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**Catholic and Protestant:
Two Religious Periodicals and US-Soviet Relations, 1930-1950**
by Colin Reynolds

Introduction

From the time of the October Revolution in 1917, the United States had a tense relationship with the Soviet Union. The United States was, after all, one of those “bourgeois” nations that Soviet ideology taught were bound for termination. Considering the importance of religion to American political culture, the iconoclastic nature of Soviet atheism could have only further tarnished the situation. Other complications arose from the change and turmoil in the Soviet Union stemming from Joseph Stalin’s rise to power and governance, which included, in an apparent retreat from the Soviet government’s official atheism during the 1920s and 1930s, Stalin re-establishing the patriarchate of Moscow in 1943.¹ Interestingly, this re-establishment occurred against the backdrop of the USSR’s wartime alliance with the US.

How did the Soviet government’s changing policy on religion, as well as its alliance with the United States during the Second World War, affect Americans’ perceptions of the USSR? To explore this issue, this paper will provide a literature review of two religiously affiliated US magazines with some analysis of what their contributors had to say about the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s.

Two Publications, Two Approaches

The publications examined are the Paulist Press’s *Catholic World* and the “undenominational” Protestant *Christian Century*. These magazines printed a wide array of views from editorial staff and contributors who increasingly wrote about the United States’

¹ Tatiana A. Chumachenko. *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 15.

wartime alliance and postwar relationship with the USSR. Most writers in both magazines found the Soviet system of government at best morally reprehensible, or at worst downright evil, but while the *Catholic World* expressed views on America's alliance that ranged from negative to condemnation, the *Christian Century* gradually moved from a moralistic tone to one more accepting of practicality and published a wider range of views than did its Catholic counterpart.

Interestingly, neither magazine had much to say about the Soviet Union during the 1930s. On the rare occasion that the *Catholic World* contained a relevant editorial, for instance, it was usually concerned with some aspect of the state of religion and religious persecution under Stalin. At the start of the Second World War, when more articles began appearing in both magazines, their opinions expressed about the Soviet Union were similar and generally negative. After the US became involved in the war, the two magazines' editorial styles diverged, and after the war ended, that divergence reached its most pronounced point.

Although the *Christian Century* never came to approve of the Soviet experiment, and the *Catholic World* never came to favor a war against the USSR, their opinions about how to handle postwar diplomatic relations were very different. As religious periodicals, the *Catholic World* and the *Christian Century* were not particularly unique. However, a comparison of their content shows that a wide variety of sentiment existed in American religious society.

Catholic World

The *Catholic World* was founded in 1865 by Father Isaac Hecker, a convert to the Roman Church. It is often credited with combining traditional Roman Catholic values of piety with a distinctly American emphasis on self-sufficiency and forging, for the first time, a distinctively American Catholic identity.² From 1922 until 1948, its chief editor was James M. Gillis, a

² Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, ed. *The Conservative Press in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 369-70.

fiercely anti-Communist priest with a gift for wit and scathing criticism, particularly of the US government's liberal consensus, and this gift is visible in nearly all his writings. Yet, it is difficult to paint Gillis with a completely conservative brush, for he was also a champion of social justice issues like civil rights.³

When writing about the US's alliance with Soviet Russia, however, he pulled no punches. To him, Soviet Communism was evil because of both its atheism and its human rights abuses, and absolutely nothing good could come of a US alliance with the USSR. Those articles that appeared between 1930 and 1940 more often took the form of news-briefs than the long, literary editorials Gillis would later write. The earliest articles of interest came from a section of the magazine entitled "Potpourri: The Opinions of our Contemporaries," in which selections of articles from other sources were reproduced. The earliest pointed to Stalin's first Five-Year Plan as "the greatest gamble in history"⁴ but leveled no condemnation of the Soviet system. Another, by political commentator and journalist Walter Lippman, criticized recent comments by Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. Lippman's words were followed by pro-Soviet comments from Shaw interspersed with dismal contradictions from *Izvestia* (spelled "*Investia*" by Gillis' publication) and speeches by Soviet politicians.⁵

The United States government had no diplomatic ties with the Soviet government until 1933, and this likely explains in part the relative silence in both the *Catholic World* and *Christian Century*. A news brief in the former from late 1933 reported on the proposed diplomatic recognition. It was written with an unusual amount of disinterest, and with enough explanation to indicate that whoever wrote it did not expect readers to be very informed about

³ Lora and Longton, 372.

⁴ B. Hessel Tiltman, quoted in *The Last Stand*, by Edmund A. Walsh, S.J. "Russia, Five-Year Plan," *Catholic World* 133 (April/September 1931): 199.

⁵ Walter Lippmann, reprinted from *New York Herald Tribune*, "Bernard Shaw on Soviet Russia" *Catholic World* 134 (October/March 1932): 302-03.

the subject. In terms of reactions, it reported only that the National Council of Catholic Men had resolved that “obligations by any government were meaningless if that government denied the existence of Almighty God and was actively hostile to the teaching and practice of religion.”⁶

The first full editorial appeared in 1937 and dealt with religion. Father Joseph F. Thorning was a lecturer at Mount St. Mary’s College in Maryland. A frequent resident of Europe before the outbreak of the war, he was an early supporter of Franco’s regime in Spain.⁷ In his guest editorial, he described Soviet Communism as an institution that would “cease to be Communism before it gives up or even diminishes its attack on God.”⁸ Thorning characterized Soviet ideology as having “the earmarks of a religious manifestation rather than that of a political or economic philosophy,” involving “the apotheosis of Lenin; the glorification of Stalin; the substitution of these two leaders for the old religious ikons [sic] and images.”⁹ Though the new Soviet constitution ostensibly guaranteed freedom of religious expression, Thorning contended that the clergy found itself under constant surveillance and persecution, often accused of counterrevolutionary action and sent to prison or death. Despite the persecution about which he wrote, Thorning believed the Russian people in general were still highly religious.

By writing in this way, Thorning anticipated the theories of historians such as Lynne Viola, who based their work on the way peasants characterized the Bolsheviks’ anti-religious mission.¹⁰ Donald Attwater echoed this belief in 1938 when he wrote about the history of Russian icons in another *Catholic World* article. “To destroy these objects, as did the Bolsheviks,

⁶ “Recognition of Russia,” *Catholic World* 138 (October 1933/March 1934): 357.

⁷ “J.F. Thorning, Jesuit Teacher and Pastor, Dies in Maryland,” *New York Times* (March 12, 1985). <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B03E3DB1E39F931A25750C0A963948260> (accessed December 6, 2006).

⁸ Joseph F. Thorning, “Present Status of Religion in Soviet Russia,” *Catholic World* 145 (April/September 1937): 413.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹⁰ Lynne Viola, ed. *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 20.

was to attack the soul of the nation and the intimate sentiments of the Russian people. This work of destruction was judged by the Russian Orthodox peasants as being the work of Satan.”¹¹ Thorning and Attwater wrote of a people held captive and silent by their corrupt government. While both authors were likely to write of a Communist or Bolshevik mentality, Gillis would later write of “Russian” qualities, as if Soviet ideology had pervaded everyone living in its grasp.

In 1939, with the Second World War about to erupt, editorials in the *Catholic World* became critical of the US government for its flirtations with the Soviets. Benjamin DeCaseres, in a letter to the magazine, mentioned that President Roosevelt had “gratuitously” sent “a telegram of congratulation to President Kalinin...on the 21st anniversary of the founding of the most anti-democratic state in all history, a state that is a synonym for terror and torture.”¹² Thomas F. Woodlock wrote in his 1939 article that “nothing, perhaps, could more strikingly illustrate the demoralization that has overtaken the Western civilization than does the eleventh-hour pathetically slavish attempt of the so-called ‘democracies’ to enlist [Soviet Russia’s] support against the so-called ‘dictatorships.’”¹³ This critical tone continued through the next decade.

Gillis’s first contribution came in May 1941, just after the German invasion of the USSR. Noting an increase in American propaganda praising the Soviet government, Gillis declared a belief to which he would hold firm in all his writings, that “to defend democracy with the help of Stalin would be like calling in Jesse James and John Dillinger to maintain law and order.”¹⁴ He spent the bulk of this first editorial criticizing those who had positive things to say about the Soviet Union, and reserved special criticism for *The Soviet Power*, a recently-published book by

¹¹ Liturgical Art Society, with an Introduction by Donald Attwater, reprinted from *The Eastern Branches of the Catholic Church*, “Icons in Russia,” *Catholic World* 147 (April/September 1938): 321.

¹² Benjamin DeCaseres, Untitled letter in *Catholic World* 148 (October 1938/March 1939): 702.

¹³ Thomas F. Woodlock, “Soviet Russia, Alliance with Democracies,” *Catholic World* 149 (April/September 1939): 580.

¹⁴ James M. Gillis, “Russia as an Ally?” *Catholic World* 153 (May 1941): 129.

the Dean of Canterbury, writing that “He actually *believes* [italics original] that fear has been abolished in a nation where everyone spies on everyone else...where purges and mass arrests and rigid censorships are everyday routines.”¹⁵ Gillis’s opposition to cooperating with the Soviets would always lay in two concerns: Soviet Russia was a cruel dictatorship that spread fear and animosity among its people, and it actively persecuted and blasphemed Christianity.

For reasons difficult to discern, Gillis did not publish another article dealing directly with Russia until 1944, after which such articles appeared frequently until he retired from his editorship in 1948.¹⁶ Perhaps even Gillis, opinionated and outspoken as he was, felt uncomfortable criticizing an ally in a war whose result was far from certain. Gillis later tacitly attributed his silence to a belief that the United States had been justified in going to war because it had been unjustly attacked. “After Pearl Harbor, neither in speech nor in writing, in public or in private, have I objected to our fighting either Germany or Japan,” he wrote in 1945.¹⁷ Either the *Catholic World*’s guest editorialists followed Gillis’s lead, or Gillis himself decided not to publish articles about the USSR during the early war years. At any rate not a single editorial about Soviet Russia appeared on the pages of the *Catholic World* in 1942 or 1943.

In October 1944, after an Allied victory was considered certain, Gillis declared Soviet Russia “the greatest potential menace to permanent peace...Fascism is not and never was as dangerous as Communism.”¹⁸ Fascism might have been an oppressive system of government, but it had never sought to destroy religion. Besides this, Gillis believed that Fascism was in its death throes. “The battle from now on is not between Democracy and Fascism, but between

¹⁵ Gillis, “Russia as an Ally,” 132. For Johnson’s views see: *The Soviet Power: The Socialist Sixth of the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1940).

¹⁶ Lora and Longton, 374.

¹⁷ Gillis, “Stalin Refuses to Play Ball,” *Catholic World* 161 (June 1945): 198.

¹⁸ Gillis, “Getting Wise to Russia,” *Catholic World* 160 (October 1944): 1.

Democracy and any and every form of Dictatorship. The only surviving dictatorship is Communist dictatorship.”¹⁹

As a longtime member of the America First league, Gillis increasingly made known his isolationist beliefs in his later articles.²⁰ Isolationists, he believed, had become anathema after Pearl Harbor; the term was “almost as offensive as ‘Nazi’ or ‘Quisling’ or ‘Fifth Columnist’,”²¹ even though nearly everyone influential, including President Roosevelt, had publicly been an isolationist before Pearl Harbor. True isolationists, Gillis insisted, were those “who don’t believe in going in unless we go in all the way, and unless we do what we go in to do, before we come out.”²² The United States shouldn’t have gone to war against one form of totalitarianism only to tolerate and support another. Therefore, Gillis reserved heated ire for those government officials who he believed had conceded far too much to Stalin. Roosevelt and Churchill had humiliated themselves and the cause of democracy with their “unconditional surrender” at Yalta.²³

Gillis mocked Winston Churchill’s famous assertion that Soviet Russia was “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”²⁴ There was no mystery, Gillis insisted; Stalin was unabashedly trying to build himself an empire, and worse, the United States continued to send him materials even as he fought Chiang Kai-Shek’s forces in Manchuria. Though Gillis insisted that he did not support a war with the Soviets, he found it intolerable that American politicians and the UN Security Council were telling what he saw as lies about Stalin’s ambitions.²⁵

Gillis’s attitude, though not frequently expressed, remained essentially unchanged from 1941. In an address to the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Meeting in August 1946, he

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁰ Lora and Longton, 374.

²¹ Gillis, “Stalin Refuses to Play Ball,” 197.

²² Gillis, “First Round Goes to Russia,” *Catholic World* 163 (May 1946): 103.

²³ Gillis, “‘Poisonous’ Criticism of Russia,” *Catholic World* 161 (July 1945): 292.

²⁴ Gillis, “Russia No Riddle,” *Catholic World* 163 (April 1946): 1.

²⁵ Gillis, “Telling Russia Off,” *Catholic World* 163 (July 1946): 289.

warned that “Russian atheistic Communism threatens to dominate the world... In a word, Russia aims to replace our Western civilization with an Oriental despotism.”²⁶ In rare racist language and bizarre inaccuracy he declared: “Stalin is largely Mongol, and for unscrupulous cunning the Mongol is superior even to the ‘Chinee.’ The cards were marked and the dice loaded when Mr. Roosevelt gambled with that slick Oriental at Teheran, Yalta and Moscow.”²⁷

Gillis said nothing directly about the 1943 re-establishment of the Moscow patriarchate. However, in a 1945 editorial, he noted that religious icons had begun to appear among the trappings of Italian Communists, “the crucifix and the picture of the Blessed Virgin with portraits of Stalin.”²⁸ This was not surprising because of “the basic Communist ethic: whatever serves its purpose is ‘good’.”²⁹ Gillis’s descriptions of Communism were often replete with religious language, because like Joseph Thorning, he believed that Communism was a religion of anti-religion. “In the Communist sect it is a matter of religion to sacrifice one’s native land for the sake of the Communist Utopia,” he wrote. “People who are infected with this disease will not hesitate for a moment to sacrifice their country or its secrets.”³⁰ Despite his characterization of Communism as a religious cult or communicable disease, Gillis did not seem extremely concerned about the presence of Communist sympathizers in the United States. He once wrote that Soviet Russia “encourages and financially supports—with our money—a fifth column of thousands of operatives in the United States...,” but he did not elaborate on his accusation.³¹ Gillis’s chief concern lay with the support America continued to send the USSR. He did not see Communism as an imminent threat as did his fellow Catholic, Joseph McCarthy.

²⁶ Gillis, “What Russia is Doing to Us,” *Catholic World* 163 (September 1946): 540-41.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 542.

²⁸ Gillis, “‘Poisonous’ Criticism of Russia,” 295.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

³⁰ Gillis, “Telling Russia Off,” 292.

³¹ Gillis, “First Round Goes to Russia,” 97.

The same cannot be said of John Earle Uhler. A professor at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Uhler wrote anti-Communist tracts in the late 1940s for the *Catholic World* that rivaled Gillis's eloquence. Like Gillis, Uhler accused leaders of the Western powers of hypocrisy for having gone to war over the imperialist aggressions of Germany, while having ignored those of the Soviet Union. However, Uhler based his argument not on the evil nature of Soviet Communism, but on Russia's long history of animosity toward Britain, which the United States was ostensibly trying to defend. "In saving England from Germany, we have strengthened Russia, which has been a constant threat to the British Empire for over a century," he wrote.³² Two years later, Uhler wrote of the Communist threat he believed existed within the United States. His warnings of Communist infiltration greatly exceeded any Gillis had made and foreshadowed the hysteria that would come with the McCarthy era. Uhler blamed "Russia's advance" in this country first and foremost on "concessions that America has unwittingly made, not only abroad, but here at home."³³ "For the past fifteen years our government in Washington has been shot through with Communism,"³⁴ he wrote, and went on to assert that it was through the work of these Communist agitators that the United States had conceded so much after the war; its propaganda had even infiltrated the ranks of the army.³⁵ He warned that some of the most fanatical American Communists were educators, resentful of their low pay and prestige, and that a culturally heterogeneous nation like the United States, with its marginalized minorities, was particularly susceptible to Communist agitation.

Of the *Catholic World's* postwar guest editorials, two merit special consideration for their uniqueness. One came from Hermann Borchardt, a German who had been living in the Soviet

³² John Earle Uhler, "Russia and World Peace," *Catholic World* 161 (June 1945): 204.

³³ Uhler, "Russia's Advance in the United States," *Catholic World* 166 (October 1947/March 1948): 11.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 11-12.

Union as a “foreign specialist.” Like the Stakhanovites, he had been privileged with access to special shops and a high salary. In 1936, his reluctance to apply for Soviet citizenship set him under suspicion, and he was forced to leave the country immediately with his family and belongings in tow.³⁶ Borchardt’s editorial is distinctive in the *Catholic World* because of its first-person narration and because Borchardt’s oppression apparently had nothing to do with his religious faith. Indeed, the implication was that he had simply done nothing to deserve his punishment, and thus his article, more than others, resembled later memoirs about Stalinism such as Evgenia Ginzburg’s *Journey into the Whirlwind*. Communism under Stalin, he wrote, was not merely an evil political system; it was senseless and unpredictable, and those living under it lived in constant fear. “They served their country with an unswerving devotion to the best of their ability...and they had no opinions to be listened to,” wrote Borchardt of his compatriots. “But one pleasure they had, and I with them. That was to open our hearts to each other deep in the night, in a closed room, and exchange our sad and comical experiences.”³⁷

Perhaps the most unusual editorial to appear during this period was Thomas F. Doyle’s “The Catholic Church in Russia.” One unusual feature of this article was the subject itself. Most people who wrote about religion in the *Catholic World* were interested in the Soviet suppression of religion in general, not the status of the Catholic Church in particular. Unlike Gillis, Doyle seems to have had positive feelings about Stalin’s new Soviet Orthodox Church, for he believed its presence would make an agreement between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism more likely.³⁸ He wrote of the Russicum in Rome, a school founded in 1929 “to prepare a future apostolate in Russia” in the hope that “one day Russia will be converted from schismatic

³⁶ Hermann Borchardt, “My Last Days in Soviet Russia,” *Catholic World* 161 (April 1945): 41-42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁸ Thomas F. Doyle, Rev., “The Catholic Church in Russia,” *Catholic World* 165 (July 1947): 357.

Orthodoxy.”³⁹ That Doyle could write thus about a nation in which both “schismatic Orthodoxy” (a contradiction in terms if ever there was one) and Roman Catholicism had been uprooted in favor of state atheism seems remarkable. Like Uhler, Doyle was more interested in Russia’s historical animosity with the West than he was with the Bolshevik revolution.

The *Catholic World* contained no staff editorials in the traditional sense. James Gillis wrote all staff editorials himself and signed them with his own name. Shortly after his accession to the editorship in 1922, he dispensed with the “editorial ‘we’,” calling this convention “awkward, clumsy, stilted, pompous, frequently misleading and altogether absurd.”⁴⁰ It is reasonable to suppose that, even when he was not writing about the USSR himself, he had a say in what was published about it. Therefore, the opinion expressed from 1930 to 1950 in the *Catholic World* was basically consistent among all contributors. The Soviet system was evil and corrupt, and Stalin’s re-establishment of the Orthodox Church did not change this fact. While no one, not even Gillis, was willing to question the wisdom of a military alliance with the Soviet Union after Pearl Harbor, the complete editorial silence of 1942 and 1943 suggests that, to put it tritely, since Gillis was unable to write anything nice about America’s strange bedfellow, he was content to publish nothing at all—for a time. After the war, Gillis and others anticipated the Cold War that would take hold in the following decade. They effectively criticized executive and congressional Democrats for being “soft on Communism.”

Christian Century

In 1884, the *Christian Century* began publication in Des Moines as the *Christian Oracle*, but changed its name at the turn of the twentieth century. Charles Clayton Morrison purchased it in 1908 and served as editor for the next 40 years, retiring in 1947, the year before James Gillis

³⁹ Ibid., 354.

⁴⁰ Lora and Longton, 372.

retired from his position as editor of the *Catholic World*. Though the magazine was originally affiliated with the Disciples of Christ, Morrison turned it into a leading intellectual journal of mainline Protestantism and labeled every issue “undenominational” on the front cover.⁴¹ Historian Michele Rosenthal wrote of the magazine that, “Despite its relatively small circulation [of about 40,000], the editors wrote with an assurance that they were the rightful and historical guardians of American culture.”⁴² Of course, one barrier to their gaining this cultural hegemony was the mainstreaming of Roman Catholicism, making the *Christian Century* an interesting magazine to analyze alongside the *Catholic World*.

The editorial layout was very similar to that of the *Catholic World*. Issues contained news briefs and advertisements, but were mostly devoted to guest and staff editorials. Editor Morrison, unlike Gillis, did not take credit for—and perhaps did not even write—his own columns. Staff editorials were always unsigned and used the editorial “we.” They were invariably brief and usually written with a great deal of poise and restraint, as opposed to Gillis’s often scathing and nearly always witty contributions. During the 1930s, the *Christian Century* was even more profoundly silent about the USSR than its Catholic counterpart; very few, if any, articles appeared before 1940. However, there was no dearth of coverage during the war. The *Christian Century* maintained a high level of interest in the Soviet Union throughout the 1940s, producing over 100 guest columns, staff editorials, and news briefs. That pertinent editorials suddenly began appearing in 1940 is not arbitrary, for all these concerned what role the Soviet Union would play in the newly started European war.

⁴¹ Michele Rosenthal, “‘Turn it Off!’: TV Criticism in the *Christian Century* Magazine, 1946-1960,” in *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture*, Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 141.

⁴² Ibid.

The first staff editorials from 1940 concerned the Soviet invasion of Finland. One of these described a “setback” the Soviets had received and noted that “France and Great Britain appear to be playing with the idea that a war with Russia and Germany combined might not present as formidable difficulties” as they had earlier feared.⁴³ The Soviet Union was clearly a potential enemy at this point. Hitler had, after all, not yet broken his pact with Stalin, and both the Soviet and German governments seemed bent on imperialistic forays. Nearly a year later, but still before the “Russian bear” had sided with the Allies, the United States decided to lift its “moral embargo” against the Soviets and began to send war materials nearly four months before Hitler broke his pact with Stalin. The editors of *Christian Century* responded with an even-tempered, but obviously perturbed, article pondering why the government would do such a thing, particularly when even Britain found these weapons deals unwelcome.⁴⁴

With the USSR’s entry into the war on the Allied side came the first guest editorial, written by a Unitarian minister named John Haynes Holmes.⁴⁵ Holmes was a pacifist and a proponent of ecumenism. He was concerned about German Fascism and in 1938 published a short book on modern anti-Semitism, *Through Gentile Eyes*.⁴⁶ In a contribution to the *Christian Century*, Holmes predicted—with surprising accuracy—that if Russia proved victorious, it would be granted an influential place in world politics and with this power and influence would annex Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland, dominate the Balkans and East Prussia, and set its imperialist sights on the Far East.⁴⁷ Holmes wrote with no blatant political agenda and made sure to note that he did not favor a German victory, but his article was clearly prophetic.

⁴³ “A Real Setback for Russia,” *Christian Century* 57 (January 2, 1940): 35.

⁴⁴ “Moral Embargo Against Russia Lifted,” *Christian Century* 58 (February 5, 1941): 173-74.

⁴⁵ Paul Sprecher, “John Haynes Holmes,” *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*, <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/johnhaynesholmes.html> (accessed December 7, 2006).

⁴⁶ John Haynes Holmes, *Through Gentile Eyes: A Plea for Tolerance and Good Will* (New York: Jewish Opinion Publishing Corporation, 1938).

⁴⁷ John Haynes Holmes, “If Russia Wins,” *Christian Century* 58 (July 30, 1941): 954-55.

Shortly afterwards, Henry Nelson Wieman became the *Christian Century*'s first contributor to suggest that the United States should join the Allied Powers in the war. Wieman was a Presbyterian minister who would later become a Unitarian, and is known for his academic work in trying to reconcile Christianity with the modernizing world.⁴⁸

Wieman's stated purpose in proposing interventionism was neither to defeat German fascism nor to protect Britain from conquest. Through a rather convoluted chain of logic, Wieman asserted that the root cause of the war had been the animosity between Western democracy and Soviet Communism. After all, the Nazis had only risen to power in Germany because of their outspoken stance against Communism. The USSR had only entered the war as a result of a "trap" that the Western powers had set, "[using] Czechoslovakia as bait."⁴⁹

To Wieman's mind, a Russian victory was inevitable, and this victory would soon result in an ideological war between the Soviet Union and the United States. Only a military alliance could heal the rift between the two powers and prevent the otherwise inevitable war of democracy against Communism. In contradiction to Holmes's editorial, Wieman stated that the Soviet Union had no imperialist aims. This belief he based on the tenet that Communism was supposed to spread by natural means, not military conquest (although the USSR had already shown that it could and would invade other countries). Essentially, Wieman asserted that, though the USSR was totalitarian, it did not pose the imperialist threat that Germany did. James Gillis, and no doubt Holmes as well, would have vociferously disagreed. The *Christian Century*'s editors disagreed as well. "With all of its achievements, the dictatorship which rules Russia is still the oldest and bloodiest of the modern state tyrannies," the editors wrote in reply to

⁴⁸ Ralph Burhoe, "Henry Nelson Wieman, Philosopher of Natural Religion, 1884-1975," *Notable American Unitarians*. <http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/wieman.html> (accessed November 27, 2006).

⁴⁹ Henry Nelson Wieman, "Join Russia in the War!" *Christian Century* 58 (August 13, 1941): 1002.

Wieman.⁵⁰ They continued by saying that, in the same year that the United States had extended diplomatic recognition to Russia, that nation's government had deliberately starved over 3000 peasants, to "break their resistance to collectivization."⁵¹ Besides, to join Russia would be to tacitly approve of the Soviet campaign to exterminate religion. The *Christian Century*'s editors further stated, in agreement with Gillis, that the Soviets had set up an alternative faith, a "religion of nationalism."⁵² It would be morally offensive, the editors asserted, to make a military alliance with a nation like the Soviet Union.

After Pearl Harbor, editorial opinions in the *Catholic World* and the *Christian Century* diverged. While in 1942 and 1943, the *Catholic World* was silent concerning the USSR, the *Christian Century* published several interesting articles. Just over half a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor launched the US into war, William Henry Chamberlin contributed to the *Christian Century*. While living in Russia during collectivization he had written a book, *Russia's Iron Age*, asserting that "of the historic responsibility of the Soviet government for the famine of 1932-33, there can be no reasonable doubt."⁵³ Like Gillis, Chamberlin was disturbed by the recent "whitewashing of Stalin's regime" in American war propaganda.⁵⁴

Unlike Wieman, who had highlighted the ways in which the Soviet government was very different from that of the Third Reich, Chamberlin emphasized similarities, such as the disregard for individual rights and a one-party system headed by an officially infallible leader. Chamberlin believed that the war made it necessary to cooperate with the Soviet regime, but that propagandists should not falsify the regime's true character.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ "Shall We Fight for Russia?" *Christian Century* 58 (September 10, 1941): 1104.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 1105.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ William Henry Chamberlin, "Our Russian Ally," *Christian Century* 59 (August 12, 1942): 976.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 977.

By early 1943, the editors of the *Christian Century* were writing with a very different tone from that of 1941. Being involved in the war had increased the necessity for postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union, and the editors apparently agreed with Vice President Wallace's assertion that "unless the Western democracies and Russia come to a satisfactory understanding before the war ends...World War III will be inevitable."⁵⁶ Later that year, with Germany's defeat evidently a foregone conclusion, the editors predicted that the USSR would come to dominate postwar Europe. This they did in a very practical style, without the moralism that had pervaded their prewar editorials. "Without lifting a finger, the Soviet Union will influence the politics and policy of every nation on the continent after the war," they wrote.⁵⁷ In order to deal with this reality, "Europe must have a far-reaching social and economic revolution before it can hope for a durable peace."⁵⁸ There was no hope in trying to restore "legitimacies" (no doubt referring to Winston Churchill's proposal to restore the Balkan monarchies).⁵⁹ The editorial ended with a prophetic prediction of the United States and the Soviet Union as the two remaining world powers at the war's end.⁶⁰

This changed attitude on how the United States should relate to the Soviet Union evidently had everything to do with the war and almost nothing to do with Stalin's restoration of the Patriarchate, which was mentioned only in a news brief about the Archbishop of York's return from Moscow. According to the archbishop's report, "The government recognizes that religion is inherent in man and that the churches no longer support the old regime."⁶¹ He also mentioned that the days of anti-religious propaganda had come to an end. Nearly a year later, the

⁵⁶ "We Must be Friends with Russia," *Christian Century* 60 (March 17, 1943): 316.

⁵⁷ "The Fact of Russia," *Christian Century* 60 (December 8, 1943): 1431.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Issues that Divide Russia from Anglo-Americans," *Christian Century* 60 (October 6, 1943): 1124.

⁶⁰ "The Fact of Russia," 1432.

⁶¹ "'Anti-Christian Propaganda Ends': Archbishop of York Notes End of Era in Russia," *Christian Century* 60 (November 17, 1943): 1341.

Christian Century's editors expressed confusion that provisions circumscribing religious freedom in the Soviet Union had been changed, but that the Constitution evidently remained unaltered.⁶² In 1945, R.H. Markham wrote a long article about the purpose of the new Soviet Orthodox Church. In it, he proposed that Stalin was using the revived Church as a political tool for his imperialistic ambitions in Eastern Europe. The Orthodox Church had gone through centuries of animosity with the Western Church, he argued, and Stalin would use this fact to woo Eastern Europeans and that it was a feature of the Soviet government's increasing tendency towards nationalism. To Markham, four "mighty currents" had swept Stalin to his position of absolute power. These were nationalism, "a flaming secular religion of apocalyptic social reform," pan-Slavism, and the revival of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which Markham claimed encouraged "a Russian messianism as natural and dynamic as America's own 'manifest destiny'."⁶³

As the war drew to a close, nearly all editorials concerned the coming postwar tension. William Henry Chamberlin offered his opinion in a series he called "Preview of the Postwar World." The Soviet Union had become a truly imperialistic nation-state, Chamberlin asserted, and Stalin was "a shrewd, realistic man."⁶⁴ To Chamberlin, even the self-liquidation of the American Communist party seemed tied to Stalin's political shrewdness. "The Soviet dictator wants Mr. Roosevelt in office for a fourth time. An American Communist party flying its old red flag and urging the President's re-election would be a liability rather than an asset."⁶⁵ Also at about this time, Oswald Garrison Villard, who had been chief editor of the *Nation* until that

⁶² "Lift Ban on Church in Soviet Russia," *Christian Century* 61 (August 30, 1944): 988.

⁶³ R.H. Markham, "Stalin and the Orthodox Church," *Christian Century* 62 (April 18, 1945): 941.

⁶⁴ William Henry Chamberlin, "Preview of the Postwar World III, The Soviet Union," *Christian Century* 61 (March 22, 1944): 365.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

magazine ended its pacifist stance in 1940,⁶⁶ wrote of his concern that a war with the Soviets would be “the final disaster for Europe and for us.”⁶⁷

After 1945, most editorials were concerned with how to prevent a war with the Soviet Union. It was at this time that the material in the *Christian Century* was most at odds with that in the *Catholic World*, for while James Gillis in particular accused American and European politicians of telling lies about the Soviet Union for the sake of diplomacy, writers in the *Christian Century* often criticized politicians for being too belligerent. One of the first of these editorials came as a reaction to a speech by the US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes. The *Christian Century's* editors criticized Byrnes and other politicians who believed that “tough talk” was effective diplomacy. “How’s that for an enlightened foreign policy—threaten the next most powerful nation on earth, while at the same time admitting you would rather not face the consequences if he doesn’t back down at your threats!”⁶⁸ Unlike Gillis, the editors emphasized the importance of trying to understand the Soviet Union, though they questioned whether this was possible, considering “the concealments practiced by the Soviet government.”⁶⁹

Conclusion

Although it had nothing to say about the USSR during the 1930s, the *Christian Century* frequently published relevant opinion articles throughout and after the Second World War. It seems that editor Morrison and his co-workers were more relaxed than Gillis when it came to publishing editorials with opinions that differed from their own. Still, following the trend of at least the staff editorials, the general opinion of the *Christian Century* changed from a moralistic anti-Soviet stance before the war to one of political practicality afterwards. Letters from the

⁶⁶ “Oswald Garrison Villard,” *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition*, 2001-05.

<http://www.bartleby.com/65/vi/VillardO.html> (accessed December 7, 2006).

⁶⁷ Oswald Garrison Villard, “Russia the Acid Test,” *Christian Century* 61 (September 27, 1944): 1103.

⁶⁸ “War with Russia?” *Christian Century* 63 (March 13, 1946): 675.

⁶⁹ “How Can We Have Cultural Relations with Russia?” *Christian Century* 64 (March 5, 1947): 293.

1940s predicted—with an oft-surprising level of accuracy—the political divide that would develop between East and West after the Allied victory. It was the fear of the ensuing conflict between Communism and democracy that led the *Christian Century*'s editors and other writers to insist that friendly postwar relations with the Soviets must be maintained. Gillis and Morrison, while never directly advocating war, seemed to consider war a more moral option than continuing what Gillis called America's "covenant with Satan."⁷⁰

To reach a general conclusion about the opinions expressed in these editorials is no easy task. Nearly all were written by obviously highly educated, religious people, and thus perhaps were removed from the bulk of American Christians, as a university education would not become commonplace in America until after the war. However, they were written and/or read by the ministers and leaders who would speak to these Christians regularly. Most of the articles came from the 1940s and most concerned wartime politics.

Stalin was generally characterized by both publications as a totalitarian ruler and an imperialist. In the magazines examined for this study, only Harry F. Ward, a liberal Methodist minister who promoted what he called "Labor-Religion" and was notorious in some circles as a Communist sympathizer,⁷¹ directly disputed this image, in an editorial in *Christian Century*.⁷²

However, many writers, particularly in the early articles of the *Catholic World*, were unwilling to believe that the Russian people had passively accepted the Stalinist affront on their religious culture. Writers like Gillis and Borchardt, as well as the editorial staff of the *Christian Century*, wrote of resistance to Stalinism, a subject that historians like Lynne Viola and others would take up in later decades. However, accusations that Stalin was plagued by neurosis or

⁷⁰ Gillis, "Telling Russia Off," 293.

⁷¹ Eugene P. Link. *Labor Religion Prophet: The Times and Life of Harry F. Ward* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1984), xiii-xix.

⁷² Harry Frederick Ward, "Is Russia Forsaking Communism?" *Christian Century* 59 (October 28, 1942): 1314.

megomania, which other historians, notably Robert Tucker,⁷³ seriously explored, are nowhere to be found. Certainly, many considered Stalin an evil man, but no one considered him insane.

Indeed, several contributors highlighted Stalin's political acumen, particularly his skill at turning the ideals of the Bolshevik revolution upside-down. Finally, writers in both magazines asserted that Stalin had created a new Soviet religion in place of the one he had spent years repressing, and his re-establishment of the patriarchate, when it was mentioned at all, was explained as an act of political opportunism. Politically speaking, the manner in which the two magazines' editorials diverged showed a divide among religious intellectuals — between those who wished to maintain relations so as to prevent another and potentially worse conflict, and those who wished to actively and aggressively contain the Soviet menace.

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⁷³ Tucker, "Stalinism as Revolution from Above," 104.

- _____. "What Russia is Doing to Us" *The Catholic World* 163 (September 1946).
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**From the Silk Road to Chevron:
The Geopolitics of Oil Pipelines in Central Asia**
by James Fishelson

Kazakhstan has received much press recently as a result of the success of the comic film *Borat*. However, that movie got everything wrong in its depiction of Kazakhstan, with the exception of two things. The first is that the country is in a regional conflict with Uzbekistan. The second is the prevalence of prostitutes, which are everywhere in Kazakhstan. The country has become a target for immigrants practicing the profession, with women, girls, and even a few men flowing in from neighboring countries and farther abroad.¹ Since the 1979 discovery of the Tengiz field, a massive oil source under the North Caspian Sea,² and especially after the full-scale exploitation of that field and others during the post-Soviet era, Kazakhstan's economy is booming and its citizens, in a frenzy of capitalism, are spending the influx of money liberally.

Elsewhere in Central Asia, Turkmenistan, a relatively small and isolated country, has been largely ignored by the American media but possesses what are believed to be the fourth-largest natural gas reserves in the world.³ Considering the current violence in the Middle East and rising energy costs, we should begin to pay the sort of serious attention we have paid to *Borat* to the production of Central Asian oil and gas.

The International Nature of Energy

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are landlocked nations. They do not have complete control over the utilization of their natural resources, as they are forced to ship their oil and gas via pipelines that run through other countries in order to reach the global market. Whoever controls

¹ Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Kazakhstan: A New Destination for Trafficked Women." *RadioFreeEurope Radio Liberty*, 15 March 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/03/e1f80e53-bb4f-4ea7-9fff-200a771e8785.html>.

² Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York: Grove Press, 2003) p. 80.

³ Breffni O'Rourke, "Turkmenistan: A Pipeline Long in the Pipeline." *RadioFreeEurope Radio Liberty*, 14 February 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/b8cad86-b102-44ea-bce5-6d68c87b6ec9.html>.

the pipelines controls the energy they contain, which is vital to a country's economy and even military strength, as modern militaries, with aircraft, armored vehicles, and gas-powered ships are reliant on oil. The struggle for control of these pipelines is now being waged, quietly but surely, between many countries including Russia, China, Iran, and the United States.⁴

Central Asian oil and gas has historically flowed through Russian pipelines. Of course, maintaining this arrangement will also mean that Russia will receive sizable transit fees as well as have more oil and gas with which to secure greater leverage in international politics. China proposes to build a pipeline of about 3000 km from the Caspian oil fields across Kazakhstan and into China to feed its growing economy. Iran would pump the oil and gas south into its existing network, which would boost its efforts to obtain a regional leadership position in the Middle East. The US, attempting to maintain its position as the world's sole superpower, but without direct geographic access to the region, would like the oil and gas to reach the open market without it falling under the control of Russia, China, or Iran. The remainder of this paper will examine the "grand strategy," or overall foreign policy, of Russia, China, the US, and Iran as they relate to Central Asian energy. An historical analysis of these policies as well as a critical analysis of the pipelines and the strategies will also be provided.

Historical Background

Since much of the current geopolitical struggle over the region is colored by the past, it is necessary to provide some of its political history. All of the Central Asian republics, including Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, were creations of the Soviet Union.⁵ What is now Kazakhstan

⁴ European countries have up until now played relatively minor roles in Central Asia's oil industry, but where they have, such as with the British oil and gas giant BP exploring the gas field of Turkmenistan, or with the Italian company ENI running the Agip consortium, which controls the Kazakhstan's Kashagan field, the European interests often dovetail with America's.

⁵ Zainiddin Karaeve, "Border Disputes and Regional Integration in Central Asia." *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2005).

was taken over by Russia in stages but by the early 19th century was entirely under the Czar's control. Present-day Turkmenistan was fully absorbed by the latter part of the same century. Prior to this, both countries consisted of a series of small khanates and local rulers. Historically nomadic, industry and large-scale farming were introduced under the USSR, but self-sufficiency was not. All roads and railroads were built northward into Russia and it was almost impossible to travel between the provinces of East and West Kazakhstan without a stop in Moscow.

In part due to this dependence on Russia, the economies of the Central Asian states atrophied as borders were shut down after gaining independence in 1991.⁶ Gaining true independence proved to be an especially trying problem for Kazakhstan, which shares a massive land border with Russia and was, at the time, populated by a Russian majority; it was only recently that the Kazakhs became a majority in their own state.⁷ For a while there was even talk of Russia annexing northern Kazakhstan, although this aspiration was effectively squashed when Kazakh President Nursultan Nazerbayev moved the capital from Almaty in the south-west to the then tiny steppe town of Astana in the north. However, due to the still-close economic ties (Russia is its biggest trading partner)⁸ it has proven exceedingly difficult for Kazakhstan to distance itself too far from Russia.

As for the development of democracy in the region, that is something of a misnomer. The Great Turkmenbashi⁹ and President, Saparmurat Niyazov, ruled Turkmenistan from its gaining independence in 1991 until his death in December 2006. His personality cult was bizarre; Turkmenbashi erected a 12m gold-plated statue of himself that revolves so that it always faces

⁶ For an overview of the Central Asian republics' transitions from Soviet rule to independence, see Martha B. Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2005).

⁷ Martha B. Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2002), pp. 51-52.

⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Kazakhstan Country Report*, April 2007, p. 10.

⁹ In Turkmen language, Turkmenbashi translates as "Father of all Turkmen."

the sun.¹⁰ Like Niyazov, Nazerbayev in Kazakhstan was the leader of his country at the fall of the USSR and retained control after independence. Nazerbayev is far from a democratic ruler, retaining full control of the press, the judges, the congress, and the entire political system. However, the relative freedom he allows his people, the fact that he has presided over the emergence of Kazakhstan as a regional economic powerhouse, and the success he has had in preventing ethnic strife between the Russian and Kazakh populations, make him a saint in comparison to other Central Asian rulers.

The Logistics of Caspian Oil

Despite the region's isolation, it is surprising that so little regard is paid to Kazakh and Turkmen reserves, for they are truly astounding. Kazakhstan has estimated reserves of 79.6 billion barrels (bbl) of oil and 3 trillion m³ (trm) of natural gas; by comparison Saudi Arabia has 264.3 bbl of oil.¹¹ Turkmenistan has comparatively little oil at 500 million barrels (mbbl) but has estimated proven reserves of 2.9 trm of gas.¹² Furthermore, since a full, public exploration of Turkmenistan's Caspian seabed has not been conducted, we can assume that Turkmenistan's actual gas reserves are almost certainly far greater; the Economist Intelligence Unit has estimated reserves at 10 trm, while the Turkmen government has claimed it is more than 13 trm,¹³ which would place the country in the top four countries for natural gas reserves.¹⁴

A small pipeline network built by the Soviets has long carried Central Asian oil and gas towards Moscow. However, this network is nowhere near sufficient to carry the massive amount of reserves available. A number of pipelines have been built following the fall of the Soviet

¹⁰ Tom Parfit, "Father of all Turkmen dies aged 66." *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 December 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,1976842,00.html>.

¹¹ EIU, *Kazakhstan Country Profile*, 2006, p. 20.

¹² EIU, *Turkmenistan Country Profile*, 2006, p. 16.

¹³ EIU, *Turkmenistan Country Report*, April 2007, pp. 23-24.

¹⁴ Breffni O'Rourke, "Turkmenistan: A Pipeline Long in the Pipeline." *RadioFreeEurope Radio Liberty*, 14 February 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/b8cad86-b102-44ea-bce5-6d68c87b6ec9.html>.

Union: the Caspian Pipeline Consortium Pipeline from the Tengiz oil fields to the Russian port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea; the Korpezhe-Kurt Kui gas pipeline from the Turkmen fields to Iran; and the Kazakhstan-China pipeline from Atasu to Alataw in China.

There are two main problems with transport: geography and international relations. From a purely logistical standpoint there is no easy route for the Central Asian oil and gas to reach sea shipping lanes and major markets such as Europe. To head directly west demands either skirting the Caspian, greatly increasing the length of any pipeline, or building an underwater pipeline, which greatly increases the cost of a pipeline. To the east is the Pacific Ocean, but the 6400 miles of pipeline needed to reach it would be a deterrent to construction plans. Running southeast towards the Indian Ocean would mean traversing the mountains of war-torn Afghanistan.

Borders and the politics they represent pose an even more serious problem. Each country through which a pipeline passes can demand transit fees and can, theoretically, turn off the flow for any reason – from political to economic. For cross-border pipelines to be built, treaties and agreements must be signed and financial agreements struck, often with numerous nations competing. Signing such agreements is highly political, which is why, for example, Kazakhstan is afraid of sending its oil through Iran and thereby infuriating the US. Complicating the matter further, pipelines tend to be built by consortiums of governments and oil companies, and the desires of a nation's government do not always mesh with those of private companies.

Another related issue is the controversy over rights to the Caspian and its seabed, much of which comes down to whether the Caspian should be classified as a lake or a sea under the United Nation's Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982). As a lake, each littoral state would be entitled to an exclusive zone for a given number of miles from its shore, but the center of the Caspian would be a shared zone for all littoral states. However, if declared a sea, the entire

Caspian would be divided up according to each state's amount of coastline.¹⁵ Russia and Iran consider it a lake, while Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan prefer a sea classification. Under the current convention, the Caspian could be judged to be logically as either.¹⁶

This issue is further complicated by the 1921 Friendship Treaty between Persia (now Iran) and the USSR. The treaty divided the Caspian between those two states and declared that no changes to the arrangement this treaty established could be made without the agreement of all littoral states. While Russia and Iran consider this treaty valid, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, not being signatories, do not feel bound to it.¹⁷

Although the issue of ownership of the Caspian remains undecided, oil and gas exploration and drilling continue with abandon. Russian and Iranian claims stemming from the treaty are becoming weaker and weaker with each passing year, though the issue is far from settled. In July 2001, Iran deployed a warship and two fighter jets to stop an Azeri research vessel exploring a gas field near the center of the Caspian, but well within what Azerbaijan considers its territorial water.¹⁸ Even though Russia agrees with Iran on the issue of Caspian ownership, it has not taken such drastic measures. Also, despite the Friendship Treaty, Russia has proven willing to make bilateral deals with other states, such as when in 2005 it signed a production sharing agreement with Kazakhstan for that country's Kurmangazy offshore oilfield, situated on the northern part of what is generally agreed to be Kazakhstan's Caspian sector.¹⁹

¹⁵ Eric A. Vanhove, *US Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Pipeline Politics and the National Interest* (Monterey CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 1997), p. 10.

¹⁶ Vanhove, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Clive Schofield and Martin Pratt, "Claims to the Caspian Sea." *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 1996, p. 77.

¹⁸ Ariel Cohen, "Iran's Claim Over Caspian Sea Resources Threaten Energy Security." *The Heritage Foundation*, 5 September 2002, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/bg1582.cfm>.

¹⁹ Vladimir Socor, "Major Russia-Kazakhstan oil production-sharing agreement signed." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 7 July 2005, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2369982.

China's Plans

On October 27, 2005, China made its first major foray into the Central Asian oil industry when the state-owned Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) purchased the Canadian-based PetroKazakhstan Inc., owner of the Kumkol field, a move that was applauded in China as a major victory over the privately-held Russian giant Lukoil.²⁰ The sale mildly surprised some experts, as China paid well over market value and was forced to sell a third of its holdings in the Kazakh state oil company KazMunaiGaz back to the government as part of the deal.²¹ The surprise at this seemingly one-sided deal is mitigated by China's ravenous thirst for oil, which is a result of an exploding Chinese economy combined with relatively small proven domestic reserves; China is already the second largest importer of oil and it is predicted that it will overtake the current leader in imports, the US, by 2030.²²

China has partly relied on Middle Eastern oil imports; the purchase in Central Asia gives China a source of oil that it at least partially controls, is located in a more politically stable region, and which can be imported directly overland from a friendly country. This would avert shortages due to war or possible Western-enforced embargos either in the Middle East or on China itself, which could occur over the issue of Taiwanese independence.

China has until now not shown much political interest in Central Asia; after Kangxi took over what is now the western Uigher province of Xinjiang at the end of the 17th century, the buying off of Uzbek warlords/khans during the 18th century was the last major Chinese activity there.²³ However, the recent increase in Chinese aid to Central Asian countries, combined with

²⁰ "CNPC completes acquisition of PetroKazakhstan." *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America*, 27 October 2005, <www.china-embassy.org/eng/hyzg/t218598.html>.

²¹ Christopher Pala, "China Pays Dearly for Kazakhstan Oil." *New York Times*, 12 March 2006, http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F40C15FE35550C748DDD_AA0894DE404482.

²² Gal Luft, "Feeding the Dragon: China's race into the Oil Market." *Institute for the Analysis of Global Security*, <http://www.iags.org/china.htm>.

²³ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 67-69.

the exuberance with which it celebrated its victory over Lukoil and thus, symbolically, Russia, indicates that China at least would like to have Central Asia nominally within its sphere of influence. Until Chinese internal government documents are declassified, it will be impossible to determine the extent of these possibly imperialistic desires, but they must be considered as at least a possible motivating factor for China by any country that also has interests in the region.

The purchase of PetroKazakhstan was only a small part of China's overall plan to access Central Asian oil. In 1997 China and Kazakhstan signed a pact forming the Sino-Kazakh Oil Pipeline Co. Ltd., a joint venture between CNPC and KazMunaiGas which had, as its stated goal, a pipeline running from the Caspian Sea to Xinjiang.²⁴ An initial \$700 million, 962 km section of the pipeline, stretching from Atasu to Alataw, first started pumping oil in May 2005 from the Kumkol field of the Aktobe region, making it the first pipeline to pump crude directly into China.²⁵ It has a 20 million ton/year capacity,²⁶ which was 15% of China's 2005 total crude imports, though it currently carries only half that.²⁷ Once the crude reaches Alataw, it is transported via a Chinese pipeline network 246 km to a refinery at Dushanzi in Karamay; this refinery, when it becomes fully operational in 2008, will be the largest in China. When the final stage of the pipeline is completed in 2011, the Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline (KCP) will stretch about 3000 km across Kazakhstan to the Caspian fields.²⁸ As with any pipeline, additional pumping stations could be added at a later date to increase capacity. The KCP was also designed to transport Russian crude, but Russia is balking at the related transit fees.²⁹

²⁴ "China-Kazakhstan Pipeline Starts to Pump Oil." *Xinhua*, 15 December 2005, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-12/15/content_503709.htm.

²⁵ "China-Kazakhstan Pipeline Starts to Pump Oil." *Xinhua*.

²⁶ Though the exact conversion depends on the grade of crude oil, 1 ton of oil is approximately 7.15 barrels.

²⁷ "Kazakhstan Oil Pours into China Through Crossborder Pipeline." *Xinhua*, 25 May 2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-05/25/content_4600061.htm.

²⁸ "Kazakhstan Oil Pours into China Through Crossborder Pipeline." *Xinhua*.

²⁹ "First oil through Kazakhstan-China pipeline." *Petroleum Intelligence Weekly*, 15 August 2006, <http://www.intertanko.com/templates/Page.aspx?id=36307>.



Map 1:
The Kazakhstan
-China Pipeline
(KCP)¹

This KCP is advantageous for Kazakhstan as well as China. As opposed to every other existent or proposed pipeline route for Central Asian oil, the KCP provides a direct transport route. Transit fees do not need to be paid, and no country can hold Kazakhstan's oil hostage by arbitrarily raising fees or closing the pipeline. Additionally, as can be seen with the PetroKazakhstan purchase, China has shown a willingness to overpay for natural resources and, short of a complete collapse of the Chinese economy, its demand for oil should not abate anytime in the near future, so Kazakhstan is guaranteed a purchaser. It is also unlikely that the fairly opaque Chinese government will care much about the corruption of its Kazakh partners, so long as the oil is delivered on time and at the agreed-upon price. As the pipeline is already mostly constructed and has only two developers, there is little chance that it will not be completed or that it will have difficulty in providing reliable transport.

However, there are also disadvantages. Even though the terrain is fairly flat, 3000 km is a long way to run a pipeline. The added cost of transit due to this length somewhat offsets the

transit fees of shorter routes for Caspian oil. Additionally, the extreme cold of the Kazakh steppe during the winter months means that with the relatively low quality of the oil, which has high paraffin content (and thus lower viscosity), the oil in the pipelines may completely stop if the pumping stations temporarily stop, as happened in the winter of 2005-2006.³⁰ Both the length and harsh weather increase the cost of maintenance and repairs for the pipeline. Also, the KCP is strictly for oil. China has comparatively much larger gas reserves than it does oil, and it already receives a steady supply of gas from the Russian fields. While there have been feasibility studies of a Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline, the estimated \$4 billion price tag has so far proven prohibitive.³¹ Therefore, another route must be found for Kazakhstan's gas.

Furthermore, the fact that the pipeline is solely owned by Kazakh and Chinese companies does not mean that Kazakhstan and China will have full control of the oil it will ship. By the time the pipeline is complete, the majority of the oil will come from the Caspian fields, and underwater oil exploration and drilling demands far more advanced technology than China or Kazakhstan currently possesses. This is especially true for the massive Kashagan field, a high-pressure field with large quantities of poisonous hydrogen sulfide.³² Furthermore, the field is located in the shallow northern Caspian Sea which freezes in the winter.³³ The Kashagan consortium, known as Agip KCO, is led by the Italian company ENI, who might be willing to succumb to western pressure and attempt to prevent oil it pumps from reaching the Chinese markets in the event of an embargo.

Additionally, the majority of the other Caspian fields, which would likely supply a minority of the oil to be shipped, are owned by TengizChevroil, a joint venture between the

³⁰ "First Oil Through Kazakhstan-China Pipeline." *Petroleum Intelligence Weekly*.

³¹ *China Natural Gas Weekly*, 11-17 November 2006, pp. 3-4.

³² EIU, *Kazakhstan Country Report*, April 2007, p. 28.

³³ *ibid*

Kazakh government and Chevron,³⁴ which might prefer to send its oil through American-sponsored routes or via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), of which it is a shareholder.

Furthermore, Kazakhstan can only sell the oil that is pumped along the KCP to China. Ideas have previously been floated to construct a pipeline that would run across China to the Pacific Ocean,³⁵ but the cost, as well as China's understandable reluctance to move the oil to the open market, has squashed this plan. For the present, the fact that there is only a single buyer is not a major issue, but it is dangerous to be fully beholden to a foreign power for a large chunk of one's national revenue. Kazakhstan has already shown reluctance in surrendering too much control over its oil resources to China, as was seen in its insistence on buying back one third of KazMunaiGas from China as part of the PetroKazakhstan deal.

In conclusion, since this pipeline is already mostly completed, and there are no third-party powers that could hinder its construction, nothing except construction delays should keep the pipeline from being finished by around 2011, although there is the possibility for some difficulties in signing agreements to purchase the Caspian oil. As China's needs increase, the capacity of this pipeline may be increased as well, but it is too early to be able to reliably predict if and when this could occur. From a political standpoint, the KCP brings the two nations closer together and opens up the possibilities of further trade agreements. Unless an embargo is called, it is very doubtful that the pipeline will be denied oil. However, the fact that China might not be able to purchase the oil directly from Kazakhstan introduces the possibility for higher prices and removes some of the autonomy that is the major advantage of a direct pipeline. Kazakhstan could shut off the pumps if the relationship between the two governments sours, but it is unlikely that Kazakhstan would take the drastic step of shutting off such a large revenue stream.

³⁴ "Kazakhstan: 'When There's a Challenge, We Face it Head On'." *United World*, 27 April 2006, <http://www.unitedworld-usa.com/reports/kazakhstan/tengizchevroil.asp>.

³⁵ Vanhove, pp. 21-22.

The Russian Route

Petropolitics for the past half-century tended to be fairly straightforward. Countries like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia spent their massive oil revenues lavishly to further international objectives. For example, Venezuela has sponsored poverty initiatives in other Latin American countries, and Saudi Arabia heavily financed the Afghan mujahideen insurgents against the Soviets during the Soviet War, paying for a large number of the weapons that the CIA supplied.³⁶ Over the past few years however, Russia has managed to extend petropolitics beyond the checkbook, and has started to wield power with the oil and gas itself, raising and lowering the rates as a means of political influence. When the newly reformed Ukraine moved closer to the EU and NATO in 2004, Russia responded with markedly higher gas prices.³⁷ When Ukraine resisted another increase in 2005, Russia shut off the pipeline from January 1-4, 2006.³⁸

Russia provides 90% of Western Europe's gas and the majority of its oil.³⁹ Whereas gas and oil must currently flow through Eastern Europe to reach the West, Russia is in the process of constructing the Nord Stream, a gas pipeline that will extend from Vyborg (near St. Petersburg) under the Baltic Sea and into Greifswald, Germany.⁴⁰ By bypassing Eastern Europe, Russia will be freed from transit fees, but more importantly, it will have full vertical control of its gas, from drilling to refinement to transport to sale. This is very important especially considering that Russia's current economic growth is almost entirely the result of its oil and gas sector.⁴¹

³⁶ For a detailed view of the Saudi involvement in the Afghan Wars, see: Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

³⁷ Tom Pafitt, "Belarus Cuts Off Russian Pipeline in Bitter Gas War." *The Guardian*, 9 January 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/oil/story/0,,1985743,00.html>.

³⁸ Andrew E. Kramer and Brian Knowlton, "Russia Cuts Off Gas to Ukraine as Talks on Pricing and Transit Terms Break Down." *New York Times*, 2 January 2006, <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F50C13F63B540C718CDDA80894DE404482>.

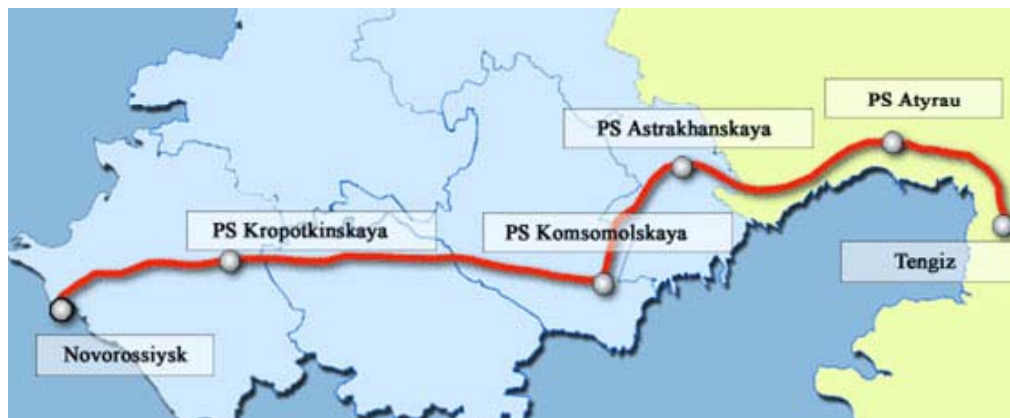
³⁹ "A Bear at the Throat." *The Economist*, April 14, 2007, pp. 58-60

⁴⁰ "The New Gas Supply Route to Europe." From the Nord Stream website: <http://www.nord-stream.com/>.

⁴¹ EIU, *Russia Country Report*, April 2007, pp. 31-31.

Russia considers Central Asia to be firmly in its sphere of influence, and would loathe losing any of its influence in the area and the benefits, especially the economic ones, which they accrue. Also, by combining the sizable Central Asian reserves with its own, Russia could become a petroleum power to rival the Middle East. Just as in the 20th century the USSR relied on its military for its superpower status, in the 21st century it will rely on its oil and gas.

Out of the four countries being discussed in this paper, only Russia has a completed, operational pipeline – the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC),⁴² which started transporting oil in 2001. It runs from Kazakhstan's Tengiz fields to the Russian Port of Novorossiysk and is the largest current export route of Caspian oil, carrying 34 million tons of oil/year. There is talk of almost doubling capacity to 67 million tons/year by adding 10 new pumping stations.⁴³ An example of the complicated nature of the geopolitics of oil in the region, the CPC has varied shareholders: Russia holds 24%, Kazakhstan 19%, Chevron 15%, and Oman 7%.⁴⁴ A variety of oil and gas companies make up the remainder. In addition to Kazakh oil, the CPC also exports for major Russian producers such as Lukoil, Rosneft, Surgutneftegaz, and TNK-BP.⁴⁵



**Map 2: The
Caspian
Pipeline
Consortium⁴⁶**

⁴² CPC refers to both the consortium and the pipeline itself.

⁴³ EIU, *Kazakhstan Country Report*, January 2007, p. 29.

⁴⁴ Caspian Pipeline Consortium website, "CPC Structure:" <http://www.cpc.ru/portal/alias!press/lang!en-US/tabID!3360/DesktopDefault.aspx>.

⁴⁵ EIU, *Kazakhstan Country Report*, January 2007, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Map 2, as well as general information on the CPC, can be found on the official Caspian Consortium Pipeline website under "General Information:" <http://www.cpc.ru/portal/alias!press/lang!en-us/tabID!3357/DesktopDefault.aspx>.

The main advantage to the CPC is that it is already in existence. Due to the enormous cost of pipeline construction, short of some catastrophic shift in international relations, it is doubtful that the pipeline will ever be abandoned in the space of expected lifetime. Additionally, since the pipeline is already in place, and runs across relatively flat land, it will be relatively inexpensive and easy to increase the CPC's capacity if desired. One additional point in the CPC's favor from the Russian point of view is Kazakhstan's dependence on Russia. The CPC is not the only Russian route for Kazakh oil, as a sizable amount flows through the old Soviet pipeline system. Oil pumped through the Atyrau-Samara pipeline links to Russia's pipeline network, while the Kenyak-Orsk pipeline transports Kazakh crude to a Russian refinery in Orsk.⁴⁷ Lastly, the CPC stands on fairly safe ground due to the international nature of the consortium. While the US is a natural rival to Russia over control of Central Asian oil and gas, the fact that American companies hold a sizable share (22.5% in total) strengthens the CPC's position as an extension of America's undisputable power on the world stage.⁴⁸

However, the varied partners of the CPC don't always get along. Russia once threatened to withdraw the operating license after an incident in 2006, when Chevron, along with other Western shareholders, tried to raise transit fees by 9.1% to \$29.88/ton. Russia countered by asking for an increase of 38.8%.⁴⁹ To put additional weight behind its bargaining position, Russia also demanded back taxes from the CPC.

From a strictly logistical standpoint, the CPC might be limited by the narrowness of Turkey's Bosphorus Straits, from which the oil is carried from the pipeline to wider international markets. Traveling the straits has already been compared to "floating through people's living

⁴⁷ "Kazakhstan: Oil and Natural Gas Exports." *Energy Information Administration*, July 2002, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/kazaexpo.html>.

⁴⁸ Caspian Pipeline Consortium website, "CPC Structure."

⁴⁹ EIU, *Kazakhstan Country Report*, January 2007, p. 29.

rooms” due to the ease with which one can look through the windows of the homes that line both shores.⁵⁰ Since only so many deep-draft supertankers can fit through the Bosphorus within a given time frame, there are doubts as to whether the oil from an increased capacity CPC could be efficiently transported via this route. Russia’s “Blue Stream” pipeline, which will stretch from Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea and thus bypass the Bosphorus, it is solely a gas pipeline, and there are no current plans for the construction of a sister oil Blue Stream that could transport oil from the CPC.⁵¹ Also, the high transit fees that Russia is demanding provide impetus for Kazakhstan to try and find alternate, cheaper routes for its oil.

The CPC also poses some political problems. Based on Russia’s previous dealings with the Ukraine, Kazakhstan may justifiably fear that Russia will someday decide to sharply raise transit fees, or, more drastically, shut down the CPC as a tool of diplomatic negotiations. The more the Kazakh government wishes to obtain independence from Moscow, the more it will try to inch away from the CPC so as not to play petroleum hardball.⁵²

The most effective strategy for Russia in its international diplomacy is to continue occasionally yielding on disputes over transit fees, while continuing to implicitly (or explicitly if necessary) threaten Kazakhstan by stressing that country’s dependence on it. Via this strategy, Russia should be able to guarantee that a large portion of the Caspian oil will continue to flow through its territory. However, as time goes on, Kazakhstan will likely manage to reduce its dependence on Russia, which has historically extended to all parts of its economy, including newspapers, television, food, transportation, etc.⁵³ Now, the burgeoning Kazakh economy is

⁵⁰ Andrew E. Kramer, “New Pipeline Will Bypass the Bosphorus but Involve Russia.” *New York Times*, 16 March 2007, <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F50E15FE34550C758DDDA0894DF404482>.

⁵¹ “Economic Brief: The Blue Stream Gas Pipeline.” *Power and Interest News Report*, 22 November 2005, http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=403&language_id=1.

⁵² EIU, *Country Report Kazakhstan*, January 2007, p. 29.

⁵³ EIU, *Country Report Kazakhstan*, January 2007, p. 29.

starting to produce and procure these things for itself, or finding other sources for them. The government is also taking an active role by building new rail lines, modernizing old roads and building new ones in an effort to make it possible to easily travel from the east to the west without going through Russia, thus further aiding the development of an independent Kazakh industry and agriculture.⁵⁴

As this situation progresses, Russia may be forced to rely more on the carrot than the stick. If in the face of increased Kazakh self-reliance, Russia insists on demanding high transit fees, and especially if it shuts off the CPC for arguably political reasons, Kazakhstan may wish to more strenuously search for alternate routes to transport its oil. If Russia focuses more on transit fees, as opposed to the increased geopolitical clout that will come with the control of the oil in transit, then the prospects for increased capacity of the CPC will decrease dramatically.

Additionally, the CPC, like the KPC, is solely an oil pipeline. There is no major pipeline to export Caspian gas, and interestingly enough, Russia has shown no inclination to fill this need. Any Caspian gas pipeline would also likely need to connect to Turkmenistan to take advantage of that country's massive gas reserves. However, the Turkmenbashi proved himself an unreliable negotiating partner, evidenced in the planning of the American-sponsored Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP).⁵⁵ However, with the Turkmenbashi's recent death, that may change. Russia's involvement in the region's natural gas markets would be a prudent move, since control of Caspian gas as well as its own would cement Russia's position as the world's preeminent gas supplier. During recent talks concerning a possible Russian-led gas OPEC, one of the experts' criticisms of the idea was that Russia already has such massive reserves that forming such a

⁵⁴ "Kazakhstan – Economic Overview: Transport and Communications." *The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland*, <http://www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk/cgi-bin/index/70>.

⁵⁵ EIU, *Turkmenistan Country Profile*, 2006, pp. 5-6, 8-9, 14-15. For more on Turkmenistan's political and societal structure, see Martha Oclott's *Central Asia's Second Chance*.

cartel might be unnecessary.⁵⁶ While this is debatable, by obtaining control over Caspian gas, Russia should be able to completely put itself in a position to effectively determine and manipulate the world's natural gas market as it sees fit.

The Iranian Route

George W. Bush has described Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the "Axis of Evil," defined as "countries that sponsor terrorism and are searching to acquire weapons of mass destruction."⁵⁷ Currently, Iran is the most powerful of the three. Saddam Hussein was overthrown in Iraq, and although Kim Jong Il appears to be close to acquiring nuclear weapons, North Korea's economy is in shatters. Comparatively, the Iranian economy, thanks to its oil and gas, is comparatively strong, making it more viable in international politics. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has also taken up a very muscular foreign policy in an attempt to make Iran a leader in the region.

Since oil and gas are important to Iran's strength, it is imaginable that it will do everything in its power to gain control of as many Central Asian resources as possible. The added transit fees would aid Ahmadinejad's current populist policies, which have gained him some domestic support, but have proved costly for the government. With a population of over 68 million,⁵⁸ oil money can become spread thin very quickly, and there are already fears that Iran is spending more than its budget allows.⁵⁹ The additional revenue that pipeline(s) would bring would also allow Iran to better withstand Western embargos. Additionally since Iran would control a greater fraction of the world's oil and gas, such an embargo would cause a far more serious shortage of oil and gas and greater price increases for the West, making it less likely.

⁵⁶ Sergei Blagov, "Russia Mulls 'Gas OPEC' Plan." *ISN Security Watch*, 2 March 2007, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=17207>.

⁵⁷ George W. Bush, *President Delivers State of the Union Address*, 29 January 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

⁵⁸ CIA World Factbook, *Iran: People*, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ir.html>.

⁵⁹ "All Hands to the Pump." *The Economist*, 24 March 2007, pp. 52-53.

The Korpezhe-Kurt Kui gas pipeline (KKK), completed in 1997, is currently the major export line for Turkmen gas. It traces the Caspian shore from the Turkmen fields to the northern city of Kurt Kui in Iran. From there, the gas is exported through the internal Iranian pipeline network. However, this is a fairly small pipeline, with a capacity of only 282 billion cubic feet (bcf) per year.⁶⁰ Though some Turkmen gas is exported into Russia through the old Soviet pipeline system, the KKK gas is purchased at market rates in cash, while most of the gas to Russia is bartered.⁶¹ While the system is opaque, the overall compensation Turkmenistan receives from the Russians is likely far below market value.⁶²

Iran would like to add to the KKK by building a gas pipeline of a far greater capacity. Since all such plans are only in the very basic planning stages there are numerous possible variations, such as a pipeline that would terminate at an Iranian port on the Indian Ocean, or one that would go through Pakistan and into India. One further option would be the construction of a Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey pipeline (TIT), which could be extended north to include Kazakh gas.⁶³ The TIT would transport gas from the eastern shore of the Caspian across Iran and into southern Turkey, where it would join the extensive Turkish pipeline network. Iran is also encouraging the construction of a Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran oil pipeline (KTI), which would have a capacity of one mld/day, and could be built in conjunction with a gas pipeline.⁶⁴

As there are numerous possibilities, it is somewhat more difficult to discuss advantages and disadvantages of the Iranian preferred route than it is for the Chinese or Russian routes. The

⁶⁰ "Caspian Sea Region: Natural Gas Export Options." *Energy Information Administration*, July 2002, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspgase.html>.

⁶¹ EIU, *Turkmenistan Country Report*, January 2007, pp. 21-22.

⁶² EIU, *Turkmenistan Country Report*, January 2007, pp. 21-22.

⁶³ Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: Pipeline Dream II." *Caspian Crossroads Magazine*, Winter 1995, <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/HOMEPAGES/USAZERB/9.htm>.

⁶⁴ "Table 4. Oil Export Routes and Options in the Caspian Sea Region." *Energy Information Administration*, July 2002, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspgaph.html>.

advantages and disadvantages given below, unless stated otherwise, refer to the generality of any pipeline that passes through Iran. One major advantage to the Iranian routes is Iran's willingness to provide low-cost transport. Iran's economy is weaker than Russia's, China's, or America's and its need for the income that will result from the pipelines being built through its territory is greater, so it is willing to offer favorable rates. Iran is also in a favorable geographical position, allowing for the shortest possible pipelines to major bodies of water, and by building in the south instead of north or west, harsher climates are avoided. The net result is lower construction and maintenance costs.

The Iranian routes are particularly advantageous for gas pipelines. Much of the Caspian oil is in the northeast Kazakh sector closer to Iran, the oil fields tend to be further south. Also, Turkmenistan has hitherto shown a willingness to work with Iran that it has not shown to other countries. Since Russia and China as of now do not plan for any gas pipelines, the only other option is the American-sponsored TCP, which is astronomically expensive and difficult as compared to the simple overland Iranian routes.

However, a major logistical problem is that any major pipeline needs to be constructed from scratch. The KKK is a small diameter pipeline, and its maximum capacity cannot be increased. Therefore, though the Iranian routes promise fairly short pipelines, they will still be expensive, and cobbling together various actors to agree to pay for such a pipeline would be difficult given the sizable American resistance. It is therefore doubtful that major countries would help build it, or even connect to it for fear of raising American ire. Also, America discourages its oil and gas companies from dealing with Iran, which would hinder the export of Kazakh oil and gas through Iran as Chevron has a share in many of the Caspian fields.

Furthermore, if an embargo against Iran is put in place, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan's oil- and gas-based economies could collapse, creating a very dangerous situation for them.

Although Iran would like to play up the "Muslim Brotherhood" aspect between it and Central Asia as a means of currying favor, it is doubtful whether this will be a successful tactic. While Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are Muslim countries, Islam came very late to the region, and was not exactly adopted wholeheartedly. Many traditionally Muslim edicts are not followed: Vodka and beer flow freely across the steppes; few speak Arabic or pray on Fridays, let alone five times a day every day; and pork is widely sold and eaten. Additionally, Iranians are ethnically Persian, while Kazakhs and Turkmen are closer to Mongolians and speak Turkic languages rather than Farsi. Iran is Shi'a, while Central Asia is Sunni. Despite some collaboration between Iran and Kazakhstan/Turkmenistan, there remain few viable historical or cultural links between them. It is notable as well that one of Kazakhstan's closest friends and economic partners in the Middle East is Israel, a sworn enemy of Iran.⁶⁵

Of all the proposed pipelines discussed here, the Iranian plans are the least likely to come to fruition. As long as America's animosity towards Iran remains, it will be far too risky for Turkmenistan or Kazakhstan to dedicate a major portion of their reserves to Iran. However, if Iran offers sufficiently enticing deals, it may be possible to get relatively small gas pipelines built, especially from Turkmenistan.

The American Routes

Since at least the oil crisis of the 1970s, cries for independence from Middle Eastern oil have been a constant political refrain in America. Following September 11th, these cries have become particularly strident. President Bush has alluded to "energy independence" in every one of his State of the Union addresses. During the sometimes vicious debates over energy in

⁶⁵ Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, p. 208.

Congress, the issue is never whether or not the US should be independent of Middle East oil, but rather how it should be made independent. This is an even more pressing issue with the increasing animosity between the US and Iran, as well as with the difficulties in Iraq and the general distaste for the US in the greater Middle East. In his 2006 State of the Union address, President Bush set forth a goal to reduce oil imports from the Middle East by 75% by 2025.⁶⁶

Alternative energy and reduced consumption are two ways that America could reduce its dependence on foreign oil. However, most of the technology for alternative energy is either many years from being fully functional or too expensive without large subsidies (as with corn-based ethanol) and severe consumption reduction seems to be too bitter a medicine for Congress to swallow.⁶⁷ Therefore, at least for the near future, the US will likely take the less environmentally friendly path and search for new sources of oil and gas. Places like the Canadian tar sands in Alberta provide one option, but due to extraction costs, this will likely not be economically viable until oil prices rise further.⁶⁸ Some of America's oil and gas comes from Russia and Venezuela, but considering the increasing tensions with the former and the open animosity with the latter, it makes sense for the US to look for oil from a new region with pro-American governments, and in this respect the Caspian region shows great potential.

There are two major routes that America is considering: the TAP and the TCP. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline (TAP) would travel from the Caspian eastward through Turkmenistan and over the mountains into Afghanistan and on to Pakistan and an open-water port and/or refinery. The TAP could be extended into India to reach the open market there.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Felicity Barringer and Andrew C. Revkin, "Gore Warns Congressional Panels of 'Planetary Emergency' on Global Warming," *New York Times*, 22 March 2007, <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30F15FA3F540C718EDDAA0894DF404482>.

⁶⁸ "Are Canadian Tar Sands the Answer to Our Oil Needs?" *Money Week*, 11 November 2006, <http://www.moneyweek.com/file/21765/are-canadian-tar-sands-the-answer-to-our-oil-needs.html>.

Since Pakistan and India have rapidly growing economies and expanding manufacturing sectors, those countries should be eager to receive such a pipeline.



Map 3:
The Turkmenistan –
Afghanistan - Pakistan Pipeline
(one possible route)⁶⁹

Costs for constructing the TAP are high due to Afghanistan's mountains. A greater problem is the fact that Afghanistan is still in the throes of a civil war and the virulently anti-American Taliban is still active. It will be difficult to construct a pipeline in such an environment, and if constructed, the pipeline would incur extra maintenance costs in the fact that it will need to be guarded, such as certain African pipelines that travel through similarly unstable territory. If Pakistan and/or India are willing to dedicate resources to ensure security in Afghanistan, then the TAP/TAPI will become a far more viable option. However, for now, it has not proceeded farther than the planning stage. Neither an exact route, capacity, nor whether it should carry gas, oil, or both has been decided.

The Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP), could be a gas, oil, or combined pipeline. It would go from either Aktau, Kazakhstan or Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan under the Caspian Sea to Baku, Azerbaijan. From there, any oil could link with the existing Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC)

⁶⁹ Farhan Reza, "Is the Largest Market in the Making?" *Himal*, January 2004, <http://www.himalmag.com/2004/january/report.htm>.

to ultimately access the Mediterranean,⁷⁰ while the gas could be transported via the South Caucasus gas pipeline into eastern Turkey⁷¹ and possibly on to Europe from there via the proposed Nabucco pipeline.⁷² While the TCP is still in the planning stages, feasibility studies have shown that a gas pipeline would cost \$5 billion and have a capacity of 30 bcf/year.⁷³ An oil pipeline would cost \$4 billion and carry 400,000 barrels/day, and thus deliver 40% of the BTC's total export capacity.⁷⁴ No feasibility studies have been done for a combined TCP pipeline.



Map 4:
The Trans-Caspian Pipeline⁷⁵

The TCP has relatively few political complications. Burrowing under the Caspian conveniently avoids Iran and Russia, providing a direct route. Also, since the US's main desire is for the oil to reach an open market (it cannot be piped directly to the US, so the US will be dependent on purchasing the oil and transporting it), Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan can feel

⁷⁰ "BP Caspian – Overview: Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline." From the BP website: <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=9006669&contentId=7014358>.

⁷¹ "BP Caspian – Overview: South Caucasus Pipeline." From the BP website: <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=9006670&contentId=7014371>.

⁷² "Nabucco Pipeline is Approved." *BBC News*, 27 June 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/5121394.stm>.

⁷³ Vladimir Socor, "Azerbaijan Spearheading Initiative on Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 30 March 2006, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370929.

⁷⁴ "Kashagan Partners Eye US\$4-bil Trans-Caspian Oil Transport System to Connect to BTC Pipeline." *Global Insight*, <http://www.globalinsight.com/SDA/SDADetail6096.htm>.

⁷⁵ "EU, Kazakhstan: The Geopolitics of Energy Cooperation." *Stratfor*, 4 December 2006, http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read_article.php?id=281479.

relatively secure in that they will be able to ask market rate for their resources. However, the underwater TCP would be far more expensive to construct than the overland TAP.

For the TCP, a combined gas and oil pipeline would make the most economic sense. The economies of scale reduce the price of a combined pipeline more when it is underwater than when it is overland, as a large part of the costs of laying down an underwater pipeline comes from digging the trenches on the seafloor and the use of pipe-laying vessels.



Map 5:
The Baku-Tbilisi-
Ceyhan Pipeline⁷⁶

One main challenge will be in finding the needed large initial investment. Due to the costs, both Kazakh and Turkmen gas (and possibly oil) will likely need to flow through the pipeline(s) to provide enough product to make them profitable. However, in the past, Turkmenistan's protectionist policies helped keep such a pipeline from being constructed.⁷⁷ While BP and Shell were active in Turkmenistan in the '90s, there is currently no major foreign oil company operating there; Shell finally shut its office there because it saw "no prospects for taking part in realistic oil-and-gas projects" due to government regulations.⁷⁸ If Turkmenistan

⁷⁶ Charles Ganske, "Georgia: More Unintended Consequences?" *Real Russia Project*, 6 November 2006, http://www.russiablog.org/2006/11/georgia_more_unintended_conseq.php?

⁷⁷ EIU, *Turkmenistan Country Profile*, 2006, pp. 5-6, 8-9, 14-15. For more on Turkmenistan's political and societal structure, see Martha Oclott's *Central Asia's Second Chance*.

⁷⁸ Ina Iankulova, "Shell Closes Down in Turkmenistan." *Euraisanet.org*, 10 April 2003, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/turkmenistan/hypermail/200304/0022.shtml>.

still remains opposed to the TCP, its chances of construction remain slim to none. However, the death of the Turkmenbashi and a change in government for Turkmenistan changes the outlook. The new Turkmen president, Gurbanguli Berdimukhamedov, has not explicitly addressed the TCP, but he has promised reforms, eschewing the Turkmenbashi's personality cult and allowing the first Internet cafes to be constructed in the capital of Ashgabat.⁷⁹ These hints at an increased willingness to be an active part of the global community bode well for the TCP. While it remains to be seen how much Turkmen-US relations might improve, Turkmenistan has much to be gained from increased economic ties. Its fields have not come close to being fully surveyed, and its deep-water fields demand technology that Turkmenistan does not possess - but the US does.

Issues surrounding ownership of the Caspian seafloor may also negatively impact construction of this pipeline. Lastly, due to the current relative lack of gas pipelines, more interest has been shown in a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline than an oil pipeline. However, if money for a combined pipeline cannot be gathered, the line may prove unprofitable.

American Foreign Policy and Caspian Oil

While America's dependence on foreign oil is universally accepted as a serious problem, it is overly simplistic to group all foreign oil together as being endemic of the same problem. The US holds only 2% of the world's oil reserves but consumes 25% of the world's oil production,⁸⁰ so as long as oil remains a primary fuel the US will never be able to rely on its own reserves. This should not necessarily be a frightening prospect, as it is not reliance on foreign oil in general that is troubling, but is rather dependence on oil which comes from countries with unstable and/or unfriendly regimes, particularly Venezuela and many Middle Eastern countries.

⁷⁹ "A Crack in the Isolation of Turkmenistan: Internet Cafes." *USA Today*, 16 February 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-02-16-turkmenistan_x.htm.

⁸⁰ "FreedomCar & Vehicle Technologies Program: Fact of the Week #336." From the U.S Department of Energy: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy website: http://www1.eere.energy.gov/vehiclesandfuels/facts/2004/fcvt_fotw336.html.

Many Central African nations have large reserves which American companies are eager to exploit, but the region is not exactly known as a bastion of political stability.⁸¹ By comparison, Kazakhstan's government has been very stable, if undemocratic, since the fall of the USSR. Although the death of the Turkmenbashi has introduced some uncertainty to the political process in Turkmenistan, there is no large-scale opposition movement or threats of revolution as in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, Kazakhstan has proven very friendly towards America, and neither it nor Turkmenistan has shown a tendency to rival American power as Venezuela and Iran have shown. Furthermore, as shown above, the pipelines to transport this oil and gas to a location where the US can easily purchase it are expensive, but entirely possible to build. Central Asian oil can provide a pivotal piece of the puzzle to solve America's oil problem.

Simply stressing the construction of its preferred pipelines as a pivotal part of American foreign policy and putting its diplomatic might behind the plans will do much to encourage the pipelines' eventual construction, but there are also more specific strategies that the US can adopt. Since the Kazakh and Turkmen governments control their respective oil and gas industries, for the US to get its desired pipelines built, it will have to negotiate with the governments of these countries, so maintaining good relations and avoiding conflicts by not calling for government reforms and/or improvement in human rights will be beneficial to the US. Additionally, it is possible that large-scale reforms would actually be detrimental to the American aims. The US needs to be assured that the government will hold up its end of any contract, and a new ruling party might not respect the old party's deals.

⁸¹For a detailed look at the geopolitical struggle over African oil reserves, see: John Ghazvinian, *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's oil* (London: Harcourt, 2007).

Luckily for America, human rights violations in Kazakhstan are not particularly egregious. There is a decidedly undemocratic election process and lack of a free press, but torture is not a major issue and the people have a large degree of freedom to do as they please in their economic and personal lives. The fact that President Nazerbayev is wildly popular among the Kazakh people only further demeans the importance of such human rights violations.

The US's treatment of Nazerbayev during his August 2006 state visit is indicative of the attitude that the American government has and should take. Nazerbayev was given a warm greeting, and President Bush thanked him for his help with Iraq and Afghanistan, and they jointly declared a "shared vision of stability, prosperity and democratic reform in Central Asia."⁸² At the same time, a spokesman for the National Security Council claimed that Bush would be "encouraging Kazakhstan to accelerate progress on democratic reform" in order to save political face with those concerned about human rights.⁸³

Turkmenistan demands a slightly different approach. The Turkmenbashi ruled his country as a police state and was very hostile to the TCP, and the human rights violations were far more serious than in Kazakhstan and cannot be as easily ignored. The US must balance its role as a global leader in calling for reforms with its desires to build the TCP. Since US support would grant legitimacy to the Turkmen government, and assuming that the new government desires this, offering closer diplomatic ties, a large aid package, and perhaps an official visit to Washington, could be useful bargaining chips.

⁸² Jeffrey Thomas and Kathryn McConnell, "Bush Welcome's Kazakh President, Reaffirm US-Kazakh Friendship." *Bureau of International Information Programs, US Department of State: The Washington File*, 29 September 2006, <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=200609291641571CJsamohT0.7357599>.

⁸³ Barbara Slavin, "Kazakh Leader's Visit to Require Diplomatic Finesse." *USA Today*, 27 September 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-09-27-kazak-visit_x.htm.

The US can also leverage American gas and oil companies to take up pro-US stances. While with all the other players in the fight for Central Asian oil and gas the government and the companies are one and the same, Chevron is a separate entity from the US government and is under no compulsion to follow American foreign policy. Therefore, the US should work hard to ensure that Chevron and the other, smaller American companies in the region support the TCP and/or the TAPI as opposed to making further deals with Russia, China, or Iran. This can be achieved in a variety of ways. The government could tie support for the TAPI and TCP to the generous subsidies that it gives the oil and gas industry, while threatening possible embargos, tax hikes, and other punitive measures if American companies stray too far towards the other countries' pipeline plans. Additionally, the US could pledge diplomatic and if necessary military support for the safe construction of the pipelines. If Chevron was confident the TAPI would be secure, the company would likely be far more willing to invest in its construction.

Lastly, America needs to garner European support for its plans. The TCP would be favorable for Europe as well. The vast majority of all gas consumed in Europe comes from Russia. If the TCP were constructed, gas could be carried along the proposed Nabucco into the heart of Europe, thereby greatly reducing its dependence on Russian gas. The combined US and EU diplomatic and economic might would make the construction of the pipeline more likely.

It is difficult to say just how closely the US is currently pushing for these initiatives, as the government and press has been relatively mum on Central Asia. The US may not wish to advertise its strategy to foreign powers, but more seriously, there might be some major political ramifications if it openly pursued a policy of giving more subsidies to oil companies, willingly dealing with despotic foreign governments, or committing troupes to guard pipeline construction. Likewise, other countries, such as China, may not always be completely open or honest about

their intentions, and it will be impossible to get the whole story of this fight over the placement of oil and gas pipelines until the battle is good and won and the various governments have released internal documents.

Conclusion: Perspectives for Caspian Oil on the World Stage

Nothing more than tentative predictions for the future of pipelines and the countries' strategies can be made. However, despite the problems with providing reliable predictions, by looking at the advantages and disadvantages of the various Central Asian pipelines, one can at least make some decent educated guesses. We can assume, for instance, that all pipelines already operating will continue to transport oil and gas: the Iranian Korpezhe-Kurt Kui (gas), and the Russian Caspian Pipeline Consortium (oil). We can also assume that the pipelines already being constructed will continue and come online in the future: the China-Kazakhstan pipeline (oil).

We know that the export routes for the Central Asian gas face more difficulties than those for oil. Except for the small KKK and a few minor Soviet-era pipelines, there is no way to currently get the Turkmen and Kazakh gas to market. An Iranian route is unlikely, and gas pipelines through Russia face even more serious challenges than oil pipelines. As Russia has a much larger share of the world's gas reserves than of oil reserves, it is more able to play politics with gas. Also, Russia would integrate the Central Asian gas into its existing pipeline network which is dedicated to shipping gas to Europe, as opposed to selling it on the open market, which might further increase the likelihood of political problems with the US. China does not have the same need for gas as it does for oil, and the costs of building a China-Kazakhstan gas pipeline would be prohibitive. If the US follows the strategies laid out in this paper, then the TCP will most likely be built, and it will carry the majority of Central Asian gas as well as some of its oil.

Looking at the struggle between Iran, Russia, China, and the US over their preferred pipeline routes for Central Asian oil and gas gives a good glimpse as to the world's future geopolitical order. Despite the formidable difficulties in building pipelines, those four powers are converging upon the region with an eagerness that is almost desperate. In previous eras, a country's military was the sole arbiter of her strength, but today her economy has become nearly as important, if not more so, and all industrial economies – and militaries – run on oil and gas. The US and China desire those resources to fuel their power plants, factories, automobiles, aircraft, and armored vehicles. Iran and Russia want the pipelines to go through their territory in order to claim transit fees and use the resources as political tools. For each country wresting control of the Central Asian oil and gas is necessarily a vital part of its grand strategy.

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From Image to the Salvation of Mankind:
Discovering Differences in Theology and Culture in
a Comparison of Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Sacred Art
by Allison Leigh-Perlman

Hans Belting begins his discourse on the medieval imagery of Europe, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, with the statement: “A history of the image is something other than a history of art.”¹ A history of the image is a history of not only the images displayed in what may be considered “art,” but also the development of a particular religion and the culture that surrounds it. The style, subject, and form of the sacred art of a specific era communicates much more than aesthetic principles; it has the power to contribute to the understanding of the values and traditions, indeed the very way of life, of that bygone age. The timeline of history is thus illuminated when viewed through the lens of images.

Scholars frequently point out divergences in Christian iconography as it has developed in the East (Orthodoxy) and West (Catholicism). Some, like Michel Quenot, use progressive examples to demonstrate the differences in a specific representation over time² (Figure 1)³. Others follow Leonid Ouspensky’s model and engage in lengthy discussions on the nature of the differences in theology as they work themselves out in iconography in general, without reference to time or location. The goal of this essay is to fuse these two methodologies and show particular visual examples that illuminate underlying differences in theological culture. These divergences will be examined as they progress during the period which is considered the Renaissance or Golden Age of sacred art, the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries.

¹ H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago, 1994), 9; quoted in Charles Barber, “From Image into Art: Art After Byzantine Iconoclasm,” *Gesta* Vol. 34, No.1 (1995): 5.

² Michel Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 75.

Background of Icons – Pre-Fourteenth Century

There is much scholarly debate about the origins of Christian images. While both Orthodoxy and Catholicism teach that images were produced from the time of Christ, many believe that icons only appeared in large quantities between the third and fourth centuries AD.⁴ Before this, and even during this early period, there was a lingering fear of producing images because of the text set forth in Exodus 20:4: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”⁵ When representations did begin to proliferate it was to a large extent because of a change in state, rather than doctrinal, policies, such as the landmark event of Christianity becoming the official religion of the Byzantine Empire in 313. While little remains of this early Christian art, enough remains for scholars to discern that Christians integrated an assortment of pagan elements, likely in order to appeal to potential converts from pagan faiths, into their early religious depictions.⁶

Despite an increase in images after this period, doubts continued to linger concerning the theology surrounding them until the period of Iconoclasm began in 726. Leading this movement to destroy icons, Emperor Leo III and the group of Christians who followed him argued that the making of images led to the heretical separation of the dual nature of Christ into a purely material object and to the worship of the image itself. However, St. John of Damascus and St. Theodore of Stoudios wrote treatises defending the value of images. Their arguments were based on the Dogma on the Two Natures of Christ and the Doctrine of the Incarnation which state that Jesus has two natures, one human and one divine, and both coexist without confusion and

³ Ibid., reproduction of p. 75. All images are located in an appendix at the end of this document.

⁴ Leonid Ouspensky, Theology of the Icon (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 40.

⁵ The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha, intro. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89-90.

without separation. Thus, Iconoclasm was not just a controversy over the production of religious images, but also about specific doctrines that were seen as vital to Christian belief. The official defeat of the movement in 843 is still celebrated by Orthodox Christians today on the first Sunday in Lent. Known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy, it enumerates not only the defeat of those adverse to icons, but the triumph of the religion and its canons as well.⁷

In the centuries that followed, the rise and development of Christian images flourished even while controversy arose again in an age that is now known as “The Great Schism” (858-1204). Despite the East and West’s agreement on the issue of iconoclasm and their united efforts to defeat it, less than two decades later, ruptures began to appear that would eventually lead to the spilt between the two Christian Churches. Timothy Ware indicates how:

...the schism, as historians now generally recognize, is not really an event whose beginning can be exactly dated. It is something that came about gradually, as the result of a long and complicated process, starting well before the eleventh century and not completed until some time after.⁸

He describes the many varied reasons for the schism, including barbarian invasions, the rise of Islam, the iconoclast controversy, language problems, the “monarchy of the pope,” the Crusades, and the *Filioque* dispute.⁹

Interestingly enough, the complete and final rupture into two divided Churches with the sack of Constantinople in 1204 corresponds to some extent with dramatic changes in Christian art in Western Europe. Within a century after this event, Italian artists such as Duccio and Giotto began to deviate from the norms of iconography. They began to make changes in style and technique that would forever alter the course of visual history. While Orthodox Christians continued to practice traditions of iconography that had existed since its inception, Catholics in the West began to innovate in such areas as perspective, psychology, and artistic imagination.

⁶ Ouspensky, 39-58.

⁷ Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 30-35.

⁸ Ibid., 43.

The manifestations of these differences can be seen in nearly all works of a religious nature, regardless of subject or artist. In the past, scholars like Quenot and Ouspensky have used certain iconographic “types” in their comparisons. These include the *Virgin and Child* (Figure 2 and 3)¹⁰ and the *Crucifixion of Christ* (Figure 4 and 5).¹¹ These motifs are available in wide abundance in the art of both the East and West. While artists in Western Europe began to use a wide variety of biblical narratives for the subject of their works, the East continued to represent only certain key subjects. Whereas in Western Europe by the seventeenth century, one can find many representations of *Susanna and the Elders* (Figure 6 and 7) or *Adam and Eve* (Figure 8 and 9), Orthodox believers do not reproduce these narratives in their icons. More research needs to be done to understand the reasons behind this specific development, but for the purposes of this study, we will examine some of the subjects that were represented by both cultures and expound on the possible reasons why they were chosen.

Differences in Style: East and West

One of the most striking differences between Eastern and Western European religious art of the Renaissance and Baroque is in the depiction of human features. Icons in the East have a specific style of non-naturalistic representation which differs greatly from the West. This tradition begins in the features of the human sense organs and then extends to surrounding elements in the picture plane. Upon first viewing an icon, one might suppose that the artists simply did not possess the skills necessary to depict figures and faces in a life-like manner. However, many have argued that this is not a lack of skill, but a direct effort to look outside the constraints of the natural world to a realm which exists beyond this one. Saints and other

⁹ Ibid., 43-60.

¹⁰ Ousepensky, reproduction of figure 26 and 27, referenced on p. 216.

¹¹ Quenot, reproduction of figures 31 and 55.

religious figures are not meant to be marveled at by viewers of icons for their physical beauty, but rather for their inner state of spiritual purity. As Ouspensky, for example, states:

The non-naturalistic manner of representing the sense organs in icons conveys deafness, impassiveness, detachment from all excitation and, conversely, the receptiveness to the spiritual world by those who have attained holiness.¹²

Whereas Renaissance paintings began to represent nature as closely as possible, icons use different formulations to display the unseen beauty of the spiritual world. Icons use symbols to represent the unrepresentable. They impart to the viewer a vision of the world not as it has existed in its sinful state of the past and present, but in the future of the perfect universe to come.

In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti, one of the leading Florentine humanists of his time, wrote an intellectual treatise for art, entitled *On Painting*. Unlike manuals written by Orthodox artists and thinkers, *On Painting* deals not at all with the material aspects of the technique, but rather with the intellectual basis of painting. Nowhere are the humanist foundations for the tradition of painting in the Renaissance more evident than in Alberti's work. From the very first page, he states that "no one will deny that things which are not visible do not concern the painter, for he strives to represent only things which are seen."¹³ He even repeats, "painting aims to represent things seen"¹⁴ and "the painter is not concerned with things that are not visible."¹⁵

In Book II, Alberti describes how body members should be composed: "...sketch in the bones...then add the sinews and muscles, and finally clothe the bones and muscles with flesh and skin."¹⁶ However, he quickly sees how this leads to a contradiction of his previous statements to only represent things which are seen: "But at this point, I see, there will perhaps be some who will raise as an objection something I said above, namely, that the painter is not concerned with

¹² Ouspensky, 208.

¹³ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* trans. Cecil Grayson (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 37.

¹⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶ Ibid., 72.

things that are not visible.” Eric Cameron explains this problem in terms of a duality between the artist’s studies from nature and his ability to create from compositional theory in a way which elucidates the changes that were occurring in Western art at that time:

[Alberti’s] explanation compounds the contradiction, and it cannot be resolved within the logic of the formulation. It is the inevitable outcome of the sort of tasks painting was called on to perform in the 15th century and also in classical antiquity, the twin points at which Alberti’s understanding is anchored. Elaborate compositions of figures in action cannot be painted all-of-a-piece from life, nor can subjects from history or mythology. So the empirical principle will not suffice. At a certain stage a synthetic-constructive principle must take over.¹⁷

While Alberti could not have been clearer about the aim of a painting in the West to be naturalistic to the utmost degree, artists in Russia, it seems, could not have disagreed more. In his defense of images, St. John of Damascus writes, “an image is a likeness depicting an archetype, but having some difference from it; the image is not like the archetype in every way.”¹⁸ Thus, the icon was to be a deviation from an abstracted model of the physical world and well removed from that physical world.

For Alberti, the goal is to rid the image of any difference from the archetype as it exists in the natural world, not to preserve it. After its publication, the ideas expounded in *On Painting* could be seen at work in nearly all paintings of the time, whether of a religious or secular nature. Alberti’s legacy has been great; his ideas continue to be of immense value to scholars’ understanding of Italy in the fifteenth century and the influence of this viewpoint on artists throughout Western Europe in the centuries that followed.¹⁹ However, for Orthodox artists in Russia there was no place for imagination or idealization as described by Alberti in sacred art. Icons do not represent the physical beauty of a person or a direct, uncompromising imitation of nature, because this would deprive them of their otherworldly holiness. If nothing in nature is of

¹⁷ Eric Cameron, “The Depictional Semiotic of Alberti’s *On Painting*,” *Art Journal*, Vol.35, No. 1 (Autumn 1975), 26.

¹⁸ St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* trans. Andrew Louth (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 25.

the spiritual purity that we are seeking when we reach the next world, then why should it be used as a model of perfection in our churches?

St. George

Let us now begin to examine a specific subject that was often represented in both Russia and Western Europe during this time and see how the differing ideals behind style and theology are at work. One of the most complicated and frequently studied hagiographies of medieval times was that of St. George. Extremely popular over several centuries, George was considered a “national champion embodying the moral and social characteristics of a Christian... civilization.”²⁰ One of the most important Western written sources for the story of St. George and his encounter with the legendary dragon comes from the *Legenda Aurea*, a collection of hagiographies which includes traditional lore about saints’ lives, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine around 1260. The essential story is that a city is besieged by a dragon, which kills inhabitants of the city. After feeding the dragon all of their livestock, the people develop a lottery to determine who will be fed to the dragon. The king’s daughter soon draws the lot and is sent to be killed. George happens upon the scene, saves her, and orders the people of the kingdom to convert to Christianity or he will let the animal loose within the city walls. The kingdom converts and George beheads the dragon. This and stories like it were an important blend of ecclesiastical literature and folklore, two dominant traditions of the time. This genre, known as religious folk verse, provided a vital link between the two cultural institutions.

There are two main iconographic renderings of St. George shared by the Catholics and Orthodox Christians. In most, he is pictured in the midst of the battle with the dragon (Figures

¹⁹ Edward R. de Kurko, “Alberti’s Theory of Form and Function,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (June 1957), 142.

²⁰ Maria Lunk, “Towards a New Thematic Structure of the Religious Folk Verses about St. George,” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring 1998), 25.

10-12). In Western depictions, the figure of George is represented in a variety of different poses and landscapes. Most take place at the moment just before George strikes the final blow—essentially the climax of the story, which would have the greatest impact on the viewer. One can feel the intensity and strength of George’s action. The dragon writhes and fights back and the princess waits calmly praying. The figures exist accurately in space, with linear and atmospheric perspective and a foreground and background. The scene is not just naturalistic and believable, but dynamic and exciting—the epitome of Alberti’s instructions.

The Russian icons, however, show something emotionally altogether different (Figure 13-16). In these, George is presented almost as a passive participant in the action. His hand barely seems to hold the instrument of murder. Time seems suspended. A calming rhythm is produced by the curving bend of George’s head, which is mirrored by the bow of the horse’s neck. Circular shapes abound in the halo and the sun. The horse George rides does not seem a part of the space he inhabits, but rather to float above it. There is no logic to where the dragon and horse actually stand on the ground. There is no perspective, no sense of proportion – only a mystical harmony among the participants in the scene. The only evidence of action at all is George’s cape, which stretches out behind him as the horse rears backward. But even this detail seems to hover in space rather than energetically pulsate behind the hero.

These icons show several insightful differences from the traditions of Alberti and Western sacred art. Alberti states “the first thing that gives pleasure in a ‘historia’ is plentiful variety... the mind takes great pleasure in variety and abundance... I do not like a picture to be virtually empty, but I do not approve of an abundance that lacks dignity.”²¹ This explains why so many of the paintings of the West contain the princess, even at the expense of compositional sense, as in Rubens’ (Figure 12). Even the landscape plays the role of a character in these

paintings; it is clearly detailed and represented thoughtfully. Meanwhile, the landscape depicted in the Orthodox icons could be virtually anywhere. Only some of the icons contain the princess; sometimes she is eliminated altogether to further simplify the “historia.”

Likewise, Alberti seems to be directly referring to Orthodox icons (as in Figure 15 and 16) when he states:

Another thing I often see deserves to be censured, and that is men painted in a building as if they were shut up in a box in which they can hardly fit sitting down and rolled up in a ball. So all bodies should conform in size and function to the subject of the action.²²

Indeed in Western paintings men are usually depicted in appropriate proportion to the architecture. However, Orthodox icons purposefully depict architecture as defying all logic. Ouspensky explains how this abstraction of architecture is a manifestation of the idea that the events depicted should not be limited by representing them as occurring at a specific location or time. Then the events are not restricted by the “laws of earthly life” or “rationalistic logic.”²³

The icons which follow the motif of “St. George and the Dragon” exemplify perfectly what Ouspensky names as the essential impulse of Orthodox sacred art: peace and harmony in creation. Everything around the saint changes in aspect the same way he does. The horse, the landscape, the buildings all are penetrated by the divine order and tranquility of the saint himself.²⁴ It is hoped that he will impart this divine harmony on to the viewer as well. The saint and his actions remind us that there exists another order, other than the action and chaos that intrigues our sinful minds in this world. It is as though the grace of God is being revealed to us in the graceful action of the scene.

In another motif of St. George, he is pictured alone, with the accoutrements of his life as a knight (Figures 17-20). Many of the discrepancies between the details of the paintings can be

²¹ Albert, 75.

²² Ibid., 75.

²³ Ouspensky, 223.

explained by the wide proliferation of sources for the story across cultures and centuries. In his book, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, Christopher Walter elucidates the many different legends and hagiographies in which George is mentioned. He discusses the fact that the story of George can perhaps be traced back before Christianity, in the sense that the saint may be originally just a reincarnation or reinterpretation of a pagan god or hero. Walter determines that the story of George rescuing the princess from the dragon, which is the subject of the Christian iconography, dates back no earlier than the eleventh century. Among the many different early representations of the saint, including George on a processional cross, on horseback attacking serpents wrapped around a tree with St. Theodore, as a warrior saint enthroned, or even the depiction of him killing a man, the dragon motif is actually a fairly late development. Not until the twelfth century did the rescue of the princess come to be George's characteristic scene.²⁵ Walter also points out how the story had great appeal for the people who lived in the time of the Crusades.

While Walter provides valuable sources for many of the early George types and explanations as to their development, he does not explain why there are certain differences in varying cultures. It is clear that one of the most important sources for St. George's iconography in the West is the *Legenda Aurea*. It is easy to see how textual discrepancies and differences in translation could have led to slight differences in the visual renderings of the scene, as exemplified by some depicting George as holding a sword and others a spear or lance. In fact, the most common English version of the *Legenda Aurea* states:

Thus as they spake together the dragon appeared and came running to them, and Saint George was upon his horse, and drew out his sword and garnished him with the sign of the cross, and rode hardily against the dragon which came towards him, and smote him with his spear and hurt him sore and threw him to the ground.²⁶

²⁴ Ouspensky, 220.

²⁵ Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, (Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 140.

²⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton University Press, 1995), 239.

As to a more obvious and important difference such as the Western images containing the body of the dragon at George's feet, whereas the icons do not, one must perhaps again examine the sources for the imagery. One must look to the religious folk verses of Russia, which greatly influenced the story, in order to understand why the iconography differs. While these folktales contain many different verses on St. George, the most popular and by far most complicated of the verses is that which details his slaying of the dragon. Like the story in the *Legenda*, the religious folk verses describe the battle between man and beast, but:

The conflict [of the Russian verses] is unusual in that it does not present a direct confrontation between the hero and the antagonist. Rather the conflict is between the populace and the king as a result of the lottery.²⁷

Whereas the *Legenda* story tells that the princess drew the lot to be killed, the folk verses tell that the king himself drew the lot and offered up his own daughter in his place. This may help to explain the lack of emphasis on George's physical heroics in Russian icons. He does not stand victorious over the dragon, but stands proud with the symbols of his battle and inner purity as evidence of his greater victory over disbelief through the defusing of an unjust act by an evil ruler and the conversion of an entire kingdom.

Similarly, art historian Alison Hilton discusses George's iconography in terms of the saint's folk heritage. She explains how George played an important role in Russian culture as a patron of herds and farming before he was considered a great chivalric warrior saint. In fact, St. George's feast day, or *Yurief Den*, on April 23, is celebrated by sending the flocks and herds out into the open fields for the first time after winter—entailing a greater cultural legacy in Russia for George as a pagan character who was later adapted into a Christian hero. The oral tradition even preserves stories in which George, here known as Yegory the Brave, is locked in a dungeon by his pagan foe, King Demianishche, who orders that he should lay in utter darkness and

silence. After thirty years, Yegory is able to come out and see the sun again, at which point he fights many battles, including one with a serpent/dragon and one in which he kills the evil king who imprisoned him.²⁸ W.R.S. Ralston discusses this oral folk tradition and concludes:

All this... is nothing more than a poetic representation of the struggle which takes place between Perun and the dark storm-clouds, which are crushed beneath his mace, or pierced by the shafts of his lightning. For a time the demon of wintry storms may hide the sun, keeping him, as it were, imprisoned, but the spring comes, the sunlight bursts out again in its glory, and the thunder-god once more goes forth conquering and to conquer.²⁹

Thus, in Russian icons, George is not simply a warrior who rescued a princess, but also a protector of farmers, a pagan nature god, or a Christian saint, all at once. Hilton states, “The many aspects of St. George... gave his icons many different emphases, depending on period, region, or worshippers for whom they were made.”³⁰ The same holds true for images of George in the West. By taking into account the many variants of culture, as well as the source information, differences in iconography become illuminated.

St. John the Baptist

The iconographic motif showing St. John the Baptist was also popular in both Orthodox and Catholic sacred art. Representations of John are for the most part very similar between the two sides of Christianity. Both usually represent him as a gaunt, disheveled, bearded adult dressed in animal skins and sometimes holding a reed cross (Figure 21-25). This is the John described by Matthew in 3: (1) “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea...(4)And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”³¹ The reed cross may refer to a passage later in

²⁷ Lunk, 35.

²⁸ W.R.S. Ralston, The Songs of the Russian People: An Illustrative of Slavonic Mythology and Russian Social Life, (Ellis and Green, 1872), 229-233.

²⁹ Ibid., 229-233.

³⁰ Alison Hilton, Russian Folk Art, (Indiana University Press, 1995), 162.

³¹ The Bible, 5.

Matthew 11:7 and repeated in Luke 7:24, "...Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken in the wind?"³²

One motif of John that is completely unique to Orthodoxy is the winged messenger (Figure 26 and 27). This is based on the belief that John was the last of the Old Testament prophets as prefigured in Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts,"³³ and confirmed in Matthew 11:10-11: "For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee...among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist..."³⁴

Scholars since the seventh century have argued that John is compared to an angel not just because the original Greek word for messenger was *angellos*, which can also mean "angel," but also "because of his mission and announcement, and because of his accurate imitation of an angel's method of life."³⁵ The mission referred to is John's announcement in John 1:36 that "...looking upon Jesus as he walked, [John] saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"³⁶ Thus John fulfills his role as a messenger with the announcement that Jesus is the son of God. A notable writer on this subject, Walter Haring, goes on to suggest that the angel motif reflects a wider tendency within the Byzantine and Russian Orthodox world to represent the supernatural images in the Bible in a literal manner.³⁷ This explains the lack of a winged St. John the Baptist in Western art.

³² Ibid., 15.

³³ Ibid, 1038.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

³⁵ Walter Haring, "The Winged St. John the Baptist: Two Examples in American Collections," The Art Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Dec., 1922), 36.

³⁶ The Bible, 115.

³⁷ Haring, 38.

Western artists also had unique depictions of John. Scattered among traditional representations (as described in the first paragraph of this section) are those that correspond virtually not at all to scripture or liturgy. They are amalgamations of accepted symbols of John's life, such as the lamb and reed cross and complete inventions of the artist's imagination. Depictions of John as a youth or adolescent (Figure 28 and 29), and those in which John is nearly naked and assumes a playful, even sexual pose (Figure 30 and 31), are for the Orthodox the worst kind of "Italian style" paintings because they introduce a "falsified understanding of spiritual experience, of holiness."³⁸ Not only is the presentation of holiness alluded to in a way foreign to Orthodox believers, but it is completely destroyed by rousing impure thoughts in the viewer. Thus, works like these, which were created by Caravaggio and Leonardo da Vinci for private patrons and not meant to be seen by the general public, take Alberti's calls to select "excellent parts...from the most beautiful bodies, and... perceive, understand, and express beauty"³⁹ quite literally, even at the risk of falsifying Biblical literature. In fact, Alberti begins Book II of his treatise by stating that "painting possesses a truly divine power" and "the man who, in modeling or painting living things, behaved like a god among mortals. The virtues of painting... are that its masters see their works admired and feel themselves to be almost like the Creator."⁴⁰ He gives artistic imagination the same license as a god who creates nature.

For an Orthodox believer, nothing could be more blasphemous or a greater deviation from the purpose of the artist and the sacred image itself. The fundamental aim of religious art in Orthodoxy is not just to teach specific truths or narratives within the faith, but to educate people on how to achieve a life of spirituality and prayer. The icon serves one main purpose: to strip our entire human nature of all emotional adulation and orient it to transfiguration alone. The hope is

³⁸ Ouspensky, 216

³⁹ Alberti, 90.

that the viewer will be redeemed by contemplation of images of people who have achieved holiness. By contrast, Alberti claims:

The function of the painter is to draw with lines and paint in colours on a surface any given bodies in such a way that, at a fixed distance and with a certain, determined position of the centric ray, what you see represented appears to be in relief and just like those bodies.⁴¹

This statement does not just apply only to secular art; Alberti describes religious subjects and their compositions in the most impersonal way:

They also praise in Rome the boat in which our Tuscan painter Giotto represented the eleven disciples struck with fear at the sight of their colleague walking on water, each showing such clear signs of agitation... that their individual emotions are discernible in every one of them.⁴²

Surely any Orthodox believer who has written about art, from John of Damascus to Dionysius of Fournia, would never refer to Jesus Christ as the apostles' "colleague" as if he was nothing more than one ordinary man among many. Thus, looking at specific representations of religious subjects in the East and West may elucidate the theological differences which underlie Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

The Nativity of Christ

Another biblical narrative represented in great abundance by Christian artists in both Eastern and Western Europe is that of the nativity of Christ. In the earliest representations of this theme, one can see similarities between Eastern and Western conceptions of the narrative (Figure 32 and 33): Mary's pose and dress; the child placed in a bower behind the mother and slightly above; the inclusion of animals and angels; and the depiction of the scene after the birth, in a moment of calm respite. Giotto's version of the *Nativity* (Figure 34) marks the first deviation from the traditional way of representing this scene. In this work, one sees the first introduction of new elements formerly lacking: correct linear perspective and arrangement of figures

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60-61.

⁴¹ Ibid., 87.

⁴² Ibid., 78.

realistically in space, with a variety of poses (especially the twisting of Mary to look at and hold the child); interaction among characters; and a certain vitality in the narratives which were previously so static. One gets the sense that this is an evolving story, and there is motion, conversation, and a dynamic that did not exist in previous scenes of the same subject.

Giotto opened the doors to a continual progression of elements that would be included in Nativity scenes in the West in the centuries to come. Once again, where the Orthodox stayed true to the roots of their traditions of representation, the West became only more imaginative and realistic. Later Western depictions provide hardly any congruency to the location of the scene, the pose or dress of the Virgin, or the placement of the Christ child. Some take place in front of a wall with an awning or roof that seems to exist in the middle of nowhere (Figure 35), others in a semi-dilapidated building (Figure 36), and in others that a location is not identifiable at all because the surrounding space is engulfed in darkness (Figure 37).

The account of the birth of Christ is set forth in Matthew 2:1-23 and Luke 2:1-38. The accounts share certain details, many of which seem to have been completely neglected by the artists of Western Europe after the turn of the thirteenth century. “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2: 7).⁴³ And later: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2: 13-14). Swaddling clothes, the manger, and the multitude of angels tend to be left out of Western paintings (such as in Figures 36 and 37).

However, the swaddling clothes, manger, and angels all remain in the icons of the Russian Orthodox. In no other religious subject does the intricate iconography stay so unchanged over the centuries (Figures 38-40). Russian icon artists traditionally divide the complicated

elements of the different parts of the story into several compartments within the icon. In this way, even a scene which could easily become too detailed with too many figures and separate areas of action retains its simplicity and organization. The central focus is Mary, who is the largest figure and is dressed in dark, saturated colors. She reclines away from Christ, who lies wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. In the upper tier of the mountainous landscape are several angels. The three magi are entering the scene from a distance, usually on horseback. On the bottom left, Joseph sits, hunched over, with his head resting on his hand, listening to an old man. On the right, two young women are washing the baby in a round basin of water. These details are evident in nearly every composition of the nativity. .

The Nativity of Christ also, like other icons, shows several important aspects of theological culture. Here, one can see exactly how Orthodox believers sought to make images work with the Gospels to provide a complete teaching for the life of mankind. Ouspensky states:

The strange and unusual character of the icon is the same as that of the Gospel. For the Gospel is a true challenge to every order, to all the wisdom of the world...The Gospel calls us to life in Christ, and the icon represents this life.⁴⁴

Just as there is no place for idealization in Scripture, there is no room for it in sacred art either. The inclusion of as many details as possible from the Biblical narrative shows the artist's desire to remain true to the word through the image.

Interestingly, the *Nativity of Christ* also shows the inclusion of narrative details from New Testament Apocrypha writings and their use in iconography. These stories are not considered accepted canons of Scripture, but instead reflect a genre that survived outside of the Church's official sanctions. In Nativity images of both the East and West before the fourteenth century, one can see many instances of the appearance of Apocryphal details, such as the midwives washing the infant Christ. Nowhere in the canonical New Testament are midwives

⁴³ The Bible, 73.

mentioned in relation to the Nativity of Christ. However, the Gospel of James, otherwise known as the Infancy Gospel of James or the Protevangelium of James, details how, as Mary goes into labor, “[Joseph] found a cave there, and led her into it; and leaving his two sons beside her, he went out to seek a midwife in the district of Bethlehem.”⁴⁵ Joseph obtains a Hebrew midwife, who assists with the birth and believes in Christ after seeing a great light shine in the cave. She then brings another midwife, Salome, to the scene. Salome does not believe that Mary is a virgin and decides to check for herself, at which point her hand drops off as if burnt by fire and she too believes Jesus to be the King of Israel⁴⁶.

After the fourteenth century, Apocryphal details like the midwives disappear from Western art. However, these iconographic elements continue almost without fail to be essential to the visual narrative in Nativity scenes of the Orthodox Christians. This reliance on the precedent of tradition is another important divergence from Western religious conventions. Where innovation is prized by the culture of Roman Catholics, it is sacrilege to Orthodox believers. Thus, an examination of the *Nativity of Christ* shows how Orthodox artists managed to organize the complicated events of Christ’s birth in such a manner as to remain faithful to Scripture in ways that images of the same subject in the West did not.

Dormition of the Virgin

Much like scenes of the nativity of Christ, the subject of the death of the Virgin Mary was frequently depicted in Eastern and Western art. It is one of the few narratives not included in any part of the Bible or in the Deutero-Canonical Books, but still depicted in the West. Scholars have pointed out the complexity of the mass of early sources for the Dormition narrative. One of these historians, Stephen Shoemaker, states:

⁴⁴ Ouspensky, 226.

⁴⁵ Peter Kirby, “Infancy Gospel of St. James,” from Early Christian Writings (2006).

In fact, its origins seem to have been primarily Eastern... the earliest accounts of the end of the Virgin Mary's life, first come into historical view around the year 500, when they almost simultaneously appear in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. From these 'origins,' these legends spread rapidly throughout the early medieval world, with the result that we currently possess over sixty different accounts from before the tenth century, preserved in nine ancient languages, ranging from Old Irish to Old Georgian."⁴⁷

This proliferation of writings may be the reason that this subject was so frequently depicted in the West, despite its existence outside of the official realm of sacred writings.

Like the Nativity scenes, representations of the Dormition were largely similar between Christians in Western Europe and Russia up until the fourteenth century (Figure 41-44). Both contain a large number of saints and angels crowded around a bed on which the dead or dying Virgin lies. Above her stands Jesus, holding the symbol of her soul, a childlike version of the Virgin wrapped in white cloth (see details of Figure 41 and 42). The latter element comes from one of the first extant Greek homilies on the subject (by John of Thessalonike), in which "Jesus and the archangel Michael come to [Mary's] house, and Jesus takes her soul—which John describes as human in form but lacking any features to distinguish it sexually, and...wraps it in veils."⁴⁸ This sermon, and others like it, not only synthesize earlier accounts into one clear story, but emphasize that Mary was "allowed to share in the full reality of the eschatological resurrection"⁴⁹ as her body and soul were united by Jesus in heaven.

Brian Daley argues that the Dormition story itself was meant to give Christians a model for dying well and hope for the transition into a second life. He describes it as a "direct and immediate realization of the deliverance from death promised to all human beings."⁵⁰ It was meant to assuage the fears of early Christians concerning the time after death, and to reassure them that the transformation into the afterlife can be peaceful and even beautiful for a person

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Stephen J. Shoemaker, "'Let Us Go and Burn Her Body:' The Image of the Jews in the Early Dormition Traditions," *Church History*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec., 1999), 776-777.

⁴⁸ Brian E. Daley, "'At the Hour of Our Death:' Mary's Dormition and Christian Dying in Late Patristic and Early Byzantine Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 55 (2001), 84.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 80.

filled with complete holiness like the Virgin Mary. This may also help to explain the proliferation of images of the Dormition in the West. Obviously, teachings about eschatology would have been as important and necessary for Christian believers in Europe as in Russia. If fear of dying and what occurs after this event are universal to all mankind, then both versions of Christianity would find it necessary to deal with these issues for their believers.

As in the Nativity scenes, however, the commonality of the motifs up to the fourteenth century quickly disappears and is replaced by many artistic variations in the West (Figures 45 and 46), while in Russia they remain static. In Western paintings, there is no consistency in the location, figures present, or even the position of the Virgin when she is dying. The desire for variety discussed by Alberti and mentioned above in regard to the depictions of St. George and the Dragon is also at work here. The aspiration for uniqueness in compositional arrangement even leads Hans Holbein the Elder to illogically feature Mary sitting up in a chair in the last moments of her life (Figure 47). One common feature that is not always present, but is often seen in many Eastern and Western paintings, is the inclusion of a palm branch and lamps or candles. John of Thessalonike describes the scene when Mary is informed of her impending death by an angel and given a palm branch which symbolizes her coming funeral procession, but which is also an established emblem of victory. The lighted lamps or candles in many of these scenes are visual markers of the vigil held by the apostles and Mary while she awaits death.⁵¹

The most complete departure from the typical Western European iconography exists in Caravaggio's depiction of the Dormition (Figure 48). Gone are the palm branch and candles, which are replaced by an overwhelming sense of psychological realism. Alberti states that "a 'historia' will move spectators only when the men painted in the picture outwardly demonstrate

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

their own feelings as clearly as possible.”⁵² Where is this sense of loss, heaviness, and intense anguish over the Virgin’s death more apparent than in Caravaggio’s depiction of the subject? The symbols which might take the viewer away from these feelings disappear. We are only meant to be affected by the suffering of those close to the Virgin, and not to be distracted by details or thoughts of the coming funeral procession. It is this manipulation of the “fictive environment, its furnishings, and its natural effects” which “generates an empathetic response in the viewer,”⁵³ rather than a spiritual connection prompting hope for the afterlife. This may have been one reason the painting was rejected by the Cherubino Chapel in S. Maria della Scala in Rome. The Church did not believe that the painting gave an optimistic enough view of the Virgin’s death or fatality in general.⁵⁴ This is evidence that a limit exists to the Western Church’s ability to accept deviation from the iconographical norms.

Turning back to Russia, we see that while the Orthodox iconographers do not always use the symbolic elements of the palm branch and candles or emphasize emotional realism in their Dormition paintings, they do have a series of motifs of their own which they consistently use. We have already discussed the inclusion of Jesus holding the soul of Mary in the art of both the East and West up until around the fourteenth century. In fact, this theme continues to be represented, albeit very rarely, in the West for about another century (Figure 49 and 50). However, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, it has disappeared altogether. In Russian icons, conversely, it is the most consistent motif across the centuries other than the fully reclining pose of the Virgin herself. Whereas the number of apostles or angels present in the scene changes somewhat and the inclusion of architecture in the background is not completely

⁵² Alberti, 76.

⁵³ N. Randolph Parks, “On Caravaggio’s ‘Dormition of the Virgin’ and Its Setting,” The Burlington Magazine, Vol.127, No. 988 (July, 1985), 448.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 443.

consistent, there is always the figure of Jesus holding the childlike Mary wrapped in white cloth (Figure 51-53).

Two different but parallel themes are at work in this image. On the one hand, the viewer is struck by the similarity of this compositional arrangement to images showing the Virgin and Child, which are so popular and abundant in Christianity (Figure 2 and 3). The reversal of roles at work here, where Jesus holds the infantile Mary instead of the typical image of Mary holding the Christ child, is evidence of the ecclesiastical theology concerning Mary's role as the one who held Christ in her womb and who gave Him flesh. Now, at the end of her life and in the future afterlife, the roles are reversed; God holds her and she is given flesh by God as her soul and body are reunited in heaven. This motif symbolizes her role as the embodiment of the transfiguration itself. On the other hand, some argue that Christ does not hold her in a motherly manner, but as if he was showing her to everyone. Her soul, dressed in the purest of white, symbolizes her life of purity and prayer. Christ displays this holy soul to the viewer as if to show the path to sacredness.

In Orthodox versions, the bier on which her body rests often represents one of the most interesting and distinct elements of Orthodox iconography's desire to include the viewer in the religious icon—inverse perspective (Figure 54). In Western art of the Renaissance and thereafter, space is logically constructed according to linear or one-point perspective, whereby parallel lines that recede into the distance appear to get closer together or converge. The rules of this system, first written down by Alberti, involve the determination of a vanishing point where all the parallel lines, or orthogonals, meet on the horizon line, where the sky appears to meet the ground. In icons, this system is reversed so that the vanishing point exists somewhere outside of the painting, usually where the viewer would stand a few feet away. Thus, the spectator becomes

an integral part of the scene. He or she is incorporated into it. In this way, in almost all images of the Dormition, the spectator's path to or view of the dying Virgin and the figure of Christ with her soul are never blocked by obstructions such as other figures, as they often are in the West. Nothing is to hinder the sacred process of transmission of holiness from Mary to us, as presented in the motif of Christ holding the soul.

Indeed, there is only one thing that ever seriously impedes our direct sight line to the Virgin in this type of icon, and that is the heavily symbolic narrative account of the encounter between the Jew and the angel (Figure 55-57). Notably, only one of the over sixty accounts of the Dormition omits the scene in which Jews plot to seize and burn Mary's body during the funeral procession⁵⁵ or an impious priest seeks to overturn the bier.⁵⁶ In the story, all are struck with blindness except Jephonias, who rushes the body and tries to grab it; at which time his hands are cut off by an angel with a flaming sword. Only by praying to the Virgin are his hands restored, at which point he converts to Christianity. These various accounts contain only minor changes in detail; all identify the Jews as stern adversaries of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁷

The strong connection in the Dormition traditions between Mary and anti-Judaism seems to have roots in the (actual) disagreements between Jews and Christians over the question of Mary's virginity in late antiquity...many of the earliest narratives of Mary's Dormition portray the Jews as hostile to certain developments of late ancient Christian piety, most notably the veneration of the saints, relics, and, in later narratives, images.⁵⁸

Thus, the Dormition tradition arose as a reaction to the direct challenge of Jewish rejection of Christianity and as an endeavor to reinforce Christian identity by marking the Jews as socially and religiously different. This convention makes its way naturally from the literature to the iconography by means of the closeness between Scripture, the Liturgy, and images as described above in regards to the Nativity. The threat that Jews posed to Mary in the Dormition

⁵⁵ Shoemaker, 789.

⁵⁶ Alfredo Tradigo, Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church, (Getty Publications, 2006), 154.

⁵⁷ Shoemaker, 777.

narrative attains a feel that it is contemporaneous to the time of the Renaissance when analyzed in images which contain it. Not only is the physical corpus of the Virgin literally threatened by the Jews, but the viewer is separated from a direct connection with the holiness of Mary and Jesus by their disbelief.

Conclusion

A comparison of the holy images produced during the Renaissance era by Orthodox Christians in Russia and Catholics in Western Europe clarifies how each expresses theology in art differently due to variations in religious culture. The history of the image is indeed something other than just a history of art. It is an account of differences in teaching the truths of faith and of how images shape society's spirituality. It shows how the secular concerns of humanist learning could invade the sacred image as in the West, and how a strict reliance on tradition could nonetheless provide a wide abundance of beautiful and varied art as in the East. Despite their origins as one common belief system, the two Christian traditions produced art that looks vastly different and produces immensely dissimilar feelings in the viewer. While the followers of Alberti painted in order to impress the viewer with their perfect imitation of nature and derive an emotional response via psychological realism, the Orthodox artists hoped that their images, by the nature of the holy figures they depict, would serve as a spiritual guide for daily life. The differences in the European and Russian conception and presentation of holiness show us how different the purposes of their art became in the centuries after the Schism. Only a comparison of specific paintings can illustrate the essential difference in their goals. For Orthodox Christians the image is not just an icon, but a means by which to achieve the salvation of all mankind.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 777-778.

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Figure 1: Quenot, illustration from The Icon: Window on the Kingdom, p. 75

Figure 3: Cretan Icon, *Virgin and Child*, late 15th century



- Appendix -

From Image to the Salvation of Mankind:

Discovering Differences in Theology and Culture in a Comparison of Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Sacred Art
by Allison Leigh-Perlman



Figure 2:
Raphael, *Madonna del Granduca*, 1505

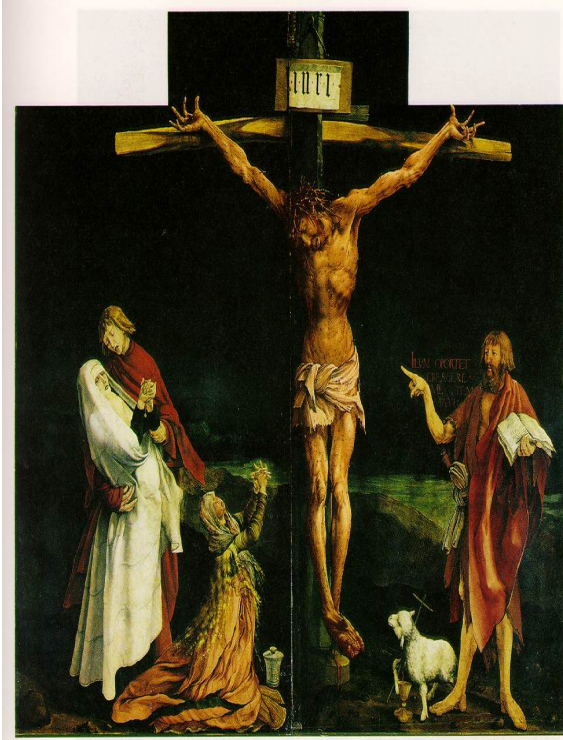


Figure 4: Mathias Grunewald, *Crucifixion of Christ*, 16th century

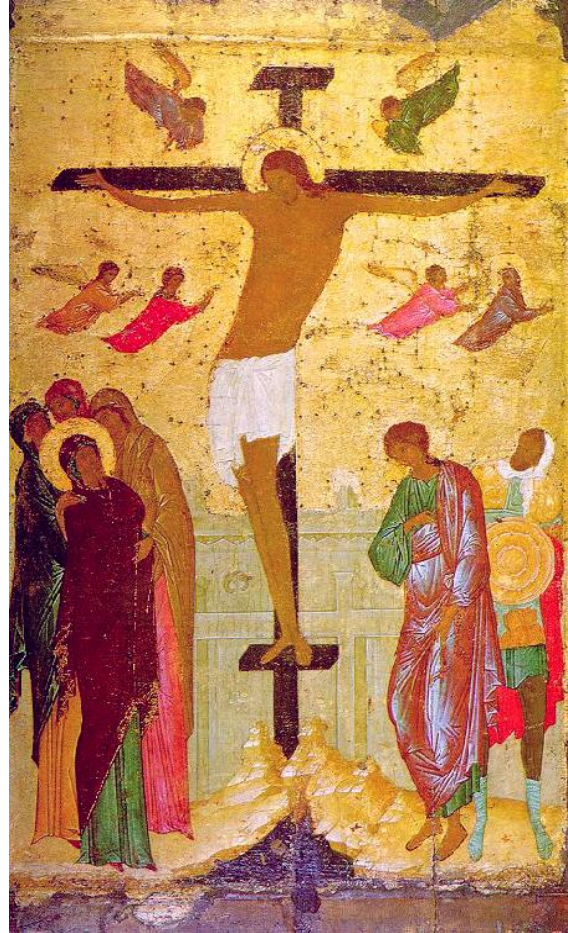


Figure 5: Master Dionysius, *Crucifixion of Christ*, late 15th-early 16th century



Figure 6: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610



Figure 7: Guercino, *Susanna and the Old Men*, 1617



Figure 8: Albrecht Durer, *Adam and Eve*, 1504



Figure 9: Titian, *Adam and Eve*, 1550



Figure 10: Paolo Uccello, *St. George and the Dragon*, 1460



Figure 11: Raphael, *St. George and the Dragon*, 1504



Figure 12: Rubens, *St. George and the Dragon*, 1606



Figure 14: *St. George and the Dragon*, Novgorod school, late 15th century



Figure 13: *St. George and the Dragon*, Novgorod school, beginning of 16th century



Figure 15: *St. George and the Dragon*, Ukrainian, late 15th century



Figure 16: *St. George and the Dragon*, Novgorod school, early 16th century



Figure 18: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *St. George*, 1514



Figure 17: Andrea Mantegna, *St. George*, 1467



Figure 19: *St. George*, Novgorod, 1130-50



Figure 20: *St. George*, Novgorod School, 15th century



Figure 22: Pietro Perugino, detail from *Madonna and Child Enthroned with St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian*, 1493



Figure 21: Filippino Lippi, detail from *St. John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene*, 1500



Figure 23: *St. John the Baptist*, Novgorod school, 1475

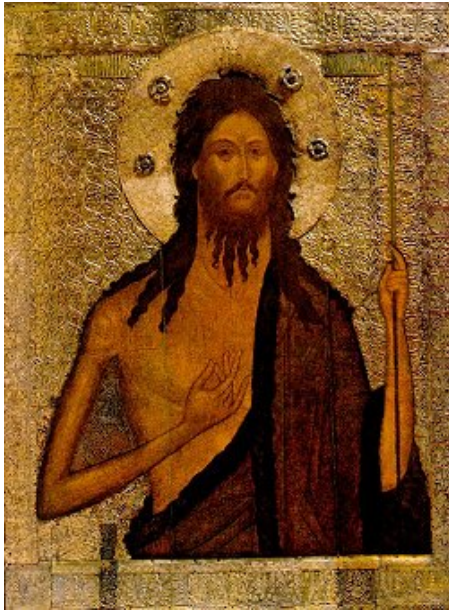


Figure 24: *St. John the Baptist*, Moscow school, 1560s

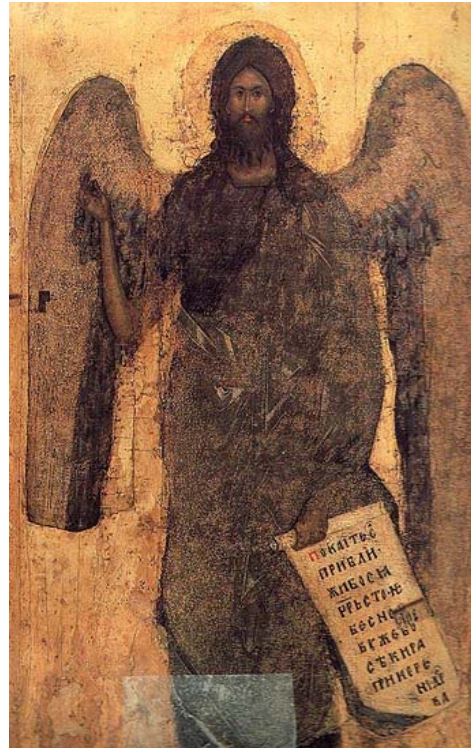


Figure 26: *St. John the Baptist*, Moscow school, 1390



Figure 25: Dionysius, *St. John the Baptist*, 1502



Figure 27: *St. John the Baptist*, Moscow school, 17th century



Figure 28: Caravaggio, *John the Baptist (John in the Wilderness)*, 1602-5



Figure 30: Caravaggio, *John the Baptist (Youth with a Ram)* 1602



Figure 29: Raphael, *St. John the Baptist*, 1518

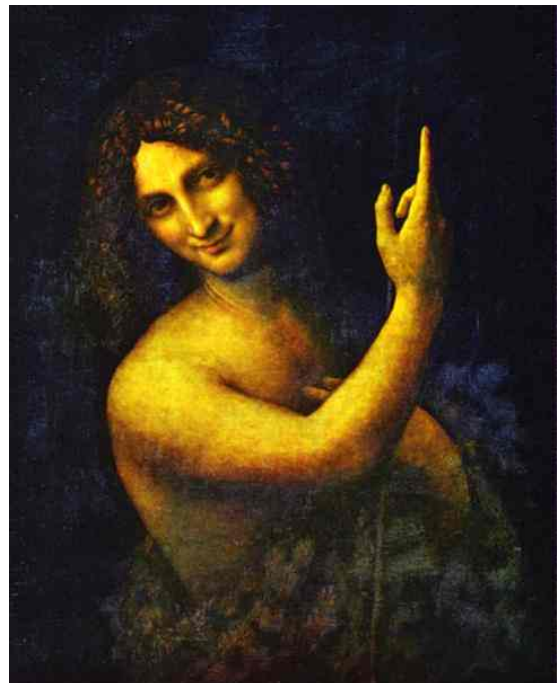


Figure 31: Leonardo da Vinci, *St. John the Baptist*, 1513



Figure 32:
Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Nativity*, 1308-11



Figure 34: Giotto, *The Nativity*, 1304-6



Figure 33: *Nativity*, Moscow school, 16th century



Figure 35: Piero della Francesca, *Nativity*, 1470



Figure 36: Hans Baldung, *Nativity*, 1520



Figure 37: Caravaggio, *Nativity with Saints Francis and Lawrence*, 1609

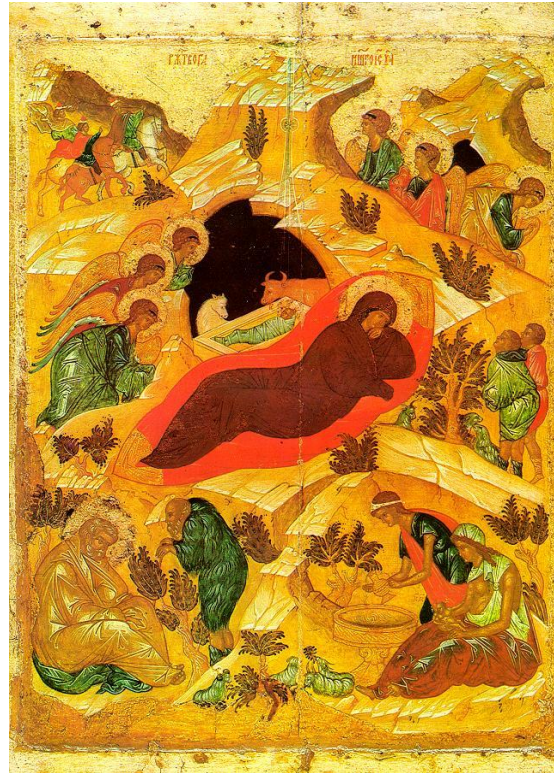


Figure 38: *Nativity of Christ*, Moscow school, early 15th century



Figure 39: *Nativity of Christ*, date unknown



Figure 40: *Nativity of Christ*, Novgorod school, early 15th century



Figure 42: Giotto, *The Death of the Virgin*, 1310



Details of Figures 41 and 42



Figure 41: Duccio, *The Death of the Virgin*, 1308-11



Figure 43: Mihail and Eutychios, *The Death of the Virgin* (fresco from Church of Sv. Kliment), 1295



Figure 44: Byzantine, *Death of the Virgin*, 14th century



Figure 46: Konrad Von Soest, *The Death of Mary*, 1420



Figure 45: Andrea Mantegna, *The Death of the Virgin*, 1460



Figure 47: Hans Holbein the Elder, *Death of the Virgin*, 1501



Figure 48: Caravaggio, *The Death of the Virgin*, 1606



Figure 49: Fra Angelico, detail from *The Death of the Virgin*, 1433-34



Figure 50: Benozzo Gozzoli, *Death of Mary*, 1484

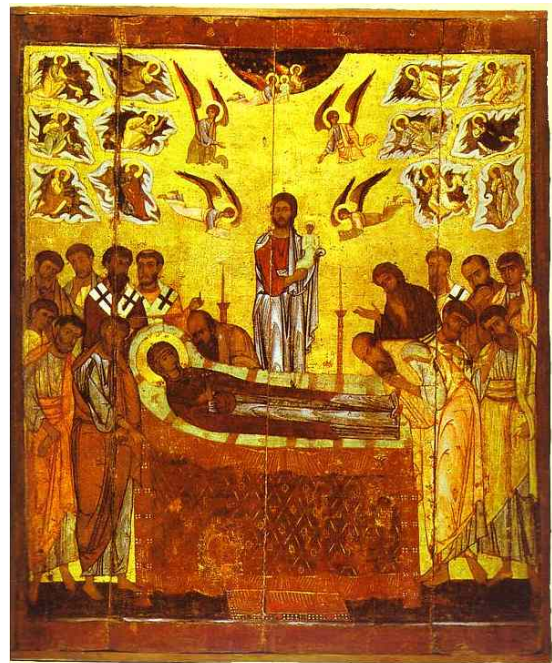


Figure 51: *The Dormition*, Russian, late 12th century

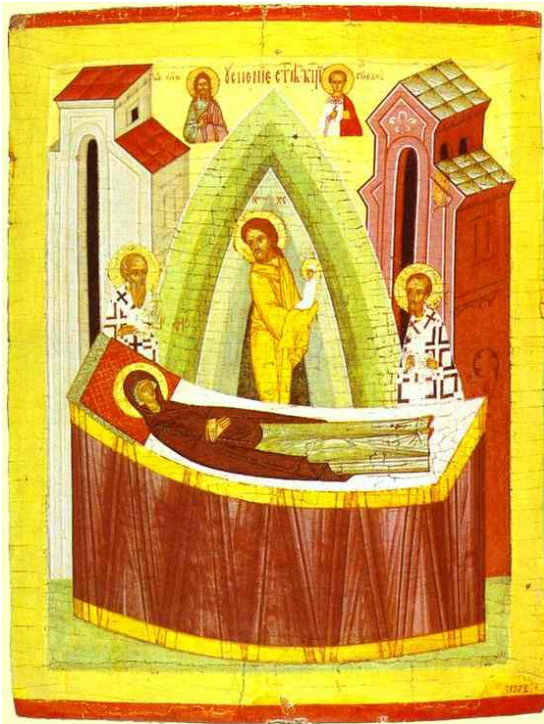


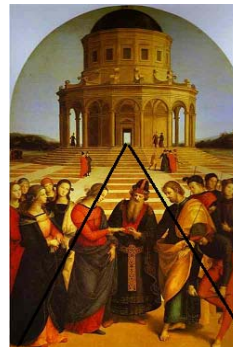
Figure 52: *The Dormition*, Novgorod school, early 15th century



Figure 54: *The Dormition*, Novgorod school, end of 14th century



Figure 53: *The Dormition*, Novgorod school, beginning of 16th century



Linear Perspective



Inverse Perspective



Figure 55: *The Dormition*, Novgorod school, last quarter of 15th century



Figure 57: Master Oleksa, *The Dormition*, 1547



Figure 56: *The Dormition*, Novgorod school, first half of 16th century