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"I AM THE VINE,... ...YE ARE THE BRANCHES"

THE GRAPEVINE

Vignettes of Seminary Life

The Seminary in autumn

The Synod of Whitby. After my two-part online lecture, *The Saintly Kings of Seventh-Century Northumbria*, one viewer sent in the following excellent question: "What were some other liturgical changes brought about by the Synod of Whitby, and what were the consequences (ecclesiastically and culturally) of the changes?" This inquiry prompted further research into what has turned out to be a singularly difficult question to answer.

The Synod of Whitby (664) dealt first and foremost with the problem of conflicting traditions in Britain regarding the date for the celebration of Pascha, although there were other issues involved as well. In order to approach a broader understanding of the Synod's decision, it may be helpful to give a brief historical overview of the situation which led to its convening and the motivations behind its decision.

Two sets of Christian traditions—Roman and Celtic—were brought to Northumbria (what is now northern England and southern Scotland) by different groups of missionaries less than a decade apart. The Northumbrians had first been evangelized by Roman missionaries from southern Britain in 627. There followed a brief period of apostasy, after which they were reconverted and more firmly established by Celtic missionaries from the north in 634. This Celtic Church

calculated the date of Pascha according to a tradition they traced back to Saint John the Theologian (*ca.* 7–*ca.* 101) which had been preserved and handed down by their Saintly Fathers. However, in the intervening centuries, the rest of the Church had accepted a different calculation of Pascha—the universal tradition which we still follow today in the Orthodox Church. The Patriarchate of Rome was one representative of those adhering to this universally-accepted practice, and the Roman traditions continued in southern Britain, which traced its conversion to missionaries sent from Rome by Saint Gregory the Dialogist (*ca.* 540–604) at the end of the sixth century.

The king at the time of the Synod in question was Saint Oswy of Northumbria (612–670), who had been spiritually formed by the Celtic monks. When he married a princess raised in the south with the Roman customs, the royal couple found themselves celebrating Pascha at different times. Their son also became close friends with a strong proponent of the Roman practices, who had travelled widely and witnessed the unity of practice with regard to the *Paschalion* in the rest of the Church, from which the Celtic Church alone deviated. As well, these differing practices were a source of confusion and scandal among the common people. All of these factors led the king to convene the Synod at Whitby to decide which tradition his people should follow. After listening to the arguments from both sides, Saint Oswy chose in favor of the universal celebration of Pascha despite his own personal preference for the Celtic tradition. Along with the *Paschalion*, however, came the acceptance of other Roman customs, as well as Papal authority.

Aside from the Paschal question, the only other differing practice mentioned by Saint Bede the Venerable (672–735) is the style of monastic tonsure. (He does allude to other customs but without enumerating them.) The Roman practice appears to have been to shave the crown of the head and leave a ring of hair around the head in honor of Christ's crown of thorns. The Celtic practice was to cut the hair at the front of the head and leave the back long. Some called this Celtic style of tonsure by the name of the infamous Simon Magus, the nemesis of Saint Peter the Apostle (*ca.* 1 B.C.–A.D. 67), perhaps because it was a custom so visibly opposed to the Roman practice. It should be noted that in the case of the tonsure, it was more a matter of differences in minor customs between two local Churches. The issue of the *Paschalion* was that of one local Church celebrating the Feast of Feasts separately from the rest of the Universal Church.

This brings us to an important point. The matters in question at this Synod were not doctrinal. There was no heresy at issue and not even really a schism, even if the celebration of Pascha separate from the rest of the Church was a serious concern. The issues were, first and foremost, pastoral and practical. As mentioned earlier, in addition to the impracticality of differing traditions within Saint Oswy's own family, there was a broader pastoral concern with regard to the Northumbrian people, still so new to Christianity. The apparent disharmony within the Church caused temptation and scandal to some who did not know how either to reconcile the differences in practice or to choose what was correct. It even tempted some to wonder whether they were truly Christians, since perhaps they had chosen "the wrong side." Hence, it was in the spiritual interest of his people for the king to unite them in adherence to one tradition.

Thus far we have discussed the factors leading to and the issues addressed and decided at the Synod of Whitby. Now we must turn to the more difficult part of the subject. In attempting to research the broader ecclesiastical and cultural consequences of this Synod's decision, there is a substantial obstacle. To find an Orthodox understanding of this subject is difficult precisely because the sources which are readily available are not Orthodox. In the absence of such material, we will have to content ourselves with a brief overview of some of the problematic perspectives and prevalent misconceptions encountered in various encyclopedic and scholarly works on the subject.

A fundamental problem one encounters in modern Western writings about the pre-Schism Church is that of approaching it with a very post-Schism understanding of Christianity. This is apparent in many of the sources. Another striking feature of several articles is the heavy biases brought to the assessment of such an ancient Synod. Some authors approach the adoption of the Roman practices at the Synod as either an acknowledgment of Papal primacy (if the author is pro-Catholic) or a tragic loss of Celtic identity (if they are anti-Catholic, Protestant, or just pro-Celtic). Some look at the actions of Saint Oswy as purely political and personally advantageous, imposing secular assumptions on a pious Christian king. Even in the more dispassionate articles, there is a significant lack of understanding that the seventh-century Roman Church was not "Catholic" in the current denominational sense of the word. We, as Orthodox Christians, know that the English were not adopting Roman Catholicism, as many would have it, nor was the Celtic Church a different religion or sect; they were all Orthodox. While one can discern already in the seventh century some indications of the West's gradual divergence from the East, the Great Schism was still four centuries away, so, again, they were all Orthodox Christians. Thus, the conflation of the Roman Catholic Church of our times with the Orthodox Roman Church of the seventh century in modern treatments of the subject tends to muddy the waters.

If the Synod of Whitby had chosen the Celtic practices over the Roman, do we have sufficient reason to suppose this would have prevented the eventual Catholicization of Britain? One could reasonably surmise that the acceptance of Roman customs and the direct authority of the Patriarch of Rome paved the way to eventual Roman Catholicism and submission to the Pope's claims of administrative primacy much later. But this eventuality could not have been foreseen. Moreover, there were many factors which contributed to the gradual estrangement of East and West—distance, lack of communication, and language barriers among them. Given that Rome was the only one of the five ancient Patriarchates located in the West, and since Britain was even further separated from the East—in every respect—than Rome, it is hard to see how the Churches of Britain could have avoided the fate of the rest of the Western Church even if they had not begun to assimilate Roman practices in the seventh century.

Ultimately, an Orthodox assessment of the historical results of the Synod is elusive, and it is of little use to conjecture what might have been. In 664, Saint Oswy could not have foreseen the eventual falling away of the Roman Church, nor can he be held responsible for the ways in which his decision may have facilitated or hastened the Churches of Britain being swept into that fall. Rather, when we look to his main objective of

unity in the celebration of Pascha (which was wholly Orthodox) and his secondary objective of spiritual stability through unification in practice (which expressed pastoral care for his people), the choice of accepting Roman traditions and authority seems an understandably conscientious one. Moreover, the decision appears the more admirable in that his natural inclination would have been toward the Celtic Church and its traditions, learned from his beloved spiritual Fathers.

I thank our viewer for posing such a challenging question. For our present purposes, I hope to have at least filled out the context and issues surrounding the Synod and introduced some of the views one is likely to encounter on the subject. Let us hope that someone may take up the task of researching this topic more fully and writing an Orthodox assessment of the consequences of the Synod of Whitby in the near future.

Mother Eupraxia, Instructor

Aristotle and Confucius, Part 3. *The following is the conclusion of a serialization of an independent study I did for the B.Th. program.*

The Phronimos *and the* Jūn Zi. For both Confucius and Aristotle, the life of happiness is the life of exemplary virtue. The ideal person of exemplary virtue is called by Aristotle "φρόνιμος" ("*phronimos*") and by Confucius "君子" ("*jūn zi*"). Both the *phronimos* and the *jūn zi* possess all the moral virtues, and both are said to be capable of accomplishing moral actions within a social–political realm.

Confucius also refers to his *jūn zi* as an authoritative person, because his virtue makes him an example which other people will naturally follow. "A person who is able to carry into practice five attitudes in the world can be considered authoritative.... Deference, tolerance, making good on one's word [信 (*xìn*)], diligence, and generosity. If you are deferential, you will not suffer insult; if tolerant, you will win over the many; if you make good on your word, others will rely upon you; if diligent, you will get results; if generous, you will have the status to employ others effectively." Confucius also said, "Through self-discipline and observing ritual propriety [禮 (*lǐ*)] one becomes authoritative in one's conduct. If for the space of a day one were able to accomplish this, the whole empire would defer to this authoritative model."

"He was gracious in deporting himself, he was deferential in serving his superiors, he was generous in attending to the needs of the common people, and he was appropriate [義 (*yì*)] in employing their services." Confucius' *jūn zi* is one who possesses virtue himself, is virtuous towards others and has the ability to accomplish the moral ends he sets out before him. "Conducting himself in a way that wins the trust and cooperation of others, by truly promoting the good of others ([*Analects*] 12.16, 12.22, 17.4) rather than promoting his own gain at the expense of others, is the way of the *junzi*."

For Aristotle, too, the *phronimos* is one who fully possesses the moral virtues. He has the right ends (τέλη [*telē*]) or moral universals that allow him to act as a truly courageous, temperate, generous, mild, truthful, and just person. He will always choose the right action (that is, the means) to attain the one or more appropriate moral goals in any situation.

Both the *phronimos* and the *jūn zi* are expected to act for the sake of virtue itself without regard for anything else. An example that both Aristotle and Confucius use is the case of rescuing someone from danger. One is acting for the act itself and not for the sake of renown, reputation, or material gain. One's only concern is for the safety of another and not even whether the person is deserving of being rescued. A

SPOTSLIGHTS is Back! We are excited to introduce you to a new administrator and two new students!

Esther Schenone. Esther is the Seminary's new Librarian. With her background and experience working in a public library, Esther brings much to the Seminary. In addition to keeping the bookshelves organized, cataloguing thousands of new books, and being an invaluable research resource for the students, Esther has initiated exciting programs such as "Seminary Storytime." Esther was born and raised in Northern California. Saint Silouan the Athonite is one of her favorite Saints. On fish days, she really loves salmon—smoked, baked, or broiled! So far, Esther has had the opportunity to audit one class, Church History. She says it is probably her favorite class that she has ever taken and that it is very spiritually beneficial to her. When asked what is something she loves about SPOTS she replied, "I love that there is an immense amount of knowledge and wisdom that the people here have access to, not only in terms of the books and the classes, but also through the experiences of the Divine Services and the discussions that you can have with the clergy and the monastics here." *So true, Esther! And we, monastics and clergy included, are all so grateful that you have chosen to bring your talents, energy, and enthusiasm in service to the Church here at Saint Photios! May God grant you many years and many more books!*

Tatyana Snegirev. Tatyana is from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. One of her favorite Saints is Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker. Tatyana's favorite fasting food is zucchini and shrimp stir-fry. When asked which class is her favorite this semester, she said, "I quite enjoy Church History, but I especially like the Iconography Certificate Program. I learn so much every time I go to that class. Icons have so much depth to them!" Tatyana loves the people at SPOTS and how she gets

to discuss topics on a more personal level with them. "It's incredible how at home I feel here. Being here is helping me grow not only intellectually but spiritually as well." *We are excited to have you here, Tatyana! May God continue to help you grow here at SPOTS and beyond!*

Jeffrey Chen. Jeffrey was born and raised in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. His favorite Saint is Saint John of San Francisco, who he says is a beacon of light for the Church today. Jeffrey's favorite fasting food is cucumbers. Thus far, the class that has impacted him the most is Dogmatic Theology, because "it tackles the core misconceptions of the Faith." Jeffrey says he is very appreciative of the opportunity to study with classmates and teachers of such high caliber. *We appreciate having you here, Jeffrey! May God grant you a fulfilling first year at SPOTS!*

phronimos or *jūn zi* is not simply intellectually clever enough to discern what is right but has become habituated to it. The exemplary virtuous person is concerned with his own good and the good of others. As May Sim translates a passage from *The Analects*, "[T]he one of *ren* [仁] desiring to establish oneself, establishes others (*ren* [人]); desiring to promote oneself, promotes others." In this way, in improving others, we also improve ourselves.

Confucius replies to a question about 仁 (*rén*), considered the highest virtue, by saying that *rén* is to love others and that knowledge is to know others. For Confucius, loving others is connected to loving oneself in the sense of self-improvement and not, of course, self-indulgence. "This is confirmed by Confucius' remark that *ren* is not simply one who makes others love him, nor one who loves others only, but is one who also loves himself." Aristotle says that the moral virtues are the perfections of the appetitive part of the soul and that φρόνησις (*phronēsis*) (or practical wisdom) is the perfection of the practical part of the rational soul. Virtuous living fulfills the function of both parts of the soul. In acting virtuously, we do what is appropriate to our nature, and doing so is a good that also makes us happy.

For both thinkers, in knowing and doing what is good for others in general, one is also doing what is good for oneself. Aristotle and Confucius both posit the condition that one must decide on a virtuous act for the act itself and not for one's own sake or even for the sake of another. The *phronimos* with the fullness of virtue necessarily possesses justice, a virtue that is directed toward others, as well as self-regarding virtues, such as courage, temperance, and self-love. Similarly, for Confucius the one with *rén* is disposed to *yì* and so extends himself to doing what is good for people in general

and is so developed in virtue that he also loves himself. Aristotle claims that, "Good deliberation is correctness that reflects what is beneficial, about the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time." Similarly, for Confucius, the *jūn zi* is one who can discern what is appropriate for each situation and carries it out.

One significant point of contrast is that whereas the task of the *jūn zi* is never finished—he is constantly learning to better himself—, the *phronimos* has attained the completion or end (τέλος [*telos*]) of wisdom. Confucius holds that, "To transgress and not correct such transgressions is what is called transgression," and that a constant effort in learning (学 [*xué*]) is necessary to sustain the virtues. Transgressions for the *jūn zi* are opportunities for improvement, and the *jūn zi* learns from his mistakes. He is not one to make the same mistake twice. This, of course, presupposes of the *jūn zi* a strong sense of self-examination and reflection. Mencius (372 B.C.–289 B.C.), one of the more prominent followers of Confucius, remarks, "If a man loves others and that love is not returned, let him examine himself as to his love of others. If he rules others but his government is not successful, let him examine himself as to wisdom. If he is polite to others but they are impolite to him, let him examine himself as to real respect for them. When by what we do we do not achieve our aim, we must examine ourselves at every point. When a man is right, the whole empire will turn to him."

Aristotle, on the other hand, has a teleological view of the cosmos: all things have a definite end or goal to which they should attain. The end of a thing is determined by its nature, and we can use metaphysics to find out what that end should be. For the human being, the truly human factor, the part which we do not share with the animals, is the human soul. Writes Sim, "God, for Aristotle, satisfies the criteria for primary substance and also the conditions of being complete and self-sufficient. Because human beings are most like God in being self-sufficient (*autarkes*) and complete (*teleios*) when they are using their rational soul, the activity of the rational soul is also the human goal." Confucius' *jūn zi* never arrives at perfection, because his progress is endless, in that his goal is an alignment with the transcendent tao of heaven (天 [*tiān*]). This is similar to the Christian idea that the Saints infinitely progress towards Divinity. Confucius does not have an explicit teleology and metaphysics, for he has no need to define the state of completed human perfection.

Another point of divergence between our two masters is the scope of the effect of the man of exemplary virtue. For Aristotle's *phronimos*, his actions transform both himself and the people around him by his example, helping them towards virtue. The Greeks believed the physical and spiritual realms to be relatively independent of each other—the basic dichotomy for them is the contrast between material and spiritual.

For Confucius, moral agency "not only embodies the mandate of heaven but holds it up like a pillar." The *jūn zi* transforms not only himself and his fellows, but the entire cosmos is uplifted by man's virtue. As Confucius puts it: "It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development in his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same for the nature of other men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the nature of animals and things." Christianity holds the view, in common with Confucius, that man has agency in the cosmos at large. Indeed, the fall of man was the fall of the whole material world, and man can likewise restore it.

Conclusion. We have looked at five points from Aristotle and Confucius, namely, definition, the body politic, the self, the mean, and the *phronimos* and the *jūn zi*, and examined them briefly, noting a few common and contrasting features. We also briefly looked at the milieu of each philosopher.

We saw how important definition is for both Aristotle and Confucius, and we established that while definition is the very foundation of Aristotle's philosophy, Confucius also considers it important, although he does not consider it in so much depth and detail.

The body politic played a large role in the philosophies of both masters. Aristotle draws a distinction between familial and political life. Confucius conceives of political life as familial life writ large. Both ideas could greatly benefit modern societies.

Aristotle uses the definition of the soul as the true human self as the basis of his philosophy. Confucius does not define human beings in terms of constitution, which has led some thinkers to believe he had no concept of the self, yet we have seen that this is false.

The mean represents a central idea for both philosophers. The mean is crucial in understanding the role of decision-making and the self. The mean for both philosophers represents a middle way in between extremes of passion and indifference.

Lastly, in contrasting the exemplars of virtue, the *phronimos* for Aristotle and the *jūn zi* for Confucius, we have understood a radical difference in each tradition. For Aristotle the influence of the *phronimos* is restricted to human beings; the influence of the *jūn zi*, on the other hand, extends to the whole cosmos.

Father Vlasie, B.Th. Graduate

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