

Department of Foreign Relations
Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church
Outside of Russia

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EMPLOYEES OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE.

It has been noted on several occasions, that the official part of the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate" publishes only facts which are connected with foreign relations, but never any decrease of internal administrative character, except for resolutions about deceased Bishops, elections of new ones, and promotions. According to information received, the Patriarchate in general is concerned, not so much with ecclesiastical management, as with external propaganda. It is visually demonstrated by the only recently known fact, that the staff of the Moscow Patriarchate has 206 employees, ONLY SIX of which work for the administration. The remainder are serving the Foreign Relations Dept.

TOWARD PREPARATION OF PAN ORTHODOX SYNOD.

The informative Bulletin "Episkepsis" has published a detailed agenda of the future Synod. The agenda is divided into two parts. One part consists of the themes which will be placed for discussion by the Preconciliar Conference, and the other the themes which are outlined for future discussion. In their totality they give us an idea of the general trend. One cannot but notice that some churches are more on guard toward the whole undertaking than Constantinople, which results in warnings not to include any dogmatical questions in the agenda. The experience with the Catholics shows that, the very fact that they are placed for discussion, already excludes their categorical confession, based on Holy Tradition. As it happened during the Second Vatican Council, which, instead of affirming the Roman Faith, actually started to revise everything and laid the foundation for reformation. The same danger is threatening the future Council.

The questions placed for discussion in the first part cannot but make an Orthodox Christian apprehensive. There are 10 points to be discussed. 1) The Orthodox Diaspora. 2) Autocephal and the order of its announcement. 3) Autonomy and the order of its announcement. 4) Diptychs, e.g. The roster of Churches whose heads are to be commemorated by the heads of other Churches. 5) The question of one general calendar. It seems it is to be expected that some new calendar will be offered, not the Julian and not the Gregorian, but one that can be acceptable to Catholics and Protestants. This is a very great danger. 6) The obstacles to marriages. It seems that there is the idea of shortening the existing canonical obstacles. 7) The revision of the fasting rules. Also in this case one is to expect indulgences. 8) Relationship of the Orthodox Churches with the whole Christian world. 9) Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement. 10) The help by local Orthodox Churches toward the fulfillment of the ideas of the Christian world, liberty, brotherhood and love among nations, and the removal of racial discrimination. In this point one strongly feels the influence of Moscow, which introduces these questions for discussion which are favorable toward Communist propaganda.

The questions which are to be forwarded to the Churches for study stand alone, and in the future can be a source of danger, as previously mentioned. The themes are as follows: The sources of Divine Revelation. The meaning of the Church. Codification of the Holy Canons and Canonical regulations. Acrivia and economia, e.g. strict and indulgent practices.

The Bulgarian Church, so far, has urgently raised the question of monasticism, mainly in connection with the election of Bishops from the ranks of the Monks, that is to say that Bishops in the future will be consecrated from the ranks of the beginner or rasophor monks. This does not exclude a further revision of the rules concerning monasticism in the future, on a much larger scale. It has been approved that the Bulgarian Church is to present a report for the next Pre-Conciliar Conference.

A large number of questions has been forwarded to the Churches for study. The totality of them would make a revision, if not of the whole of Church teaching, then at least of a very considerable part of it. Let us list some of the: Definition of Dogma in the Orthodox viewpoint. The meaning and limits of Holy Tradition. The Authority of the Church, how it should be understood. Unification of the Typicon and Liturgical Texts used in the Services and the administration of the Sacraments. The marriage of the Clergy after ordination and a second marriage for the Clergy. Cremation and Orthodox theology.

Reports on all of these themes are to be made by the various Churches. The information should be of a quasi scientific-theological nature.

In the meantime, the report of the Second Commission with regard to the negotiations with other churches, namely Anglicans, Old-Catholics, and ancient Eastern Heretics, was approved. Negotiations with all of them and especially with the latter, should continue and become more active, "in order to make them fruitful for the unification of all Christians." A separate Commission for negotiations with the Roman Catholics was set up. The Vatican, on its part, has also created a Commission which, as per the magazine "Irenikon", held sessions for five days, from Oct. 11th to 15th, 1976, making preparations for the meeting with the Orthodox. It has not been announced so far, when the next meeting will take place.

No doubt that, reflecting the Soviet influence, the Conference expressed the desire to collaborate with the various religions "in order to annihilate fanaticism on everyone's part, obtaining in this manner, peace among nations, and the defense of peace and liberty in the world, while serving humanity, regardless of race or religion."

It was decided to continue collaboration with the World Council of Churches, especially in the field of Theology and the unity of the Church.

The details about the change of the Paschalia were listed by us in the #7 issue of our Bulletin.

SYDNEY LAW SUIT.

The mutiny in the Church, which started some 8 years ago in Sydney, Australia, finally, thanks to God's mercy, has come to an end. The history of it is as follows: Taking advantage of the illness and weakness of the late Archbishop Savva, a group of executive leaders of the Cathedral Church in Sydney passed a resolution regarding the incorporation of this parish, without explaining any details to anyone. As it was discovered later, incorporation was made in the form of a lay society, under the name of Russian Orthodox Community of Sydney, Ltd., to which all the estate (including the Cathedral) was legally transferred. The minutes of the meeting, which all the parishioners did not comprehend at the time, was not shown to the Archbishop for approval until the registration of this new Society became legal under state law. Unfortunately, two priests of the Cathedral took part in this, which greatly contributed to the confusion of many and prevented them from understanding the essence of the case. Especially since this Cooperative Society assumed for itself the name of "Community". These two priests were defrocked by the Council of Bishops after they had declared their intention of first going over to the jurisdiction of the Polish Church, and then to the American Metropolia.

POPE FORBIDS ORDINATION OF WOMEN.

"The National Catholic Reporter" informs us that Archbishop Bernardin, head of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged the Vatican to publish a document clearly forbidding the ordination of women to the priesthood. The demands of several groups defending women's rights and seeking to have a female priesthood in the same manner as the Episcopalians, has alarmed many Catholic Bishops in America. Because of this, the document which had been prepared in final text since last October, was hastily published by the Vatican just a short time ago. As expected, this document met with very sharp criticism from the defenders of women's rights. A demonstration was organized in New York City, where some 80 women, including 4 nuns, walked with posters in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Sister Cathlin Keating, head of the National Assembly of Women Religious, declared that: "This can only have a negative effect on women." The Women's Ordination Conference, which has some 900 members, suggested more studies on the subject should be made, and offered to organize prayer-vigil demonstrations as a protest against the Pope's decision. Sister Elizabeth Carroll, an activist, said that "This is not an infallible statement, it is not an encyclical.....It will be presented as the end of the road, but it is not the end of the road."

Several feminist organizations demanded that collections for the churches and seminaries should instead be diverted to promote the feminist cause.

JEWISH SERVICE HELD IN EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Some 100 persons attended a religious service in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The Hannukah service was led by Rabbi Wolf Kellman, who lit the candles on the Mennorah, while singing traditional Jewish hymns.

NEW MOVEMENT AMONG EPISCOPALIANS.

The Episcopal magazine "Living Church", in its issue of Jan. 2nd, 1977 informs us that on Dec. 2nd, 1976 in Chicago, the Coalition for the Apostolic Ministry held an open meeting. In attendance were some 250 faithful, including 16 Bishops. One of the very first resolutions adopted by the Coalition was a strongly-worded refusal to recognize women's ordinations and the questionable possibility of communion with this new ministry.

It was the general wish that the Bishops should influence various committies in order to raise the religious level of the faithful and to set up forces to deal with theology, liturgy, education, finances, by-laws, and litigations.

Bishop Robert Terwilliger announced that the Chicago group should be considered as the beginning of a new religious movement.

POLYGAMY PERMITTED.

The Anglican Church in Central Africa, in its 8th Provincial Synod, resolved that "A non-Christian man with more than one wife may, with permission of the Bishop, be received into the Church with his believing wife and children, and in due course be Confirmed and receive Communion, provided that the local community gives its willing consent..."

The Synod delegates agreed that polygamy completely clashes with the ideal of Christian marriage, but that since a person with more than one wife, and children from this union, has taken on life-long responsibilities, it would be unjust to separate them. "To impose this on aspiring converts is a strange way of preparing them for Baptism." The Synod did not permit a married Christian to take another wife while his first is still living. Nice to hear this, at least.

JOB LOST BECAUSE OF REFUSAL TO WORK ON SUNDAY.

A correspondent of the Catholic newspaper "Twin Circle" discovered that a Mr. Stephen Campbell of Lynbrook, N. Y., who was manager of four departments in Korvette's Department Store, was fired because of his refusal to work on Sundays. Mr. Campbell, who is a Roman Catholic, refused to work on Holy Days on the grounds of his religious convictions, of which he informed his supervisor. The store manager threatened him with loss of his job or demotion. Mr. Campbell filed a complaint with the Hempstead branch of the New York State Human Rights Commission, but the representatives of the Korvette Company denied any kind of discrimination. They said that Mr. Campbell was fired because of a poor performance record. Upon investigation it was found that this employee received 15 pay raises during his 5 years of work with the firm, and was promoted from part-time stock boy to the managerial position. He is now seeking reinstatement to his former position and reimbursement for his financial loss during his out-of-work period. Korvette's was the first firm in New York State to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath. The example proved to be contagious, as many other companies and large firms have since joined Korvette's in remaining open for business on Sunday. Now every one of us could possibly find himself in the same difficult position as Mr. Campbell, not only western Christians, but also faithful Orthodox people as well. There is every reason to believe that in the not too distant future this kind of threat will be faced by every religious person.

LESBIAN ORDAINED EPISCOPAL PRIEST.

Episcopal Bishop Paul Moore of New York City recently ordained a Ms. Ellen Barrett to the priesthood in spite of the fact that many Episcopalians protested, and in spite of the fact that the "candidate" herself acknowledged that she is a homosexual. Bishop William Frey of Colorado pleaded with Bishop Moore not to scandalize the flock. In his telegram to Bishop Frey he stressed that the ordination of "practicing homosexuals does not represent the mid of the Church and is plainly contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, which we have all sworn to uphold." While pointing out the damage this ordination would do to the whole of the Church, he used a very strange argument: "At the very least, please show consideration for those homosexuals who are seeking a more positive solution to their difficulties, and who will be hurt by the inevitable reaction to this ordination." The Suffragan Bishop of New York, J. Stuart Wetmore, supported his colleague with the statement: "We are aware that knowingly or unknowingly, this Church has ordained clergy who have been homosexual. It has not been a test of the validity of the ordination." Such active support of homosexuality by two Episcopalian Bishops was not without protests on the part of several parishes of the New York Diocese. The New York Times in its Feb. 4th, 1977 issue reports that three parishes voted to withhold all diocesan assessments, which amounts to some \$12,000.00. The news media expect that this action will be widely followed by many more parishes and will involve the kanor part of the New York Diocese.

The President of the Episcopal Bishops of America declared that he can understand the reasons for being so unhappy about the situation, but that he still hopes that the parishes that voted to withhold their financial support, will reconsider their decision. He also cautioned the faithful against hasty "overreaction" to this ordination. "The Church as not gone down the drain." he said to reporters, "It really hasn't. Pass the word along."

A NEW ACT OF BLASPHEMY.

A Comic Book called "Abortion Eve", which depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary in the "most scurrilous, grossly defamatory caricatures ever circulated" was not removed from the Baltimore Public Library, in spite of of very strong protests from the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. The Catholic League demanded that at least a short commentary be attached to this edition, which would state that the book contains defamatory and insulting information, but as per "Twin Circle" report, the library's employee, a Miss Molz, said that any sort of appendix labelling this work would be considered illegal. The leaders of the protest declared that the fact that a Public Library carries such blasphemous material should be considered as an insult, as it "forces the Catholic community to pay for the defamation of its sacred sympols."

SYNOD BOOKSTORE.

The Synod Bookstore is rapidly enlarging its inventory. With the forthcoming Easter in mind, the Manager of the Bookstore has received a variety of hand painted Easter eggs. Sterling Silver eggs to be worn on a chain in the Russian manner are also on order. The hand-painted eggs are priced from \$1.50 to \$4.50 each, packed in a cellophane box. SORRY, NO MAIL ORDERS CAN BE ACCEPTED.....