

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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MORE ON THE QUESTION OF THE NEW CALENDAR AND A NEW PASCHALIA

Events of the last Pan-Orthodox Conference in Geneva are coming to general knowledge from Greek sources. The question of a new calendar was discussed in a separate conference from which the hierarchs of the Church of Jerusalem were absent. Yet its representative, Metropolitan Germanos, delegated Metropolitan Chrysostom of Chios, a delegate from the Church of Greece, to represent him. The calendar question has a very special meaning for the Church of Jerusalem. From the times of the Turkish domination it has priority and important privileges in the major holy places. Yet, during the holy days of the new calendar, the Roman Catholics have a number of privileges. Therefore, in the case of acceptance of the new calendar, the Church of Jerusalem would lose her rights and retreat to a second class position. It is therefore understandable that last year the Patriarch of Jerusalem categorically objected to the Greek celebration of Christmas according to the new calendar. In spite of illness, he personally went to Amman and there very sternly told the local Archbishop, Diodoros, and his flock, that no compromises on the calendar question can be accepted. He also paid a visit to King Hussein in order to confirm his legal rights within the borders of his country.

It seems that it was not accidental that the Patriarch commissioned one of the most conservative archpastors of the Greek Church, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, to represent the Jerusalem Church at the Conference in Chambesy. The latter addressed the meeting very resolutely. He reminded them that the acceptance of the new calendar in 1923 resulted in a great shake up in the Greek Church which is still being felt. He expressed confidence that the common celebration of Pascha with the West will never be accepted by the faithful. "A question of this sort alone can be of great damage, because it might create the impression that we Orthodox doubt the correctness of our position." The Metropolitan also added, "All movements, so to speak, to change the paschalia, most probably are stimulated from outside. A finger foreign to Christianity manipulates this question aided by pressure put by party-serving foreign interests who try to present this change as sort of an all-healing balsam, supposedly serving the cause of unity." Underlining the importance of the question, the Metropolitan suggested that Christians should lay aside their customary politeness. "The Church of Christ," said Metropolitan Chrysostomos, "allows, and even demands from us only one kind of diplomacy and politics - the diplomacy of the Head of the Church, Christ the Saviour, Who said 'let your communication be Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay'."

What is the essence of the new proposed calendar?

There are many reasons to believe that the newly projected calendar is not simply an adjustment of the paschalia to the Gregorian calendar. Making immovable the Feast of Pascha alone would call for an alteration of all services and the Church typicon connected with the paschalia. And now there is a new project which is to change the whole calendar in a radical manner. It is described in the textbook for cosmography by Professor Kotsaki which has been accepted for use in Greek junior high schools. The proposed calendar is called in the book "worldwide" and already has been

approved by the United Nation's respective commission, although it is not publicized as yet.

According to this new calendar, the new year is always to start on Sunday, January 1st. The months January, April, July and October will have 31 days, and the rest of the months 30 each. All dates will once and for all be attached to a pre-fixed day of the week. Since a year has 365 full days, e.g., 52 weeks plus one day (and in leap year two days), it is necessary to get rid of this one day (in leap year, two days). In order to achieve this, at the end of every year there will be established "nameless" days. This means that after the last day of December, which is designated to be always on a Saturday, Sunday will not follow immediately, but will be delayed by a nameless day, which is to be called a day of "Worldwide Feast." In leap years, one more day at the end of June will be established and will also have the name "Worldwide Feast." In this manner, any date will always fall on the very same day of the week.

In this calendar Pascha is always celebrated on April 1st, which is to fall on a Sunday. This will also be the very first Sunday of April, which coordinates with the pre-existing project of the new paschalia which had determined that Pascha should be celebrated on the first Sunday of April. Prof. Kotsaki writes that "this 'Worldwide Calendar' will actually be validly used by the whole world, because it is already accepted by the United Nations, heads of various religions and in a more general sense, by all international organizations (economic, union, etc.). It has not been introduced for general use as yet because the coordinated enlightenment of all nations has to come first."

However, in spite of all the lobbying in favor of it, the opposition to the change of the paschalia, it seems, is much in the way of the introduction of the new calendar next year, although it would be very convenient for the ecumenists, since in 1978 the 1st of January falls on Sunday, therefore Pascha of that year could be celebrated by all people on the same day. The next instance of such a coincidence will occur only in 6 years.

#### A MOVE OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE UNSUCCESSFUL

It appears that at the Pan-Orthodox Conference of last fall, the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate offered a motion that at the future Council the number of delegates from each Church should be calculated proportionally to the number of the faithful who belong to her. This unusual method in Orthodox Councils would guarantee a majority in any vote for the Moscow Patriarchate. It is very understandable that this offer infuriated the Greeks and that they reacted sharply to it. As a result, the Metropolitan of Kiev, Philaret, had to rescind his own motion and apologize to other members of the Conference.

#### SOVIET PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

A group of clergy and lay people, headed by Metropolitan Sergius of Odessa, arrived on Pascha at Jerusalem. Metropolitan Sergius made no effort to visit monasteries and convents under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

During his stay in the Holy Land, Met. Sergius, together with the Soviet Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Seraphim, made official calls on representatives of the Israeli Government. They visited also the Minister for Religious Affairs, and as a proof of the freedom of religion in the USSR, presented him with a bible printed by the Moscow Patriarchate. As usual, the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem met the guests from Moscow with all honors. Met. Sergius presented the Greek clergy with pectoral crosses and other gifts.

### THE CONFERENCE OF THE EASTERN-AMERICAN DIOCESE

On 13/26th and 14/27th of April the Eastern-American Diocesan Council was held in the Synod building in New York, presided over by Metropolitan Philaret. Reports were heard concerning the internal life of the Diocese and some problems arising in pastoral practice. Protopresbyter George Grabbe gave a report about contemporary modernism and Priest Alexander Lebedev reported on the prospective Pan-Orthodox Council. Both reports were received with lively interest, caused a lot of discussion and the Conference asked that they be published. After hearing the report of Archimandrite Anthony about the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem and also the decision of the Synod of Bishops requesting help for the Mission, the Conference unanimously decided to give 1/2 % from the parishes' gross cash income to the Mission. The same Conference also re-elected members of the Diocesan Council.

### PRIESTS IN GERMANY WORK FOR KGB

This is the headline under which "Die Welt", the widely circulated paper in Germany published the following information on March 30th. The paper underlines that there is a close connection between clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate abroad and the KGB, as stated by the German Intelligence Agency. The KGB is looking for the legalization of a "German Orthodox Church", hoping that the members of the Moscow Patriarchate will then have free entrance into various German circles. In West Germany there are 3 Soviet bishops and 17 priests. Beside that, 7 more priests serve in Berlin. Through the establishment of an autonomous Church in Germany, the Soviets hope to cut short the anti-Soviet activity of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. They try in this manner to gather in some 20,000 Russian emigres who live in Germany and Austria. According to the information of the German Intelligence service the Patriarchate not only strongly supports Soviet foreign policies, but also is very active in the field of espionage. Many of her priests are serving as active agents. The report says: "It is known from exiles and deserters from the USSR that the KGB tries to fill with their trusted people as many church positions as possible. All candidates for the priesthood, even before they are permitted to study theology, are checked by the KGB. From the point of view of the KGB, independent candidates, in general, should not be allowed to enroll in theological schools. Besides, the KGB specifically assigns its agents in order that they study in those schools and later be ordained."

### UKRAINIAN CHAUVENISTS TRY TO REESTABLISH PAGANISM

A Ukrainian, Lev Sylenko, the founder of "RUNVISM" (Dear Ukrainian National Faith) distributes a pamphlet in the English and Ukrainian languages in which a blasphemous prayer to "Dazhboh" is published. Of "Dazhboh" it is said in the prayer,

"You are the Holy Spirit of my people  
You are One, because I worship only you.  
You are almighty, because my faith in you is almighty.  
You are eternal, because my people are eternal.....  
You and I - Flesh and Spirit are One.  
You and I - One past, one present, and one future.  
Glory be to you for ever and ever."

It is interesting to note that in the mid-thirties the National Socialist Party of Germany also made an effort to restore ancient German pagan reli-

gion and in some places even erected idols which were worshipped. The "Runvist" also has a leaflet of the same title on the front page of which there is an explanation that "the members of Runvist do not accept pagan idols and are not practicing polytheism, but having as a foundation the reformed pre-Christian religion of Ukraina (Rus) by Lev Sylenko, acknowledge the one god, (the giver of existence - our Dazhboh)." (The Creation of New "Ego" by L. Sylenko)

#### GREEK BISHOP SUPPORTS RENOVATIONIST TENDENCIES

Bishop Sotirios, the head of the Canadian Diocese, declared that he would favor some changes in the practices of the Orthodox Church, especially the question concerning the possibility of bishops being married. The Episcopalian magazine "The Living Church" of March 6th quotes the words of the Greek bishop who said: "I am a sworn celibate myself, and would find it very difficult to marry because of the pledge I made God back when I was 25 years old in Greece to stay single. However, I would fight for the right of bishops to marry." Along with this modernistic declaration, Bishop Sotirios showed some conservative views when questioned about the sin of homosexuality. He was horrified when informed about the ordination of a lesbian woman to the priesthood and said that if he were to hear that any of his clerics is a sodomist, he would immediately defrock him. He also condemned lotteries and bingo games in his parishes and declared them to be "completely immoral."

#### CATHOLIC PRIESTS APOLOGIZE AND PROTEST

Priests for Equality, an organization with 1,300 Catholic clergymen, published an open letter of apology to all women for the insult which they received in the Pope's declaration forbidding women to be ordained, saying that they are ashamed that they were able to tolerate the behaviour and structure of their church this long. They said they were deeply embarrassed that Vatican authors claim to do the will of Jesus, and find the reasons given in an effort to prove that women cannot be ordained to be very distasteful. They declared that the action of some of their bishops was quite regrettable, in that they received this document with an enthusiasm very seldom shown to much more important questions concerning social justice. The National Federation of Priests' Councils, states the New York Times of March 25th, representing 113 local councils with 200 delegates, also joins Priests for Equality in demanding permission for women to be ordained. They also urged the Conference to eliminate any reference to God in the masculine form in prayers. Originally the priests intended to declare that they "reject" the Vatican document on women, but later accepted the offer of Fr. Joseph Buckley of New Orleans to change the form of their demands as written in a tone "insulting to the Holy Father." He added: "If we want to have an influence on Rome, we should not insult them." The priests agreed not to press their request for eliminating "sexist terms" from prayers, because the priest Arthur Bendixen of Florida pointed out with good reasoning that the acceptance of such a proposal will lead to the point where "we'll get ourselves where we can't even quote Scripture if we pass this."

The Pope's declaration on women met with serious opposition also on the part of the Jesuit Theological School in Berkeley, California. A letter addressed to the Apostolic Delegate, M. Rev. Jean Jadot, criticizing the Pope's decision not to admit women to the priesthood was signed by the school's President, Rev. Joseph A. Tetlow, and the Dean, the Rev. Andrew J. Dufner, along with 23 out of 27 of the faculty. "It is our judgment that the conclusion of the declaration is not sustained by the evidence and the arguments alleged in its support" the letter reads, "and that it could sanction within the church a practice of serious injustice." (Commonweal, Apr. 1)

The New York Times of April 27th also informs its readers that a coalition of Roman Catholic supporters of women's ordination recently published the results of three Gallup Polls which showed that 36% of Catholics polled would favour women priests (an increase of 5% since 1974). "Although Catholic support for women priests is not yet 50%, the trend is consistent and clearly in an upward direction," explained Sister Maureen Fiedler of the Don Quixote Center.

#### CATHOLICS AND JEWS

The "National Courier" of March 4th reported that the Roman Catholic diocese of Los Angeles published a manual for priests at the beginning of Lent which recommends that they stress in their preaching before the Good Friday services that it is not proper to accuse the whole Jewish nation of the crucifixion of the Saviour. Of particular concern is the 27th chapter of St. Matthew, verse 25, "His blood be on us and on our children." The manual reflected the views of several local rabbis. At the same time, the staff of the liturgical committee of the U. S. Catholic Conference, concerned with the improvement of Judeo-Catholic relations, appealed to parishes throughout the whole country to replace some hymns of the Good Friday services with other ones. In particular, the so-called "reproaches" hymns are mentioned. The strongest advocate of erasing these "reproaches" has been the Office of Ecumenical Affairs which is responsible for Catholic-Jewish relations. A member of the staff of this office, Rev. Jack Hotchkin said that "we came to the recommendation that they should be abolished because it seemed difficult to extensively rewrite them to everyone's satisfaction." Jewish leaders reacted very favourably to the Catholic intention to better their relations. The well-known rabbi-ecumenist, Mark Tannenbaum, noted with satisfaction that "It's an important development in a continuing process."

#### CATHOLICS RENOUNCE PREACHING AMONG JEWS

The International Catholic-Jewish Liason Committee at its meeting in Venice strongly rejected any kind of proselytism directed towards converting Jews to Christianity. As the "National Courier" of April 29th related, many Catholic experts told their reporters that the position expressed by them is consistent with the thinking that has been growing within the Catholic church since Vatican II. One of the experts, Rev. Edward Flannery, former Executive Secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, declared that "Catholic theology would see Judaism as a religion with a valid covenant with God even in the Christian dispensation." He also mentioned that Christians can learn from Judaism. Dr. Gregory Baum, a professor at St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto, said that "Fidelity to the Gospel demands openness to other religions and particularly to Judaism. I think there is emerging in the Catholic church the conviction that God is speaking also in other religions, in particular in the Jewish religion which is based on the Hebrew Scriptures." Although the Catholic Conference strongly criticizes any group which seek the conversion of Jews to Christianity, yet, said the experts, they are willing to make exception for those Jews who become interested in Christianity on their own accord and express the desire to join some Christian community.

#### ABOUT THE FILM "JESUS OF NAZARETH"

Strong protests from various religious groups succeeded and the sacreligious film adapted from Dr. Schonfield's best seller, "The Passover Plot", which was widely advertized and so far has only been shown in two cities in California, is now almost never mentioned. Unfortunately, another such film, the 6-hour "Jesus of Nazareth", which was made at a cost of 18 mil-

lion dollars by the Italian, Franco Zeffirelli, happens to be more successful for the producers, who ran it in two sessions: on Palm Sunday and Easter day. The initiator of this film production was revealed as "an ennobled British Jew", Lord Grade, by Anthony Burgess the British writer who did the film script at the request of Lord Grade. The film was in the making for some four years, but it was only last year that anything became known about it. The producers were advised by authorities on the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Moslem and even Mormon faiths. General Motors Corp. invested five million dollars in this project, but due to 15,000 protesting letters and threats not to buy cars made by them, at the last minute made a sensational announcement that it was revoking the agreement even at a substantial financial loss. NBC-TV investigated the possibility of another sponsor and Proctor and Gamble accepted the offer to sponsor the film in place of General Motors.

Obviously, the initiators of this profane deed well realized that the film might meet strong opposition and therefore arranged for several "closed door" showings to clergy of various denominations. Such an invitation was also received by the V. Rev. Protopresbyter George Grabbe, but he did not attend, suspecting blasphemy. The producer, Zeffirelli acknowledged himself that his film is going to create a lot of controversy and discussion because he felt that he was able to cope with the problem of presenting the Saviour "as an ordinary man", and also admitted that "the public is going to be annoyed that I am destroying their myths." Burgess, author of the film script, published in the April 3rd New York Times his explanations for the text. "The Gospels, I knew, were not enough", he wrote, "...the more I read Matthew, Mark and Luke, the more I was dissatisfied with their telling the story... There are four versions of the life of Christ, and the most popular version is the least reliable. This is the highly romantic fable by St. John." He had to "remake Judas from scratch." He also writes that the "12 Apostles are not well characterized in the Gospels. I had to bestow qualities on them." In order to preserve "historical truth", while profanely making up his own "gospels", Burgess carefully avoids mentioning the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to the Holy Virgin in the Annunciation, but refers to her "shameful" condition. Also not mentioned is the appearance of the Angel to Joseph, commanding him to go to Egypt. When describing the Nativity of Christ, the producers of the film not only avoid the mention of the appearance of the hosts of angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, but indicate that "some man" tells them to look for a newborn child, who will "care for the poor." In the scene presenting the Lord's baptism, our Saviour kneels before St. John the Baptist and he, instead of the voice of God the Father, says to Jesus Christ "This is my beloved Son." The words, "I have come to take on me the sins of the world; ye who follow me, must do the same", which are ascribed to the Lord, are clearly fabricated. From the second part of the film which describes the Saviour's Crucifixion everything is omitted which could be unpleasant to Jews. The mob's demands "crucify him" are omitted from the film. Pilate does not wash his hands as a witness to the innocence of Christ the Saviour. Also not mentioned is the earthquake, eclipse of the sun, the rending in two of the veil of the temple and the resurrection of many just people who had reposed. Nothing is said either of the arising of the Lord and His ascension to Heaven.

One would think it difficult to fabricate something less acceptable to a Christian than this blasphemous show. And yet the film received very favorable responses from many sides. The Vatican paper, "L'Osservatore Romano" and its broadcasting arm gave this film unprecedented top billing and devoted a lot of time and space. Bishop Fallani, who is in charge of sacred art in Italy wrote a long commendatory article. Pope Paul himself, without going into detail about the film, mentioned in his speech to some pilgrims that "We will see the representation (of Christ's passion) on our

television screens." Almost all who saw the preview of the movie found it to be exquisite. In all of these praises the Jews did not remain behind the Catholics. Rabbi Mark Tannenbaum of the American-Jewish Committee for Interreligious Affairs thought that the "Jewish community should be particularly gratified with this film in that it has not only avoided all of the negative images about Jews and Judaism which have nurtured anti-Semitism in the past, but has, on the contrary, consciously sought to portray first century Judaism in a warm, faithful and sympathetic light." Rabbi Friedlander also said that he "approves of the portrait of Jesus, the Jew" and that "the film should serve as a source of brotherhood and dialogue between Judaism and Christianity for many years to come." As much as one is mystified by the approval of the film on the part of Roman Catholics, it is easy to see why the Jews, who do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, are favourably impressed.

The "Christian Beacon" published by Pastor Carl McIntire lists the products made by Proctor and Gamble and also the telephone number, encouraging its readers to join in a boycott of those mentioned. Since it is expected that the film will be considered a "classic" and as such be shown every Paschal season, we are happy to reproduce this list for general knowledge and use.

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ALTAR GIRLS IN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Under the pressure of various organizations which fight for women's rights to the priesthood, many churches in America, and particularly in Brooklyn, permit girls to serve at the altar during the Mass, which so far has been a privilege open only to boys. As the paper "Daily News" of March 25th reported, Don Zirkel, editor of the official Catholic weekly of the Brooklyn diocese "the Tablet" said that they are serving at Mass "all over the country... Some bishops know it is going on and ignore it." He also added that the bishop of Brooklyn, Francis J. Mugavero, himself "has been at the altar in parishes where there were several altar girls serving." He said that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has put pressure on the Vatican in order to get official permission for girls to serve at the altar, but to no avail. The Rev. Daniel Hamilton, director of information for Rockville Centre, L.I., verified this information and said that correspondence between the US bishops and the Vatican is still continuing on the subject. Msgr. Desmond Vella, the Vice Chancellor of the New York archdiocese, thinks that girls should be allowed to hold the paten under the chin of communicants at communion services, may carry candles, march in processions and carry the cruets and gifts to a point near the altar and then hand them to a male usher or altar boy, but not present them directly to the priest. It is interesting to remember that the Episcopalians made the very same beginning before accepting women to be priests, and even bishops.

MODERNISM IN JUDAISM

The magazine "The Living Church" of April 10th reports that the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) included in a prayer book a new ritual for girls, an equivalent of the traditional circumcision for boys. The new rite is called "the covenant for Life" and symbolizes the bringing of a female into the covenant of her people.

Donations received and gratefully appreciated:

Kowalsky, Kochergin, P. Ivanov, Hudanish, The Tsar's Fund.