

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

NEWSLETTER #16

May-June, 1978

METROPOLITAN PHILARET IN EUROPE

On Sunday, 15/28 May, His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret departed for Europe on the ocean liner Queen Elizabeth II. He will spend most of his time resting in France at the Lesna Convent as his physicians have ordered. Nevertheless, Vladyka intends to visit England, spending two weeks in London to direct church life in that country. He also plans to visit Germany and to preside at a celebration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Archbishop Philothei's ordination to the holy priesthood, to be held in Hamburg.

Vladyka Philaret will return to America prior to the opening of the Bishops' Council (Sobor) scheduled to begin in New York on 28 August/10 September. The Council's work will conclude on Saturday, 10/23 September, with the glorification of Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg. At that time the final panikhida will be celebrated for her, followed by an all-night vigil service including special hymns composed in her honor. On Sunday, 11/24 September, all members of the Bishops' Council will participate in a solemn Divine Liturgy, after which the Blessed Xenia Fund will sponsor a dinner for all that have taken part in this joyous event.

Details of the schedule of solemnities will be announced in due course from the ambos of all parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and all interested may then express their desire to participate in the banquet.

AGAINST THE CONVOCATION OF AN "ECUMENICAL COUNCIL"

The French periodical Bulletin du Cercle d'Information Civique et Sociale, in its issue dated May 1, printed an editorial against the convocation of an ecumenical council at the present time. The article begins with a lengthy citation from an epistle of the Diocesan Assembly of the Western European Diocese which was presided over by Archbishop Antony of Geneva. It notes that it is inappropriate to convoke a council when three-fourths of the Orthodox Church is situated on territory governed by militant atheists and is deprived of freedom. On the other hand, the Diocesan Assembly forcefully and significantly spoke out against all modernism, among other things pointing to the Roman Catholic Church as an example internal collapse brought about by modernism. The epistle spoke out earnestly against ecumenism in no uncertain terms.

The Serbian Archimandrite Justin (Popovich) held to the same point of view in a statement from which the Bulletin also quoted extensively. In a French publication, the Roumanian priest Fr. Vergilius Georgiou, author of many books, expressed similar objections to the convocation of a council. He voiced many profound thoughts, refuting the ecumenical tendencies of the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow, pointing to marxist influence in their contemporary theology.

ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE PASCHALION

In the March issue of The Orthodox Observer, a publication of the Greek Archdiocese in America, an article appeared by Bishop Pierre L'Huillier of the Moscow Patriarchate on the question of the celebration of Pascha. Setting forth the history of the development of the celebration of Pascha, Bishop Pierre tries to suggest to his readers that there are no decrees in the canons which forbid the celebration of Pascha at the same time as the Jewish Passover. In Bishop Pierre's opinion, to interpret "to celebrate with the Jews" (Apostolic Canon VII) and "to celebrate Pascha with the Jews" (Council of Antioch, Canon VII) as precluding any coincidence of the Jewish Passover and Christian Pascha "is foreign and, in a sense, contrary to what was then decreed at Nicea."

However, it is well known to all that the text of the Nicean decree has not been preserved; yet it was still the basis of the decision of the Council of Antioch which met only sixteen years later. Canon I of the Council of Antioch imposes a strict penalty on anyone "who dares insist on having his own way, causing the laity to be led astray and turmoil in the Church, celebrating Pascha with the Jews." The renowned Greek canonist Matthew Vlastaris, in his detailed explanation of the canons concerning the paschalion, points out precisely the principle reason for such a decree: "Because, having separated ourselves from them (i.e., the Jews) in law and manner of thought, it is fitting that we separate ourselves from them on the days of festival." The religious isolation of Orthodox from heretics and Jews is indicated in a number of ecclesiastical canons; it is not surprising then that the Fathers of the Ecumenical Council applied this principle to Pascha as well. It is noteworthy also that this article by a bishop of the Moscow Patriarchate is trying to eliminate this principle to clear the road for the changing of the canons on the celebration of Pascha, for this is exactly what the ecumenists are in desperate need of. It is noteworthy also that this article, authored by a bishop of the Moscow jurisdiction, has been printed in full by The Orthodox Church, the official publication of the American Metropolia ("O.C.A.).

THE LIES OF TWO PATRIARCHS

The January, 1977 issue of The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate cites the texts of the speeches exchanged by Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios and Patriarch Pimen of Moscow. The latter was visiting Constantinople (Istanbul) and held a reception in Patriarch Demetrios' honor at the soviet consulate.

The persecution of the Church in the Soviet Union is so well known a fact that it has long since ceased to require refutation. The position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is not much better. The patriarch is the "ethnarch" of the Christian minority in a Muslim state which has persecuted Christianity for centuries, though not as systematically and persistently as has the communist regime.

Not long ago all the major magazines and newspapers in America reported a new outbreak of persecution against the Orthodox in Turkey. Among various details mention was made that because the patriarchate could not pay the huge tax levied against it, it was subjected by the authorities to an inventory of all its rugs, and even its linen! Archbishop Iakovos, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for America, did all he could to arouse public opinion here in favor of the persecuted Christians. However, this is what the Orthodox patriarchs had to say:

Patriarch Pimen stated: "The Russian Orthodox Church carries out her service amid the favorable conditions of the just society maintained by the Soviet people for the past sixty years. It is worthy of note that, in this year of jubilee for our homeland, a new constitution has been adopted by the

U.S.S.R., in which the great democratic principles which guarantee the freedom of conscience of all our citizens are confirmed with yet more force and clarity."

Replying to him, Patriarch Demetrios remarked on Patriarch Pimen's report concerning the new constitution which broadened freedom of conscience and religion in the U.S.S.R. with satisfaction, and boasted in turn that his government was not far behind the communists': "For our own part, we would also like to inform Your Beatitude that the constitution of our country provides for freedom of conscience and religion. And, as Ecumenical Patriarch, we abide under the protection of the constitution and the democratic laws of the Turkish state."

Metropolitan Meliton of Sardis, the principle depute of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at all ecumenical meetings also categorically denied that there is any persecution of Orthodoxy or Greeks in the Turkish republic.

SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH DEMANDS RIGHTS

The Ecumenical Press Service, a bulletin of the World Council of Churches, dated April 6, reported that the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church has turned to the Yugoslavian government with a demand for broader freedoms. A memorandum containing ten points was signed by Patriarch German and two bishops. The patriarch and his synod demand that the authorities cease meddling in ecclesiastical affairs, that children who study religion not be subjected to discrimination, and that the radio and news media stop ridiculing believers. Also among the points listed are the restitution of church properties confiscated by the government and social security benefits for teachers in theological schools.

FINALLY

Almost simultaneously, the New York Times and the Hellenic Press newspapers reported in mid-May that relations between the World Council of Churches and the hierarchy of the Church of Greece have become strained to the breaking point. As is apparent from an Athens report, the friction began as early as 1961, at the assembly in New Delhi, when the W.C.C. refused to include a statement of the Orthodox delegation in its report. The W.C.C. did not honor this refusal with any explanation, but consented to mail the Orthodox statement only on request, in no way including it in its report.

Although the frame of mind of the Protestant-ecumenists has in no way changed for the better, the official (new calendar) Greek Church has waited for seventeen years before finally airing her grievances against the W.C.C. publically. The Greek Church has been an organic member of the W.C.C. since its inception. Naturally, better late than never...

Archbishop Seraphim, primate of the (state) Church of Greece, gave an interview to a reporter of the New York Times during which he complained bitterly that the "Protestant elite" had relegated the Orthodox Church to second-class status. Archbishop Seraphim emphasized that the church he heads will demand a more equitable position (among the multitude of Protestant denominations). Metropolitan Panteleimon also took part in the interview, as well as several priests and two professors of theology.

Archbishop Seraphim complained that, considering that there are no less than 150 million Orthodox throughout the world, i.e. as many Orthodox as Protestants, the Orthodox have only 15% of the votes in the W.C.C. Besides this, representatives sent by the Orthodox to chair conferences and commissions are often not confirmed, or are replaced by others at the whim of the Council. "If we cannot name those we think best qualified, particularly to the Commission on Faith and Order, which considers questions of

doctrine, we run the danger that succeeding generations will charge us with betraying the Faith," said Metropolitan Panteleimon. He also stated that the "elite" consists of only a few persons who manipulate the central and executive committees; since the general assembly meets only once every six years, "they govern from behind the scenes, and they do what they want...They are all Protestants," added the metropolitan.

Archbishop Seraphim stressed that he was speaking only for the Church of Greece, and that "if we do not receive these assurances (publication of Orthodox statements and that representatives will not be summarily re'ected), we will suspend our participation." As far as we are concerned, may God grant that this happen!

When asked about Greek complaints, a spokesman for the W.C.C. declined to comment, but stated that Philip Potter, General Secretary of the Council, was on his way to visit a number of representatives of various churches, and that he planned to stop at Athens to meet with Archbishop Seraphim, primate of the Church of Greece.

A PURGE IN THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE?

The December, 1977 issue of the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate reports that two bishops have retired simultaneously for "reasons of health" and one due to "advanced age."

Pallady, Archbishop of Zhitomir and Ovruch, is being replaced by Archpriest Vasily Bodnarchuk of the diocese of Lvov; Archbishop Bogolep of Kirovgrad and Nikolaev resigned his see to Archimandrite Sevastian (Pilipchuk) of the diocese of Kiev; and Archbishop Iov was replaced by Archimandrite Amvrosy (Schurovy).

REPOSE OF ARCHBISHOP ERMOGEN

News has reached us from the U.S.S.R. that Archbishop Ermogen (Golubev), who long ago was forced into retirement and kept under house arrest, has reposed. He was persecuted for struggling against the closure of churches and for disagreeing with the policies of the Moscow Patriarchate, with which, however, he never broke communion.

TRISAGION AT THE GRAVE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

The May 24 issue of the Orthodox Observer, official publication of the Greek Archdiocese in America, reports that in Atlanta, Georgia, Bishop John of Thermon intoned a portion of the Orthodox service for the dead at a gathering held in honor of the well-known leftist black leader Dr. Martin Luther King. At the conclusion of the meeting, admirers of the late pastor proceeded to King's grave with candles, and there Bishop John served a trisagion (lita) for the dead. This was reported in the "parish news" column without comment. Unfortunately, the Ecumenical Patriarchate apparently does not consider it in any way out of the ordinary that an Orthodox bishop serve a trisagion for a Protestant minister, even one noted for his almost communistic public speeches.

MASONS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In our Newsletter #13 we cited a report that originated in Archbishop Lefevbre's circles concerning masons among the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Questioned about points raised in an article printed in the National Catholic Register (July 4th issue), a spokesman for the Vatican, Fr. Romeo Panciroli, stated that the lists printed therein "are so ridiculous that they do not even merit consideration." The paper devotes much space to the personality of MacKenna, the author of the expose,

pointing out that he is a former Dominican who at present has nothing to do with that order. The Vice-Prior of the Dominican Order stated that MacKenna belongs to a group of "right-right wing" fanatics which opposes all post-Vatican II reforms. Does this mean that one cannot believe him?

The Grand Master of the Italian masonic order, Mr. Salvini, refuted the accuracy of the list of masonic hierarchs published by MacKenna, but indirectly refuted the Vatican's objections as well. In 1974, Cardinal Seper made it clear that it was forbidden for clergy to become members of a masonic order, but that laymen were free to join if they wished. The Grand Master of the Italian masonic lodges stated only that the list published by MacKenna was "imprecise." However, he added that now there are "very fine relations between the church and the masons," and stated that "we have priests, and even bishops" who are lodge members. Let us keep in mind that when publishing his list, MacKenna cited masonic sources. Might this not explain the evasiveness of the Grand Master's "refutation"?

ADDENDUM TO OUR NOTE ON "QUASI-ORTHODOXY"

In the April issue of our newsletter (#15, p.6), we included a report from the magazine The Word concerning the conversion to Orthodoxy of several French uniate monks headed by Fr. Placide Dazeille. We have since received additional information indicating that the article as quoted was inexact.

As was pointed out, Fr. Placide was a Benedictine scholar who worked on the translation of the writings of the holy Fathers of the Eastern Church. Familiarity with them led him to a realization that the Roman Church was in error. He had had some experience in serving Eastern liturgical services (uniatic style) from serving as a "bi-ritual" priest for Catholic nuns in Africa. Fr. Placide's belief in the truth of Orthodoxy grew and came to the attention of his bishop, who attempted unsuccessfully to convince him otherwise. An article concerning Fr. Placide and his followers appeared in the newspaper Figaro, in which it was stated that he converted to Orthodoxy out of "ecumenical impatience." This aroused the interest of the readers, and Fr. Placide began to receive many sympathetic letters. He was also interviewed by a newspaper reporter and, despite assurances that Fr. Placide would be allowed to check the text, the interview was printed containing an incorrect transcript of their conversation. Nevertheless, he was not permitted to print a correction.

Fr. Placide and his brethren went to Mt. Athos to convert to Orthodoxy, and in one of the monasteries there were baptized and tonsured monks. At present, the future of Fr. Placide and his brotherhood is uncertain. He is disliked in France, not only by the Catholics, but by ecumenists as well, even by ecumenists who call themselves Orthodox. How their future will be resolved is difficult to say.

THE IMMANENT DANGER OF HINDUISM FOR CATHOLICS

Fr. Fox, a conservative Catholic priest, has published quite a large article, serialized in two issues of the National Catholic Register, entitled "Is Hinduism Invading Convents and Catechetics?"

By chance, the author encountered one of his former parochial school students who had converted to one of the numerous Hindu sects that are flourishing today. Grieved over the loss of his student, he decided to occupy himself with a serious investigation of this problem. Searching for information, he made the acquaintance of a cultured woman who, though raised

in a Christian family, converted to Hinduism and had been a zealous follower of her guru for twenty years, after which, having thoroughly acquainted herself with all of Hinduism's mystic teachings, returned to Christianity. A Catholic nun also wrote to him, requesting that her name not be divulged. She complained bitterly that the sisters in her convent had made higher courses in Hindu religious teachings mandatory; those who object are punished and, in some cases, even driven from the convent. By the way, we have heard a similar complaint from two nuns in New York. One stated that "the situation has changed so much since (she) was in school. What was an isolated case of Hinduism has developed into an epidemic." She thinks that to combat Hinduism, a close and fundamental knowledge of its teachings is essential; this is very difficult, because "trying to understand just what Hinduism is is a little like trying to hold a greased pig; until you learn the proper ropes," especially if one stops to consider that Hinduism consists of at least six philosophical systems.

Its principle attraction for modern youth (one, moreover, supported enthusiastically by the ecumenists) is the teaching that all religions are correct, though only Vedanta contains the fulness of truth. There is no personal God in Hinduism: man himself becomes divine as a result of labor and meditation.

Furthermore, the woman told Fr. Fox that the soviet government has decided to use Hinduism, hoping thereby to be better able to cope with Christianity. While she was in India, the secretary of the monastic order of Ramakrishna, considered the most influential in that country, related to her that the Soviet authorities had requested him to send swamis to Russia to teach Advanta Vedanta. Of course, this request was willingly fulfilled. We have already heard from people arriving from the U.S.S.R. that the youth are now showing an interest in Hindu teachings.

On returning to Christianity, the former Hindu wrote a critique of these teachings in the form of five letters to Catholic nuns, and also made a cassette tape of the same. The authore of the letters notes with anxiety that if the swamis were to lay seige to the stronghold, Catholic nuns might be able to deal with them; but "what is the portress to do when Hinduism enters clothed as a well-known Dominican theologian?"

Catholic periodicals do not hide the fact that many of the clergy exhibit an unhealthy interest in oriental mysticism. In particular, the famous Catholic writer and monk Thomas Merton was influenced by Tibetan teachings before his death, and died under suspicious circumstances in a Tibetan monastery.

THE AMERICAN METROPOLIA ("O.C.A.") AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The May issue of the Russian Orthodox Journal, published by the F.R.O.C. organization, contains a report on the festal celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of St. Nicholas' Cathedral in New York City, a building which presently is in the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate.

On Sunday, November 20, 1977, a solemn Divine Liturgy was served in which the following hierarchs took part: Bishop Irenei, exarch for the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate in America, Metropolitan Joseph of the Bulgarian Patriarchate, Bishop Elias of the Antiochian (Syrian) Church, and Bishop Herman of Wilkes-Barre, representative of the "Orthodox Church in America" (formerly the Metropolia).

A banquet was held afterwards at the Sts. Peter and Paul Center in Passaic, N.J. In his opening speech at the banquet, the Moscow hierarch noted that "with the establishment of the autocephalous Orthodox Church

in America (sic) in April, 1970, St. Nicholas Cathedral became the representation of the Most Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. In connection with this event, the cathedral became not only the historical and sacred monument, but also the symbol of the great and holy mission to assist Orthodox unity in America."

A week later, in the June issue of the Orthodox Church, official publication of the "O.C.A.", among a number of other short accounts of events in its church life, it was reported that in May a delegation was sent by the "O.C.A." to Moscow to take part in a celebration marking the sixtieth anniversary of the election of Patriarch Tikhon to the patriarchal throne. The delegates were Bishop Dimitri of Hartford and New England, accompanied by the secretary of the Holy Synod and two priests, Frs. Sergius Kuharsky and Leonid Kishkovsky. The latter is at present the pastor of their Sea Cliff, N.Y. parish.

According to the same report the "O.C.A." also sent a delegation to a celebration marking the 25th anniversary of the restoration of the Bulgarian Patriarchate. The delegation sent to Sofia included Bishop Herman of Wilkes-Barre and Archpriest John Skvir, a member of the "O.C.A."s Metropolitan Council and its Department of External Affairs. The delegation presented the patriarch with an icon of St. Herman of Alaska.

One should keep in mind that when "autocephaly" was received from Moscow, those who were disturbed by it were assured that contact with Moscow would cease then and there. But, as we see from the publications of the daughter-church, its bonds with the Moscow Patriarchate have become, if anything, tighter.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE "ANTI-MISSIONARY LAW"

As reported in the May issue (#232) of the Associated Press Bulletin, in reply to a law passed by the Israeli government and which went into effect on April 1, prohibiting anyone, under pain of fine and imprisonment, from converting others to one's own religion through material inducement, Patriarch Benedictos of Jerusalem, as well as the Latin and Armenian patriarchs, sent a joint protest to the president of Israel.

President Katzir replied to each of the patriarchs with an identical letter in which he explained in detail that this law was passed in association with a similar motion passed by the W.C.C., and also pointed out that Israel is one of a number of nations that has signed an accord on human rights and will adhere strictly to the point of view that every man has the right to freedom of religion and conscience, including the right to change his religion.

However, seventeen days after the new law went into effect, a Jewish Protestant minister, the publisher of the magazine Me-et Le-et, fell victim to it. Baruch Maoz was summarily called to appear at the police station in Rishon Letzion, near Tel Aviv, and was interrogated concerning a matter which fell under the new law but which had occurred in December, before the law took effect. The police wanted to know if he had offered people material inducements to convert to Protestantism, demanded an account of his activities and a list of his friends and acquaintances, with the assurance that it would remain confidential.

The police authorities refused to inform the defendant as to the reason for their intervention and concealed from him the Minister of Justice's instruction, issued more than a month previously, that "no investigation by the law enforcement officers in connection with the Penal Code Amendment Law (Enticement to Change Religion) 1977 was permitted without his prior authorization."

In reply to an inquiry made to the cleric in question to Prof. Aaron Barak, Minister of Justice, the latter replied by telephone that "he did promise to look into the matter."

The editors of the Associated Christian Press Bulletin note with concern that if the police permit themselves to act without the knowledge and consent of the Minister of Justice, can we truly rely on the assurances of the arbiters, namely that cases of intimidation and illegal interference will cease in the future?

THE OLD TESTAMENT SHOULD BE RENAMED

The April 21st issue of the National Catholic Reporter printed a lengthy article by the Catholic priest Fr. John Pawlikowski, chairman of the Department of History and Doctrine of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a member of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations. The entire article is based on the argument that it is essential to change the name of the Old Testament because one can sense in this term a prideful superiority of the New Testament over the Old.

"Our willingness to drop the term Old Testament will serve as a litmus test of Christianity's basic change of heart, a clear and unquestionable indication that we have finally forsaken the old relationship model in favor of the one of equality between two faith communities." The author notes correctly that if the term "Old" is eliminated, inevitably the question will arise over a suitable term to take its place. The Catholic priest considers the best possible alternative to be "Hebrew Scriptures," although he does acknowledge that such a term severely limits the entire concept of the Bible. Nonetheless, he prefers this term because it will enable "Christians to move from haughtiness to humility in their perception of Judaism."

Another, no less important question confronts this Catholic cleric: if he eventually succeeds in renaming the Old Testament the "Hebrew Scriptures," what will he do with the New Testament? The Catholic priest has a solution for this, too: "Frankly, I do not think it would be that detrimental to continue using this term for the Christian biblical books as long as we altered the Church's consciousness about the fundamental Jewish-Christian relationship through the switch to "Hebrew Scriptures." However, the author suggests the adoption of the term "Christian Scriptures" or "Apostolic Scriptures."

But, he concludes: "At this moment, however, I would concentrate especially on the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures problem and leave the New Testament for later."

THE REBIRTH OF ASTROLOGY

Evangelical Newsletter, a Protestant bulletin, draws attention to the fact that lately interest in astrology has greatly increased. Of the 1500 newspapers published in America, 1250 carry astrology columns which print "predictions" for each day. In six universities astrology is taught as an elective course. According to statistics, one fourth of the American population believes in the astrologers' predictions, and three fourths know the names of the astrological symbols.

NEW ECUMENICAL LITURGY

As reported by the Ecumenical Press Service in its April 20 release, the W.C.C. has been asked to prepare a new liturgy. This suggestion was made by a work-shop committee conducted by the W.C.C. at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, and which discussed the question of the renewal of congregational life.

The subcommittee for the question of the renewal of congregational life remarked on the great progress reached by the ecumenists on the question of understanding the essence of the eucharist, stating that a new text might be used in conjunction with already existing services by all denominations presently occupied with the revision of their liturgies.

Surveys of the present state of affairs in various congregations indicate that the committee should concentrate especially on questions of belief and creativity, liturgics and culture, worship and the church's role in the life of society.

The subcommittee recommended that a three-year period be set aside, during which it would be possible for different congregations to benefit from an exchange of views and a reappraisal of individual liturgical practices. Reports and proposals should be submitted to the working group of the subcommittee by the beginning of August.

THEY TRIED TOO HARD

Two Catholic newspapers, the National Catholic Register and the National Catholic Reporter, have reported that an ecumenical service took place in Providence, Rhode Island, on April 1.

Elizabeth Habecker, an episcopalian priestess, received an invitation from Catholic nuns to deliver a lecture which was attended by some fifty outsiders as well as by the nuns themselves. After the lecture, the guest served a mass. All took part, including the Catholic nuns (Sisters of Mercy), and received the episcopalian eucharist.

News of this ecumenical mass leaked to the press and the local Catholic bishop, Louis Gellneau, learned of it only from the newspapers. The bishop was greatly incensed and described the event as a "scandal." Emphasizing that this service had not been authorized by him, and that "those Catholics who took part in it and received communion acted contrary to church teaching and canon law." Nevertheless, he did admit that his church encourages Catholics to take part in the ecumenical services of other denominations, but that "full participation, especially when signified by receiving communion at such services, is not permitted."

Can the Catholic nuns be blamed for misunderstanding their bishops?

The Protestant magazine Christianity Today, printing an article on this event in its May issue, notes rather sarcastically that the service took place on April Fools' Day. The matter remains that the episcopalian priestess hid from the Catholic diocese the fact that she intended to serve mass in addition to delivering the lecture she had been called to give.

WOMEN PRIESTS A PROBLEM IN SWEDEN

The International Herald Tribune carried an article in its May 31 issue concerning unrest in religious circles in Sweden over female ministers. Sweden was the first country whose parliament championed the cause of women's rights, permitting women to be ordained to the Lutheran pastorate as early as 1958. In fact, parliament is the head of the Lutheran Church in Sweden.

Now women, hoping that all have grown accustomed to their pastoral role and that the turmoil surrounding their pretensions has died down, have begun to strive towards the episcopacy. This has evoked new debates and controversies, based not on the question of women's equality as before, but on religious arguments. All of this has had a drastic effect on church attendance throughout the nation, which is almost entirely Lutheran.

The newspaper notes that many have begun to abandon their religion. At present there are two hundred seventy-five female pastors in Sweden.

Lennart Stolt, head of the Church Department at the Ministry of Religion, had hoped that passions had long since abated, but "we know now it just isn't so. The bishop gives a sermon in Stockholm and the whole thing explodes— questions in parliament and everywhere...The biggest opposition comes from younger priests. It is very strange," he said. There are thirteen bishops in Sweden, and only one of them, the primate, is opposed to women pastors.

It is interesting that at first, in the '60s, the controversy in Sweden over women pastors revolved exclusively around the issue of equal rights with men. But now it is discussed principally from the biblical standpoint, with special emphasis on the Apostle Paul's words: "Let your women keep silence in the church."

Mrs. Berglund, a Lutheran pastor, explained sadly: "They say that God is against us. It is very hard to fight them. But in the Bible you can't find anything for or against women priests. Jesus didn't talk about priests. How can they know what God wants?"

PAGAN WOMEN IN THE 20th CENTURY

A group of women fighting for equal rights arranged a religious worship service at the University of California at Santa Cruz, at which one in particular declared herself to be a witch. The Los Angeles Times printed a photograph of the half-naked dancers. Appearing in April, an article about this event gave rise to many protests because the university is a state institution funded by tax dollars. The university administration also permitted on its grounds a three-day festival in honor of the "Great Goddess."

DONATIONS RECEIVED AND GREATLY APPRECIATED: Archbishop Theodosy (Australia), Fr. Anthony Gavalas, Archpriest A. Nakonechny, Archpriest V. Khmelev, Archimandrite Panteleimon--two donations (Holy Transfiguration Monastery), Archpriest I. Petrov (Paraguay), Fr. I Znachkovsky (Italy), V. Vishnevski, A. Kochergin, P. Iljinsky, C. Kashadaev and D. Levitsky.