

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC & FOREIGN RELATIONS  
of the  
SYNOD OF BISHOPS  
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA  
NEWSLETTER #50

Courageous Gesture on the Part of the Church of Serbia

According to a report in "The Way of Orthodoxy" ["Put' Pravoslavia"], its official periodical in America, the Sacred Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church has written a letter to the Yugoslavian Supreme Federal Committee for Religious Affairs, stating that it is declaring Radovan Samardzhic, the secretary of that ministry, "persona non grata." Samardzhic had given an interview to the Zagreb-based newspaper "Polet", by which, in the opinion of the Synod, "the Serbian Orthodox Church and her communities and periodicals, millions of believers, priests and monastics, were subjected to crude insult." In another interview, which appeared in "Politics Illustrated", Samardzhic spoke of a "new phase of ideological warfare by organized socialist powers against religious communities."

As regards his position, Samardzhic occupies one of the highest posts in the government, working in direct contact with representatives of the Church of Serbia. The public protest of the Serbian Church against such a high-level governmental functionary is considered unprecedented.

At the same time, "Pravoslavie", the official newspaper of the Patriarchate of Serbia, complains of the oppression the faithful are subjected to in the various provinces of the nation. Thus, there have been cases where the parents of young children are subjected to fines solely because, during the summer vacation period they sent their children to church schools; this despite the fact that there is no provision for such a fine in the law. In a certain place, on a solitary road leading to a monastery, a toll-booth was erected to tax pilgrims; this was removed only after the Church managed to secure its suppression by pressuring the local government. In another place, the inhabitants of an Orthodox village decided to construct a chapel in their cemetery. To this end they obtained the official permission of the authorities and began construction, using labor donated freely to the Church. The construction was almost completed, lacking only the erection of the cross on the roof, when the selfsame authorities refused to allow this to be done, declaring that "such a fancy decoration would impart to the building a religious character." The children in yet another locality, who took part in a church event, were photographed, and their photographs were sent to the school administration, which began to persecute them and make them.

Consecration of the Walls of the Church of St. Sava in Belgrade

As a result of the persistent efforts of the Church of Serbia over a period of many years, the communist government has finally permitted it to resume construction on the immense memorial church, begun prior to World War II, on the site where, 390 years ago, the relics of St. Savva, the great hierarch of the Church of

Serbia.

The solemnity took place on May 12, and was presided over by His Holiness, Patriarch German, with twenty bishops, twenty-seven priests, twenty-two deacons and a multitude of servers and banner-bearers assisting. The number of servers was limited because of lack of space. The combined choirs of the Belgrade parishes, numbering some 250 voices under the direction of Dushan Miladinovic, the premier Serbian director, sang on the unfinished walls of the church.

The vast crowd could not be accommodated within the walls of the church, and spilled out onto the square in front of the church. It is very difficult to calculate the number of people present: various figures, from 20,000 to 200,000, have been put forward; the most accurate assessment lies somewhere in between, probably somewhere around 100,000.

At the beginning of the service, the Patriarch passed through the immense crowd with difficulty and entered the church, surrounded by bishops and clergy. He was greeted with the sound of ringing bells, the cries of greeting of the crowd and the applause of his flock, while he, radiant with joy, intoned the verse from the Psalm: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein."

The solemn liturgy was repeatedly interrupted by the ecstatic applause of the faithful, who were unable to contain their joy at seeing the magnificence of the church, which had been arrayed in golden paschal vestments.

The Patriarch's sermon began with the words: "Let us rejoice!" After the conclusion of the liturgy, the Patriarch took up a scroll, which lay in a prominent place, on which the following message was inscribed: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We, German, by the mercy of God Orthodox Archbishop of Pech', Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovtsy and Patriarch of Serbia, with all the hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church have celebrated today, Sunday, 12 May/20 April 1985, the holy liturgy, and have performed a new consecration of the foundation begun long ago (in 1935) in Belgrade, on the Vrachara, of the memorial church dedicated to the holy hierarch Savva, first Archbishop and enlightener, to which this scroll and our signatures bear witness." In a solemn ceremony, the scroll was sealed in the foundation. This event, so joyful for the Church of Serbia, was also noted by a resolution of the Council of Bishops.

#### THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

"The Herald" ("Glasnik"), the official periodical of the Patriarchate of Serbia, reports in its June, 1985, issue that, between May 10-18, the Council of Bishops of the Church of Serbia met in Belgrade, in which all its bishops, with the exception of Bishops Firmilian and Gregory, who were unable to attend for reasons of poor health, took part.

As in past years, the diocesan bishops complained of oppression on the part of the authorities, who have confiscated church lands, putting up their own buildings on them. Permission for the erection of new churches is obtained only with great difficulty and is rarely given. Permission to restore church buildings is also very difficult to obtain.

The government media present the people with a distorted understanding of the Church and slight it as its enemy, and accuse it of nationalism, and lately of "clerico-nationalism."

Government institutions decline to answer the complaints of the Church and ignore them completely, continuing to oppress the faithful. As in the past, the children of religious parents are persecuted in school.

The Council resolved to remove South America from the jurisdiction of the American bishops and to transfer it to the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch.

It was also resolved that "in the future, no one in our country has the right to publish an Orthodox calendar besides the Synod of Bishops." The Serbian bishops abroad will, at their request, be provided with a model enabling them to produce the calendar in their own countries.

The Council noted with pleasure such joyful events in the Church as the permission to resume construction of the Church of St. Savva, to extend the wing of the building housing the Theological Faculty, and to open in several dioceses museums displaying ecclesiastical articles, vestments, icons and books.

A resolution was also adopted prohibiting the taking of photographs in monasteries and churches.

#### COMMEMORATION OF PATRIARCH GABRIEL

In its June, 1985, issue, "Pravoslavl'e", a newspaper of the Serbian Orthodox Church, published the reminiscences of the priest Vasa Vuich about Patriarch Gabriel, who was imprisoned in the Rakovits Monastery in 1942, after his arrest by the Nazis.

The priest fled his place of residence because of the war and found himself in Rakovits with his family. He was attached to the clergy there and often served.

The Patriarch, who was kept under strict house arrest in the monastery, stood in the sanctuary when he attended services, sometimes making brief remarks to those serving and assisting.

When a decent secret-policeman was assigned to His Holiness, the Patriarch would send him some of his own food. After dinner, he was permitted to take a stroll, and walking around the church, the Patriarch would pet the animals who lovingly approached him, providing him with a welcome diversion amid his monotonous life. However, this did not continue for long.

One night, rifle fire was heard near the monastery. In the morning, a Nazi military detachment pulled up in a truck. All the monastery's residents, nuns and even children, hurried out into the courtyard, expecting something horrible. They all gathered around the truck and continued to wait. Finally, escorted by soldiers, the Patriarch was led forth, the crowd of expectant people parting before him. The Patriarch blessed those standing there and said to them: "Pray to God and the all-holy Theotokos." The doors of the truck slammed shut and the Patriarch was driven off to an unknown destination.

The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is very much indebted to Patriarch Gabriel for his good relations with it, and especially for the declaration he made in London to the effect that, contrary to rumors, Metropolitan Anastasy had never enjoyed the trust of the Nazis and had always kept himself quite loyal to the Church of Serbia.

#### THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

The journalist A. Krasnov-Levitin gave an interesting interview which appeared in the Paris-based newspaper "Russian Thought" ("Russkaya Mysl'"), on August 2, 1985.

Krasnov-Levitin had gone on pilgrimage to Holy Mount Athos, and from there had passed through Constantinople. He cannot find sufficient words to describe the beauty of the Church of Holy Wisdom, which has been turned into a museum in which the frescoes formerly plastered over by the Turks are now exposed to view.

Krasnov-Levitin's visit to the Patriarchate left a particularly deep impression upon him. He says that the Moscow Patriarchate lives in paradise, compared to that of Constantinople. The Ecumenical Patriarchate owns "a run-down house on a dirty street on the outskirts of the city. There is a general air of depression. When I inscribed a copy of my book 'To the Archbishop of Constantinople,' the monk with whom I was conversing flinched: they are afraid to utter the word 'Constantinople', saying only 'Stambul'... There are neither Orthodox institutions of education nor any printing establishment. The atmosphere reminded me of our Patriarchate in the '30s."

The Patriarchate of Constantinople is, of course, to be pitied; yet is not its present grievous situation the result of its betrayal of Orthodoxy?

#### A RENOVATIONIST GREEK BISHOP

In 1984, the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America consecrated as bishop of Boston the Greek-American George Turnas, who took the name Methodius when he became a monk.

Appointed to the very important see of Boston, the new hierarch gave an interview to a newspaper reporter, declining to conceal his liberal views, speaking of serious matters with the lack of seriousness typical of modernists.

Thus, he declared to the reporter that "the Holy Spirit has a lot in store for us Orthodox," and therefore, it is absolutely essential to hasten the convocation of an Ecumenical Council.

The Diocese of Boston consists of sixty-three parishes with 150,000 parishioners, its own college and the only seminary for Greeks in America.

Bishop Methodius has announced publically that he "will support as loudly as [he] can" the opposition to abortion, yet at the same time he wants to "open the windows of our Church," since the Vatican Council did so for the Roman Catholics. He does not take into consideration that the Vatican Council has nearly destroyed Catholicism with its reforms. In his opinion, the Ecumenical Council has been somewhat delayed because of difficulties faced by Orthodox Churches in the Soviet Union and countries elsewhere under communist rule. But before the upcoming Council, upon which all the modernists place their hopes, the first matters addressed must be such questions as the changing of the paschalion. "We have to ask ourselves what is the essence, whether it is the day we celebrate Easter or the fact that we celebrate together."

As to the fasting required before receiving Communion, he said, they "are undoable by even the most ascetic of our people" and must be revised by the synod; this is not, he remarked, "a dogmatic issue, but a means by which...we prepare ourselves to grow closer to God."

As regards candidates for the episcopate, Bishop Methodius preaches blatant renovationism, considering that they should not only be chosen "from the 10% of the clergy who are celibate, but also from our married priests."

Of himself this renovationist bishop said that "I would be less than honest to say there are not times when I wish I had a

family. I take comfort in the fact that my classmates are happy and living a beautiful Christian life."

Not far from his position is also Bishop Anthony of San Francisco, who also impatiently awaits the new Ecumenical Council, hoping that at it the fasts will be abolished, priests permitted to marry a second time, married priests ordained to the episcopate, and the rest of the renovationist agenda implemented.

#### THE "EVANGELICAL ORTHODOX CHURCH"

The magazine "Christianity Today" reports that this past year, the nineteen bishops of the so-called Evangelical Orthodox Church decided to enter the universal Eastern Church, to which end, under the guidance of their bishop Peter Gillquist, they are flying to Constantinople for negotiations with Patriarch Demetrius. The Greek Bishop Maximus of Pittsburgh, of the jurisdiction of Archbishop Iakovos, has agreed to accompany the group. Bishop Maximus has considerable sympathy for this group, which came together only recently (in 1979), when six men ordained themselves bishops, later adding another thirteen such "bishops" to their number. They claim some 2,500 adherents throughout ten states and Canada.

Seeking the possibility of entering the Orthodox Church, yet not accepting Orthodoxy, they entered into negotiations with the "Orthodox Church in America."

These Protestants hope that they will succeed in convincing the Greeks to accept them as an autonomous group, as the did the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese.

It is interesting that both Constantinople and the "Orthodox Church in America" see the principal impediment to the recognition of this group as Orthodox in the fact that its entire episcopate is married.

#### ON THE BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The newsletter of the Keston News Service cites a passage from "Dukhovna Kul'tura", the official magazine of the synod of the Church of Bulgaria, regarding the 40th anniversary of the communist regime in Bulgaria.

The author of the article, Nikolai Madzhorov, reports that the Bulgarian Church has 3,720 churches and chapels, 120 monasteries with approximately 200 monks, a similar number of nuns and 1,500 priests. There is a seminary and an institution of higher theological education. The Patriarchate publishes a weekly newspaper, "Church Herald" ("Tserkoven Vestnik"), and a monthly magazine, "Dukhovna Kul'tura" ("Spiritual Culture"). The Church also has its own museum, and the second edition of a Bible in Bulgarian has been printed.

As is usual in countries under the control of communist governments, the author maintains that "All this speaks convincingly for the successful accomplishment of the Church's mission, for the normal and loyal relationship between Church and state in our country. This strengthens, among Orthodox believers, a patriotic loyalty towards the people's government."

This Church, which is loyal to its government, however, makes no mention of the destruction of churches and monasteries it has undertaken.

#### ON THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

As "The Sunday Telegraph" newspaper reports in its May 5, 1985 issue, Romanian emigres are very disturbed by reports that

a goodly number of famous and old churches in their capital (several from the 16th and 17th centuries) have been demolished on the excuse that the government needs the land on which they stand for the construction of new buildings. One monastery church in Bucharest has been razed to make room for a new presidential palace. The regime's plans call for virtually the complete demolition of the Uranus quarter of the capital, the oldest part of which contains many of the churches and other old buildings. They are to be replaced by a vast thoroughfare leading from the palace to a monument commemorating the Ceausescu "era" sited at or near the Patriarchate.

The "clearing" of this area was conducted in the most inhuman manner possible. Families were told to vacate their homes only hours before the bulldozers arrived, and some 40,000 people have been relocated to the suburbs. The authorities have not destroyed all the churches in the area. Some have been removed from their "inconvenient" positions to other sites, with considerable damage, according to observers.

There are reports that some buildings not connected with the redevelopment have been demolished because of President Ceausescu's hatred for the Church. One such building is the Monastery of Vacaresti, just outside Bucharest.

Since 1984, more than one quarter of historic Bucharest has been demolished, according to information received from Romania.

At a press conference in Washington, D.C., David Van der Bank, former United States ambassador to Romania, together with several congressmen, accused the Romanian government of the systematic destruction of the religious freedom of its citizens. He also stated that the World Reformed Union sent 20,000 Bibles to Romania, but they never reached the persons to whom they were sent; instead, the government had them reprocessed into toilet paper. Pastor Alexander Khavatoi said that he himself saw scriptural passages on rolls of toilet paper, and thus concluded as to the fate of the Bibles sent from abroad.

#### PARTICIPATION OF THE ORTHODOX IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

In its May issue, "One World", the official periodical of the World Council of Churches, complains about the insufficient participation of the Orthodox in that organization. The Greek priest George Tsetsis, the new Orthodox representative in the W.C.C., complains that "the Orthodox do not always take advantage of the possibilities offered by the [World] Council [of Churches]." Tsetsis was appointed a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to replace Metropolitan Emilianos (Timiadis) who, having served in that capacity for twenty-five years, had since stepped down.

About 19% of the members of the W.C.C. governing bodies are from Orthodox Churches, but a target of 23% representation on the working groups that oversee the programs of the W.C.C.'s subunits (agreed on at an inter-Orthodox consultation in 1982) could not be reached this year. If the Orthodox could muster a sufficient number of representatives, they could exercise an influence on the programs of the W.C.C. However, to find Orthodox who would want to work in that organization and, at the same time, possess sufficient theological education to deal with the heterodox has proved a daunting task. Fr. Tsetsis therefore complains that "Without the Orthodox presence, the W.C.C. would be a Protestant federation, useful for intra-Protestant dialogue and cooperation, but of limited scope as far as the theological search towards finding the

means leading to Christian unity is concerned."

He also remarks that "many Orthodox Churches participate in the W.C.C. mainly with persons who have been on the front lines for many years." Fr. Tsetsis suggests that scholarships be given to young Orthodox people for professional theological study, to send them to ecumenical conferences and attract them to the work of ecumenism from their youth.

#### DESTRUCTION OF AN HISTORIC CHURCH BY THE TURKS

In its June 13 issue, the "Hellenic Chronicle" newspaper reports that the 145-year old Church of the Holy Greatmartyr George of Makrochori has been at least partially demolished. This church has been made the object of demolition for the flimsy excuse of widening a sidewalk! A significant part of it has already been completely destroyed. The interior, meanwhile, has been divided by a new wall separating the condemned segment from the remainder of the church.

The church was considered a historical monument and was considered to be protected by the provisions of several articles of the 1982 Treaty of Lausanne. When it became known that the church was to be razed, the government of Greece sent a protest to that of Turkey, and the latter assured the Greeks that the church would not be touched. However, even while the Turks were assuring the Orthodox that they would hold to the Treaty of 1982, the church had already been partially demolished. Greek societies in America have joined their protests to those of their compatriots, and have sent out many telegrams to the American authorities and to the Turkish ambassador in the United States.

#### ANGLICANS IN ENGLAND ALTER THEIR POSITION

In mid-June of 1985, the General Synod of the Anglican Church resolved, by a majority of votes, henceforth to permit the ordination of female deacons, though they have not yet gone so far as to endorse the ordination of female priests and bishops. The breakdown of voting statistics was as follows: 36 bishops for, none against; 147 clergymen for, 49 against; 137 laymen for, 34 against.

If Parliament ratifies this resolution, the 350 deaconesses of the Anglican Church will be able to take their place alongside male deacons, performing marriages and assisting priests in other ways.

Although autonomous branches of the Anglican Church (which is known in America as the Episcopalian Church) have permitted ordination of women to their priesthood within recent years, the Anglican Church in England has refrained hitherto from taking such a step, fearing that the recognition of women as candidates for priestly ordination might have a detrimental effect upon their dialogue with the Orthodox and Roman Catholics.

It is anticipated that Parliament will ratify the measure, admitting women to the clergy, and observers remark that the pressure will be great to allow women deacons to advance to the next step, the priesthood.

#### CATHOLICS & JEWS

The leadership of the United States' 780 Reform Jewish congregations has declared that hopes to foster a closer collaboration with the Catholics, to establish amicable relations between the two

religions. This resolution was made in connection with the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II, which declared that the Jews as a nation did not take part in the crucifixion of Christ.

Although relations between Jews and Catholics have improved significantly, the Jews complain that Catholicism's new teaching has not filtered down sufficiently to the Catholic rank and file, so that, at the present time, misunderstandings are still possible between the two religions.

To establish closer relations, the Reform Jews recommend that theological dialogues between Catholic parishes and synagogues be organized more frequently; that the teaching of catechism be carried out in the presence of representatives of both religions and, if possible, that joint classes be held and teachers exchanged in religious school programs. The Jews have not made clear how they intend to teach Catholics about the Savior. Among the other proposals there is also one to "unite on common social concerns, such as nuclear disarmament, economic justice and other issues on which there is agreement between the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops."

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Reform group, said in endorsing the resolution that "tensions remain" despite recent progress in Catholic-Jewish relations. He complained that the Vatican does not have diplomatic relations with Israel, although the Pope has met with Arafat. "But the deadly sting has been removed," said Rabbi Schindler, "and our differences are reduced to their proper proportion." Thus did the New York Times report the event in its May 20, 1985 issue.

However, a month later, when the Catholics issued a document on the Jews, the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations reacted with dismay, saying: "We are dismayed that it was published without prior consultation with the Jewish community."

The Vatican document is an instruction for Catholic priests on how they are to speak and what they are to say to Catholics about Judaism. It calls for an end to presenting Judaism in "a prejudiced, distorted manner," and said that study should "help in understanding the meaning for the Jews" of the "Holocaust."

Rabbi Tannenbaum found that "there are some positive clarifications in the statement which we welcome." Yet at the same time, he stated, "there are also a number of deeply troublesome references that we regard as regressive compared to earlier documents." In his opinion, those parts which touch upon the government of Israel and the Holocaust "are totally inadequate." Moreover, he said the tone of the document was not warm and conciliatory, such as other recent statements by Pope John Paul and his immediate predecessors.

Rabbi Schindler remarked with regret that "the Vatican document makes such short shrift of the Holocaust and that it ignores the religious significance to Jews of the rebirth of the state of Israel."

Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, said that his organization's affiliates in twenty countries would seek clarification from local Catholic bishops as to their interpretation of the meaning and significance of the Vatican document.

#### PREPARATION FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE ANTICHRIST

In its June 22 issue, Present, a conservative French newspaper, printed a very significant article by the well-known journalist



Jean Madiran, entitled: "Rome invites Catholics to Prepare with the Jews for the coming of the Messiah. Reverend Father, explain this to me." Here is a translation of this extremely important article:

"Are you aware," writes Madiran, "that, in Rome, the Pontifical Commission for Religious Dialogue with Judaism has been joined not to the 'Secretariat for Relations with Non-Christians,' but to the 'Secretariat for the Unification of Christians,' under the presidency of Cardinal Willebrands? After three years of work, this pontifical commission has only just published a twelve-page document containing new directives 'for the correct presentation of Jews and Judaism in sermons and the catechism of the Catholic Church.' The document is signed by the three main representatives of the Commission: the cardinal-president, the vice president, Pierre Duprey, and the secretary, Jorge Mejia. It is dated May, 1985, and indication was made on it to the effect that it was not to be published before June 24.

"The theological considerations of this document are remarkable in many respects. It would require much space and time to comment upon them. Let us, then, pass immediately on to its conclusions and practical instructions.

"1. Paragraph 12 is the most important. It deserves citation in full:

"Attentive to the very God Who spoke on the basis of the same Word (as the Jews have), we must bear witness to the same memory and common hope in Him Who is the Lord of history. We should, therefore, take upon ourselves the responsibility of preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah, working together for social justice, for respect for the rights of the individual person and of nations, for social and international reconciliation. We, Jews and Christians, are urged to do this by the law of love for our neighbor, a common yearning for the Kingdom of God, and the great heritage of the prophets. Transmitted sufficiently early through catechesis, such a concept would educate young Christians in a concrete fashion for relations in cooperation with the Jews which go beyond simple dialogue."

"To work together with the Jews to prepare the world together for the coming of the Messiah... Reverend Father, explain this to me.

"2. We have much to learn. The Roman document reproaches the 'distressing ignorance of history and the traditions of Judaism' among Catholics. It might as well reproach them, in the first place, for 'distressing ignorance of the history and traditions of... Catholicism,' but it does not address this issue. On the contrary, it urges them to 'rid themselves of the traditional conception.':

"'They must in every instance rid themselves of the traditional conception of a people punished.'

"Punished for what? The traditional conception has not accused the Jewish people of committing 'deicide.' The Catechism of the Council of Trent, a witness to catholic Tradition, points out that, because of their own sins, Christians are more guilty than the Jews for the death of Christ, since the Jews 'knew not what they were doing,' whereas the Christians know what they are doing. The religious culpability of the Jewish people (which does not entail any personal moral guilt for any Jew as an individual) lies in the fact that they do not recognize the divinity of Jesus Christ, and afterwards, the divinity of the Church He founded, with all the consequences attendant upon that refusal, which is a rejection of the supernatural vocation of the chosen people. Such is the traditional catholic conception.

"Rome now orders [its adherents] to 'rid themselves' of this 'traditional conception,' because the Church has been mistaken on the point for two millenia. But if the Church has been in error for two millenia, tell me, Reverend Father, what guarantee do we have that she is not mistaken today on the very same subject?

"3. After these two orders, which are glaring in their novelty, there is that which is glaring in its absence. It teaches Catholics to 'rid themselves' of their 'traditional conception,' it instructs us to work together with the Jews to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, but it no longer invites us to pray for the conversion of the Jews, nor to work towards this in any manner; it is finished. They no longer have any need of the Gospel or of baptism. Reverend Father, explain this to me. And you, Most Reverend Cardinal, author responsible for these orders: explain yourself.

"Jean Madiran."

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is difficult to overestimate the significance of the facts reported in the above-cited article of Jean Maridan. It concerns an epochal event: a volte-face in the Vatican unnoticed by anyone: its renunciation of Christian belief in the Second Coming of the Savior in glory by its expression of readiness to prepare for the coming of the false messiah, the Antichrist.

#### AN OUTBREAK OF ANTI-MASONIC STATEMENTS

The July 11 issue of the Catholic newspaper "The Wanderer" contains an article entitled "Bishops' Committee Surprisingly Condemns Freemasonry."

The fact is that the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy toward masonry has, beginning with the '40s, repeatedly changed. Prior to the above-mentioned period, every Catholic knew very well that his religion was inconsistent with masonry. However, by 1976, Terence Cardinal Cooke spoke before a gathering of 3,000 masons and lamented the fact that, in the past, there was a marked alienation between Catholics and masons, holding that it was "unfortunate, unnatural and pathological" that Catholics could "not be active members of the nation's largest fraternal organization."

Interplay between Catholics and masons made such progress that, in 1981, Bishop Louis Gelineau of Rhode Island was awarded the Grand Master Award of Rhode Island's Grand Lodge of Freemasonry for "best exemplifying the principles of Freemasonry."

However, this friendship quickly took an unexpected turn. An unsigned lead article was published in the Vatican's newspaper, "L'Osservatore Romano," the author of which was, according to common knowledge, Cardinal Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in which it was said unequivocally that "Christianity and Masonry are essentially incompatible, so that joining one means to separate oneself from the other."

Yet even as regards this Catholicism has shown itself not to be monolithic, for in the recently published Code of Canon Law, which has been completely reworked, nothing is said of the excommunication of Catholics who join a masonic lodge. No mention is even made in the canons of "freemasons." Yet Cardinal Ratzinger has issued his own parallel instruction, in which he says that "The Church's negative position on Masonic associations...remains unaltered, since their principles have always been regarded as irreconcilable with the Church's doctrine. Hence, joining them re-

mains prohibited by the Church." Catholics enrolled in Masonry, the document continued, "may not approach Holy Communion."

The Bishops' Commission acknowledges that there are a number of Catholics who have entered the lodges solely because of the hierarchy's confused guidance.

At nearly the same time that the article appeared in "The Wanderer," a Norwegian newspaper published a serious investigation into Norwegian Masonry, which was serialized over a period of ten days. Bishop Andreas Aarflot of Oslo, Primate of the (Lutheran) Church of Norway, apparently followed this information attentively, but decided that, although several theologians recommended that ministers have nothing to do with masonry, this remains an individual matter of conscience. Nevertheless, since the pastoral ministry is intended to serve everybody, Aarflot found it most in accordance with his ministry that pastors do not belong to exclusive fellowships such as Freemasonry. There are about one hundred Church of Norway pastors among the country's 15,000 Freemasons, and two retired bishops.

Basing itself on material published early in 1985 in Sweden, the Norwegian daily newspaper "Vaart Land" maintains that in the "Christian" branch of Freemasonry there are elements of gnosticism, rituals resembling baptism and eucharist, and elements of a blood rite traditionally linked to the legend of the cup used by Christ for the first Eucharist (the "Holy Graïl").

Young theologians invited to study the above-mentioned material said they cannot understand how clergy can justify being Freemasons. Although admitting that Masonic teaching, as described by the newspaper, would not be tolerated in the churches, Aarflot expressed confidence in pastors who chose to remain in the group.

The newspaper which published the series of articles on Masonry wished to stir up theological debate on the subject and was very perplexed by the fact that those who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the Church found it possible to belong to a secret society with "doubtful religious practice."

It is interesting that a review of its relations to Masonry arose several weeks earlier in the Church of England. The Anglican Church recently resolved to conduct an in-depth investigation to establish to what degree Masonic rituals and belief are consistent with Christianity. The resolution of the Anglicans' General Synod is all the more remarkable in that Masonry has flourished in England for several hundred years already. Historians confirm that the Anglican Church was a citadel of Masonry. Many Anglican archbishops held high posts in the lodges, although of recent years it has been observed that the number of clergymen among the masons has dropped off considerably.

The British Methodists are conducting a similar investigation.

#### CONFESSION & THE LAW

Hitherto, confession has been recognized everywhere as confidential, and the laws of various states in the United States have taken this into account. However, there have been several recent incidents which may have far-reaching consequences.

As reported in the August 27, 1985 issue of The New York Times, the question of the confidentiality of confession has arisen in Texas, Florida and California.

In the California case, an Episcopalian woman admitted in confession to her priest that he had systematically embezzled the

church's treasury, but was then repenting and would repay the money a little at a time. The priest immediately went to the police and denounced his parishioner, who, because he had violated the seal of confession, is now suing him for a considerable sum of money.

In Florida, a man was arrested who was accused of sexual crimes against children. Inasmuch as he consulted continually with his Presbyterian minister, the court subpoenaed the latter to be present at the trial as a witness. To the minister's credit, he refused to give evidence in court against his parishioner, and for this the court had him incarcerated in prison for several days for "contempt of court." The case turns on the fact that, in that state, as in several others, there is a general law according to which anyone who knows of sexual crimes committed against minors must inform the police immediately. This law makes not exception for clergymen.

In another state, parents sued a Catholic priest because, in counselling their son, he did not notice a tendency in him towards suicide. The teenager, notwithstanding his counselling sessions with the priest, hanged himself.

There are a number of people who believe that the law, in seeking to protect the rights of minors, does not sufficiently clarify the role of the clergyman in such cases. The Catholics are, of course, particularly upset, for among them confession is still an ordinary phenomenon. The Catholic Brother Richard Daly says that "If we make it difficult for a person to go to his clergyman with a problem, and if we make the clergyman a criminal if he doesn't go to the police, then we're taking a bad situation and making it worse."

Only the states of Kentucky, Pennsylvania and North Carolina specifically exempt the clergy from the duty of having to report such cases.

These problems have begun to be discussed more often in the press, and our Orthodox clergy may find themselves also affected.

#### PROBLEMS WITH ABORTIONS

In Los Angeles the question has been seriously raised as to what to do in cases when a fetus aborted by medical personnel survives, despite all their efforts. American law permits abortions to be performed freely up until the fourth month of pregnancy. However, physicians are now encountering a number of serious problems: firstly, mothers often intentionally conceal from them the actual extent of their pregnancy, and it very often happens that the baby remains alive. In such an instance, according to the law, the phys-

icians must do everything possible to save it, but, as Dr. Robert Hayashi of the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center admits, "We do not try to be heroic about it," i.e. it should be understood that they do not, at best, finish off such a baby themselves.

The second problem posed is one of principle. As late as ten years ago, the technology for saving the life of immature babies was insufficiently developed, and a six-month old fetus had only a 50% chance of survival. Now, nearly 100% of such infants survive. Furthermore, as rapidly as progress is being made with such technology, the period of time earlier envisioned by the law, which is based on the assumption that the infant is not viable, is set at nought, and it is already apparent that, in the very near future, a woman who wishes to rid herself of her baby can find herself in a situation where she will not have sufficient time to make her decision one way or the other. It is expected that it may be possible to save infants as early as a week after conception.

In London, the Anglican Church is also occupied with the question of the fetus, but from another point of view: is artificial fertilization permissible, and is it permissible to conduct experiments with human fetuses two-months old?

As paradoxical as it may seem, Professor Berry, who chaired this Committee, has declared that "Both the position supporting [such experiments] and that which opposes it can be supported by the Scriptures."

Kieth Ward, a professor of moral theology, said that the weight of Christian Tradition suggested that human life begins at some point after the moment of conception. However, it does not seem that the Scriptures and Tradition rule out experiments on embryos. All we can say is that the Church of England is committed to the protection of the human embryo fourteen days after conception."

Unfortunately, the learned geneticist Berry does not cite even a single scriptural text confirming the possibility of experimentation on the unborn.

#### THE VATICAN CEASES TO BE A SACRED CITY

On June 3, 1985, an accord was signed in the Vatican between the socialist government of Italy and the representative of the Pope of Rome, the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Casaroli. After the official exchange of documents between the two governments, the Prime Minister of Italy was received at a private papal audience.

The new concordat which in part replaces the original concordat of 1929, has to a very significant degree reduced the Vatican's rights in Italy, although Catholic magazines are trying to present the matter in such a way that one would think that it was an equally balanced agreement which was ratified.

The Vatican has lost the right to call Rome a "sacred city"; Catholicism has ceased to be the state religion and must acknowledge the rights of other denominations to exist freely; by 1990, all government subsidies of the Catholic clergy will cease; Catholic parochial schools will remain such, but the teaching of religion in them will become elective; the government has promised to recognize church weddings, but will itself conduct divorces. At the government's insistence, the so-called Jewish catacombs were transferred from the jurisdiction of the Vatican to that of the Jewish congregation in Rome.

### A SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR HOMOSEXUALS & LESBIANS

In April of 1985, in the area of New York City known as Greenwich Village, a special school was opened in the building of a Methodist church for twenty students whose classmates had "persecuted" them because they had displayed signs of flagrant depravity. Although New York City's civic administration was subsidizing this educational institution, its existence was kept a closely-guarded secret from the majority of citizens and word of it leaked out only in mid-June.

The school's twenty students are of both sexes, ranging in age between 14 and 18. Next year it is expected that there will be no fewer than seventy-five students.

This example has proved very infectious, and groups of homosexuals in Los Angeles, Boston and other major centers have gotten in touch with this "school" with the intention of founding similar ones in their own cities.

Mayor Edward Koch of New York has stated that the existence of such a special school is not a surprize to him, although he did not expect it; nevertheless, he now sees a necessity for such an educational institution because, although it only has twenty students, they have come together to study instead of wandering aimlessly through the streets. The majority of these students are from the Borough of the Bronx, the most run-down part of New York.

### A BLASPHEMOUS PRAYER SERVICE

In its May 10, 1985 issue, The New York Times reported that a "requiem mass" was recently performed in Berkeley, California, for a dog who had died of a cancerous tumor:

In Calvary Presbyterian Church, weeping and wailing "mourners" gathered, bringing with them another six dogs and a cat.

Joan Newman, who holds a Master of Divinity degree and presided over the service, thanked the animals in attendance and said: "God's love extends to all creation, not just to people....God loves what she [sic] has made; God doesn't have a hierarchy of love....Churches for the most part have not allowed us opportunities to grieve for our animal friends. Up to now that was thought to be eccentric."

She prayed for coyotes, wolves, seals, pigs, monkeys, dogs "and all other animals who are victims of human injustice."

Members of the congregation rose to pray also for "all the seagulls and ocean birds," and others prayed "that we may have the vulnerability to show our tears of compassion for suffering animals. We pray for their liberation."

The service concluded with the singing of a feminist version of the traditional negro spiritual, altered to read "She's got the whole world in her hands..."

Newman is the foundress of the International Society for Religion & Animal Rights.

The pastor of the church was very pleased with the "service" of his colleague and said that it was "a significant occasion, a time that has been maturing and has now come to fruition."

Christians, Jews, Buddhists, agnostics and atheists all took part in the service.

MEDALS COMMEMORATING THE MILLENIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVERSION OF RUS'

The Diocese of Germany of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has had a commemorative medal beautifully designed and struck in honor of the 1,000th year anniversary of the baptism of Russia. This medal, in various forms, is now available for purchase from our Synod Book Store. Cost includes a display case.

Solid silver	\$65.00
Silver-plated	\$35.00
Gold-plated	\$40.00
Bronze	\$30.00

Special orders will be accepted also for the medal struck in 8-karat gold (\$475.00) and 14-karat gold (\$850.00). The Book Store suggests that orders be placed as soon as possible, as fluctuations in the costs of precious metals make it impossible to guarantee that the quoted prices will remain in effect.

The ill health and hospitalization of the Synod's translator have been the cause of the long delay in issuing this Newsletter in English. The editor and staff of the Newsletter regrets the delay.



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IMPORTANT NOTE TO OUR READERS: His Grace, Bishop Gregory, has resigned from all of his duties within the administration of the Synod and is now in retirement. The Newsletter of the Department of Public & Foreign Relations will henceforth be published under new management.