



CHURCH NEWS

June, 1988

#3

Excerpts from letters received by Bishop Gregory from the USSR
(February-March 1988)

"Heard on radio broadcast from abroad about the conference of Judaists with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. Information was given by someone named Agursky, who had previously called himself a Christian (while he was in Russia), but now according to some of his remarks, has converted to Judaism. He was satisfied that the conference, on the part of the Orthodox, had no missionary character, that is it was a theological dialog where both sides felt on equal level. Agursky made a note, that such a conference occurred for the first time in history and that all present had a special feeling of the importance of this historical moment."

Metropolitan Vladimir, while staying in America with Gorbachev's retinue, was asked about Fr. Vladimir Rusak and was not embarrassed to say that Fr. Vladimir was jailed not for his Faith, but because of anti-soviet activities.

In the corridors of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy, as well as in its Publishing Department, one can see numerous stands dedicated to the revolution with portraits of Lenin and other leaders, happy workers, peasants, etc. Guests of the Patriarchate can not miss seeing this and if they draw no conclusions from this it is only from blind apathy. I also think that in their Epistle, the Synod and the Patriarch surpassed not only themselves, but also their sergianite predecessors in their wicked lie. It is sadder still, that the Moscow Patriarchate is regarded as a true representative of the Russian Church and this lie is simply ignored. The Epistle of the Hierarchs of the Church Abroad is excellent and truthfully represents the standpoint of true Christianity.

RELICS OF ST. EDWARD, KING OF ENGLAND RETURNED TO THE BROTHERHOOD

In 1984 Mr. John Wilson-Claridge solemnly handed over to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, the relics of St. Edward, King of England. They were placed in an artfully carved chest in the Church dedicated to him. A short while later, the relatives of Mr. Wilson-Claridge initiated a law suit against the Brotherhood, demanding that the relics be returned to the family. Therefore, until the court case was settled, the relics were to be held under court supervision, and were placed in a bank vault, where they had been kept previously.

By the end of April, the Abbot of this Brotherhood, Fr. Alexis (a British subject by birth) received information from the Chancery Division of the High Court on its ruling that the sacred relics of St. Edward would be returned to the Brotherhood as soon as a burglar alarm system was installed.

In the beginning of 1980, the small Brotherhood purchased a very lovely cemetery plot not far from the ancient abbey in which many centuries ago, the sacred relics were enshrined. The tiny Community managed to pay off the major part of the loans made for this purchase, convert a western chapel into an Orthodox Church, and remodel the former mortuary building into living quarters for 4 monks and 1 novice. The heating system was installed just recently.

The monastic community needs an additional \$12,000 to pay off the mortgage. Anyone who would like to help this missionary work in England, (with the blessing of Bishop Mark, 2 missionary stations were established) can send a donation to the following address.

ST. EDWARD BROTHERHOOD
St. Cyprian's Way
Brookwood, Woking
Surrey
ENGLAND

Traditionally, the intercession of St. Edward is sought in cases of eye diseases.

MORE ABOUT THE JUBILEE

The international press has devoted much attention to the Millennium celebrations in Moscow. Although some publications stubbornly write about the baptism of Grand Duke Vladimir, in Kiev, it is well known that he was baptised in Chersones.

The Moscow Patriarchate and Gorbachev's government invited 400 guests from 90 countries and about 1500 dignitaries. The center for the Moscow festivities was St. Daniel's monastery, with the Service held on the day of All the Saints of Russia.

Most of those invited accepted. They either came themselves or sent their delegations. There were however, some refusals. In spite of prolonged deliberations, the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios, the Patriarch of Alexandria Parphenios, and the Archbishop of Athens flatly refused. The reason given was that the autocephalous "Orthodox Church of America" and the autocephalous "Church of Japan", were also invited. These autocephalies are acknowledged only by Moscow and her satellite Churches in the Communist block.

After the festive Service in the Danilow Monastery, there was a special gathering and concert at the Bolshoi Theater, which was attended by the episcopate of the Moscow Patriarchate, all the ecumenical guests and such important Government representatives as Deputy Prime Minister Talysin, the Head of the Office for Religious Affairs, K. Kharchev and Raisa Gorbachev.

Among the special guests of the Moscow Patriarchate was Rabbi Arthur Schneider of the New York City Synagogue, which the City's Mayor, Ed. Koch attends. Rabbi Schneider was also one of the 6 speakers at this gathering. After addressing the public and guests, the Rabbi singled out Raisa Gorbachev, whom he compared with the Biblical Eve, saying that she was a "devoted helpmate to your husband. I believe you are in sympathy with your husband's cause- it is more than symbolic that you are here in our midst."

The press unanimously noted that the face of Raisa Gorbachev became as red as the color of her blouse.

Cardinal O'Connor, who was also present, said, "I was a little surprised. I would have liked to hear this from someone Christian. I would think he (Rabbi Schneider) could have rightfully left that to us."

The speeches, intermixed with concert acts, lasted for 6 hours.

MEETING OF THE THREE PATRIARCHS

The official publication of the Serian Patriarchate reports that recently a meeting, arranged by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Diodoros, was held in Amman, Jordan. Participating were The Patriarch of Antioch and the Whole East, Ignatios, and The Patriarch of Alexandria Parphenios.

The meeting was arranged because Patriarch Diodoros is concerned about conditions in Jerusalem, which is now in the midst of a most difficult political situation. The muslim Arabs, do not take into consideration the existance of Orthodox Arabs, and international negotiations pay no attention to their needs.

The Patriarchs made a joint communique, stating that the question of resolving the Jerusalem problem should be considered, not so much from the point of conflict between the people of Israel and the Arabs, but the realization that the Holy City of Jerusaelm has a special all-Christian value and therefore should keep it's independent status.

Amman's press stated that the Jordanian government was exceptionally attentive to all the Patriarchs' wishes and needs and that the Orthodox Arabic population met them with warm enthusiasm.

THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF CLERGY AND LAY PEOPLE OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The Ecumenical Press of June 20, 1988, reports that between June 6th and June 9th, a Council of Clergy and Lay People of the Moscow Patirarchate , convened at the Holy Trinity Sergian Lavra. The 272 participants included bishops, priests, lay people, representatives of monasterys, seminaries and the Ecclesiastical Academy. Several nuns were also present.

The Orthodox Council was addressed by the heterodox Cardinal Willebrands, Anglican Archbishop Runcie and a Protestant, Stalset.

As was expected, according to a previous agreement with the Soviet government, the law of 1961, which placed a rector in the position of a hireling, was abolished. Now the rector will be able to be a member of the "twenty" (a group of 20 people who have the right to request a church building for use and are responsible for its upkeep). The parishioners are to be responsible for their pastor's support.

The Local Council is to be convened every 10 years. The members for it are to be elected at diocesan councils, which are to be held every year.

Archbishop Cyril of Smolensk told the press, that in essence the new laws concern the subject of the relationship and structure of the Church on the national, diocesan and parochial levels. "The goal is not to change or abolish the existing canonical norms, but to adapt them to the present situation." He also stated that negotioations are in progress, to obtain permission to teach children religion and to be able to do charitable work.

Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk mentioned that, because of the Millenium celebrations the Moscow Patriarchate published 500,000 prayer books. He also noted that the Church is especially grateful for the permission to register new parishes, although this process is not as fast as when the churches were closed.

As one advantage of cooperation with the godless government, the members of the Council noted that the Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra was returned to the Church, although not fully. On the Monastery's territory there is a State run museum, and this will remain under government control.

A PROTESTANT PRAYERBOOK IN THE USSR

The Serbian Patriarchate newspaper "Provoslavlje" for the month of May 1988, stated that the Moscow Patriarchate ruled at the Synod's meeting to publish 10,000 Protestant Hymnals for the Germans in the Volga region. Presumably this quantity will later be increased.

This ecumenical "charity" is even more upsetting, when it became known that a while ago the Moscow Patriarchate invited the Bavarian Minister of Culture, who was entertained by the Head of the Patriarchate's Publication Department, Archbishop Pitirim. During the conversations, the Archbishop stated that there is an urgent need for Bibles, Prayerbooks and religious literature in general. The assistant of Kharchev, Milivanov said that the relationship between the Government and the Publications Department of the Moscow Patriarchate is very cordial, but that the Government has no right to show any preference and should remain neutral when there is a question as to gets the necessary printing paper and when they get it.

Can one imagine for example that, St. Basil the Great or St. John Chrysostom would care to help the spread of Arian hymns instead of preaching to them the true Faith? It is obvious, that the Moscow Patriarchate does not treasure this Faith too much.

ROMAN CATHOLICS IN MOSCOW

At the Moscow Millenium celebrations, the Catholic delegation especially stood out. Pope John Paul II was anxious to attend these celebrations and he made no secret of this. But the Soviet government adamantly refused and the Patriarchate was obliged to invite a Vatican delegation only.

The Delegation was not only very numerous, but was also of a very high Vatican level. It was headed by Cardinal Casaroli, Vatican Secretary of State and also a personal friend of the Pope, Cardinal Willebrands, Head of the Vatican Ecumenical Department, American Cardinal O'Connor, some Cardinals from South America, several Bishops and Monsignors, not to mention highranking Catholic clergy from the Communist block.

Casaroli was commissioned to meet with the President of the USSR Gromyko, and to personally deliver to him a letter from the Pope. Judging by hints in the press, the Catholic delegation was seeking recognition of the Uniates, establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the Vatican and an invitation to the Pope to visit the USSR.

American Cardinal O'Connor, had an interview with Constantin Kharchev, Head of the Department for Religious Affairs. O'Connor was interested in the question of religious education of children in the Soviet Union. Kharchev replied that at present this is permitted on the family level. Children are able to study at home and parents may seek a priest's assistance. If the family is large, and they would like to use the parish building for this purpose, there will be no objection. However, the Cardinal left with the impression that "it will not happen overnight, it may take five years, but they seem to have accepted the principle of the parochial school."

A short while later Gromyko met with some 200 representatives from different religions. This time Gromyko spoke very differently from the Head of the Department for Religious Affairs, Kharchev. The New York Post of June 13, 1988 gives us a rather detailed description of this interview, as per Cardinal O'Connor.

When a Lutheran minister asked Gromyko about the possibility of teaching children religion on church premises, the answer was "The place is irrelevant. It is a question of principle."

This did not prevent Gromyko from discussing future changes of the laws in favor of religion, although he never clarified what changes, and when they will take place.

Catholics asked Gromyko to allow Uniates to have their own Bishop, to which Gromyko replied, "We will certainly give that consideration, however, the difficulty lies in distinguishing between political desires and religious desires."

Regarding the invitation of the Pope to Moscow and diplomatic relations, Cardinal Caseroli stated to one of the New York Times correspondents on June 14th, that the meetings with Gromyko and Gorbachev were very warm and "this possibility has opened up", but he declined to be more explicit. Casaroli also said that the Pope wants to have regular contacts with the Soviet government and hopes to get permission to establish a Uniate Seminary in Kiev.

It seems that the Pope has not abandoned the centuries-long dream of converting Russian people to the Unia. The absence of Church literature and the lack of religious schools will make it much more difficult for the Orthodox people to distinguish between the true Faith and a heresy.

EXCERPTS FROM THE BULLETIN "CHRISTIAN PUBLIC OPINION" Issue #3-4, Sept./Oct. 1987
Moscow. (Reprinted from the magazine "Pravoslavna Rus" Jordanville, NY)

ST. SERGIUS HOLY TRINITY LAVRA

The Dean of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary abolished the holy Apostolic Peter and Paul Fast for all the students of the Academy and Seminary. His announcement came just before the geginning of the Fast.

CATACOMBS July 17th, 1987

There were solemn special prayer services (Moleben) to the Great Martyr Nicholas and other Royal Martyrs and New Martyrs, who suffered for God and Faith. Services were held in a number of places and parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate and the True Orthodox Church. "The Day of Sorrow" the anniversary of the murder of the Royal Family was marked with very strict fasting. In many churches memorial services were held for the Royal Martyrs.

"THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA" CREATES A TASK FORCE ON THE WOMEN'S ROLE IN CHURCH LIFE

In March 1988, in Soyosset, the "Orthodox Church in America" held a Council. During the sessions, Metropolitan Theodosios announced that he is proposing the creation of a Special Task Force to coordinate his Church's participation in WCC-sponsored "Ecumenical Decade: Churches in solidarity with Women". This action will start in 1988 and will continue through 1998. "So that the response of our Church, said Metropolitan Theodosios, will not be an ad hoc response, but a carefully and consistently thought-out-contribution, I am proposing the establishment of a special Task Force. The Task Force should include clergymen, laymen and laywomen".

Under different pretexts, the infection of the "women's question in the Church" is visibly penetrating the "Orthodox Church in America" as well as the Greek Archdiocese in the USA.

ECUMENICAL PRAYER GATHERING IN TEXAS

The Ecumenical Press of May 31, reports, that in Arlington, Texas a "Christian Gathering", the first of its kind in the USA was sponsored by the National Council of Churches.

The General Secretary to the NCC, Arie Bruver said, that Texas was chosen "because it is a big enough place for the Holy Spirit to blow through". (May the Lord forgive us for repeating these blasphemous words of the "Christian".) The goal of this gathering was to "fully represent the diversity of US churches". The only requirement for participation was the "profession of the Christian Faith and desire to explore the promise and possibilities of Christian Unity and expressions of a common mission."

This "diversity" was expressed through seven "services", each 90 minutes long. The aim, said NCC Associate General Secretary, Eileen Linder, was to provide a "smorgasborg where the idea is to sup on the richness of diversity, rather than the sort of bland diet that will be offensive to no one".

The demonstration of different prayer services started early in the morning. The members of this Assembly of some 1,000 people from all parts of USA, saw all kinds of "spirituality": A Quaker meeting, the ecumenical prayer of Taize, black oral prayer, prayers through Yoga and body movements, charismatic prayer, and.....Orthodox.

Orthodoxy, in the midst of this curious group, was represented by the Head of the "Orthodox Church in America", Metropolitan Theodosios, who on the evening of his turn served it seems a vespers, with blessing of bread, although the bulletin calls it matins.

The Bulletin stresses, that there were no eucharistic services, although Roman Catholics were given an opportunity to receive Communion. It is quite possible, that the participants were under the impression that the blessed bread is something similar to Catholic communion.

One can not but wonder: what did Metropolitan Theodosios do with the blessed bread, give it to all the heretics present?

THE SYMBOL OF ANTICHRIST IN PARIS

The illustrated insert of the French newspaper Figaro, printed several plans for a monument to the French Revolution. The last monument to the revolution had just recently been razed and President Mitteran opened a new one, which is constructed in the form of a pyramid and built with a special kind of sheet glass.

Stressed as a special feature of this monument is the use of 666 sheets in its structure. Certainly it is not accidental, but expresses the ideological connection between the revolution and Antichrist, who in the Book of Revelation is called by this "number of the Beast" (Rev. 13, 17-18)

ONE MORE CULT IN AMERICA

On May 1, 1988, The New York Times Magazine, A Sunday supplementary edition of one of the largest and most influential papers in the USA, printed a long article entitled "Colorado's Thriving Cults".

In 1973, a Mr. Larry Kendall, age 41 came to a small town in Colorado named Fort Collins and became a partner in the only real estate business in that area. It is now known as "The Group Inc." and has 55 employees. In 1987 alone, this company sold 90 million dollars worth of real estate.

Kendall became obsessed with the idea that human nature has no limitations and declared that "we are limited only by our religious beliefs". In order to propagate his idea, he organized a group of people which he called "New Age" and hired special trainers to teach his employees how to exercise on a 30 foot high wire, to break planks with bare hands and even to walk barefoot on burning coals. To his clients Kendall proudly shows 3 bent forks and explains that he and his 30 employees went to a park where an "energy channeler" flown from New York showed them how to bend forks through the power of mental concentration. "Our goal, said Kendall, is to maximize the potential of each member of the organization and then to maximize the entire group.....Unlimitedness is a purely natural condition".

The Director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Santa Barbara, J. Gordon Melton, said that "Since the mid 60's there has been a steady increase in openness to metaphysical and occult ideas in the United States.....Beliefs that have existed for a long time on the metaphysical periphery are now becoming very much part of Middle America". "New Age" philosophy is becoming the religion, or at least the ethos of the growing proportion of the young professional middle class, that is now beginning to move into positions of responsibility and authority in American society", said Fergus Bordewich, the author of this remarkable article.

The New Age movement is a phenomenon which embraces cults like the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church (Rev. Moon), and a whole number of "teachers" who blend psychotherapeutic techniques with Eastern mysticism, the occult, "healing power", pre-Christian paganism or witchcraft and many other forms of spiritualism.

One of the leading members of New Age, Barbara Marx Hubbard said: "A new order is being born that will be as different from what exists now as the Renaissance was from the Middle Ages".

The New Age Movement is, of course, especially powerful in Colorado, but unfortunately, it is spreading over America with frightening speed. Meditative techniques have become common fare in public and private sectors. Thousands of executives of prestigious Colorado corporations, regularly attend management motivation courses based on New Age theories. It is estimated that as many as 50% of Denver's executives have undergone some kind of "transformational" training. Some corporations purchase cassettes with New Age lectures for use by their employees.

Several conservative Christian Churches, declared that this is a satanic movement. We, the Orthodox, have to agree fullheartedly with such a statement.

The goal of this New Age movement is to unite the whole world with their idea and for this reason, they make persistent attempts to penetrate international diplomatic circles. They managed to recruit 100 Soviet representatives for a "Soviet-American Citizens Summit" last February in Washington. Soviet delegates took part in a meditation session arranged by the Pentagon Meditation Club and a group of 15 Department of Defence employees who, hoped to place a "spiritual aura" of peace around our planet through meditation.

The New Age, published a 300 page "World Citizen Curriculum". Several hundreds of its copies were sent to public and private schools, as well as to some teachers personally. Those who have read this curriculum say that the book does not differentiate between good and evil.

More and more parents are complaining that American schools have become some kind of laboratory for experimentations by members of the New Age movement. The author of this article warns, that it would be very dangerous to underestimate the power and influence of this movement which has grown in popularity. People are drawn to such groups as suicide prevention among young people, self-improvement programs, sports, etc. and are unknowingly involving themselves in the New Age movement, which very often hides under these noble titles.

Carl Raschke, of the Institute for the Humanities said that, "The New Age movement has already become a significant alternative to the Judeo-Christian tradition.....it encourages the belief that what "feels right" is best." "What we shall see, predicts Raschke, is the creation of a garden variety sociopathic personality which believes, like Raskolnikov, that everything is permitted."

Today's young generation is openly interested in satanism, which according to some religious publications is widely spreading in the schools and now, with New Age penetrating school programs, Orthodox parents must be especially watchful of what is being taught in their children's school. Participation in Parent Teacher Associations and joint protest, can often change school policies.

The article ends with a sad statement of one young woman: "World history is over. This is the beginning of Galactic history".

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