



# CHURCH NEWS

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**CHURCH NEWS**  
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## A ONENESS OF MIND HARD TO EXPLAIN

Over a number of years the Moscow Patriarchate has persistently declared that the glorification of the Imperial Martyrs cannot take place until it is proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the "remains" which were discovered by several Russians in Yekaterinburg are indeed the relics of the Imperial Family.

For some 19 years, from time to time, the pages of the foreign and Russian language press have mentioned the Imperial Martyrs. Amongst these references have been information that the parts of the 9 skeletons found in Yekaterinburg were sent to different independent laboratories in Russia, England and the USA in order to identify the "remains."

In employing the most recent methods of science (namely, DNA) to identify these objects, experts even took blood samples from some living descendants of the House of Romanoff and, based mainly on this, all the laboratories insist that they are 98% sure that the bones they analyzed belong to the Imperial Family. After all this we have seen television programs with pictures of the "remains" and then endless discussions started about the location for the official burial of the Imperial Family. The scientists very precisely identified almost all the members of the Family and their staff members killed along with them. But the skeletons of the heir, Alexis, and the Grand Duchess, Maria are still missing. During the identification procedure the accidentally preserved dental records of the Imperial Family were also used. According to the latest information from the newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" of March 1st, the "remains" (God forbid they should call them "relics") will be buried in Petropavlovskaya Krepost (The Fortress of Sts. Peter and Paul) in St. Petersburg on the 80th anniversary of the murder of the Imperial Family, July 17th 1998. It will be interesting to see what reasons the MP will now find for not glorifying the Imperial Family. However, the forced glorification of the Imperial Martyrs by the children and grandchildren of those who murdered them would rather be an insult to their memory, rather than a glorification.

Thus the question is basically settled for Russia. But what about for us, abroad?

Unfortunately, in spite of the irrefutable evidence of contemporary science, the First Hierarchy of the ROCOR, Metr. Vitaly, on Jan 31st gave a scandalous telephone interview from Canada to a journalist of the ITAR TASS agency in Moscow, Yelena Yougina.

From it we learn that the Church Abroad "will never recognize the remains in Yekaterinburg as the 'Royal' ones" and the State Committee in Russia in its final meeting last Friday, "committed a blasphemy in the eyes of all the Orthodox world, by proposing that believers venerate 'false relics.'"

Then the Metropolitan declared: "We pray to them as to saints, we have asked their intercession for Russia for some 17 years and there can be no talk about some recently found 'remains'. Two years ago a representative of the State Commission regarding the case of the remains, Yuri Yarov, approached me at that time with the request that I give him a chance to have a particle of the relics for identification of the Yekaterinburg find. But the attitude of the Committee has towards the remains is no different than to false remains of the Imperial Family and therefore, the answer was negative. We know, and it has been proven beyond a doubt by the investigator Sokolov, that the bodies of members of the Imperial Family were hacked to pieces and the blood mess of human stumps, arms, legs, bodies, head, had gasoline and acid poured over them and were burned. We can expect only the Lord, if it be His Holy will, to reveal to us the holy relics."

"Novoye Russkoye Slovo" of February 10th was not silent about this interview of Metr. Vitaly and entitled its article with a question: "Do the Genuine Remains of the Romanoffs Rest in Brussels?" and added the subtitle: "A Sensation!" This short article states that "the genuine remains of Nicholas II and his family are in the Brussels church of the Much Suffering St. Job. Or so the head of the ROCOR, Metr. of Eastern America and New York, Vitaly, insists."

The newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" published in Moscow in issue # 3-4, 1998, also devoted two full pages to the case of the "remains" of the Imperial Martyrs. It published, in particular, another telephone interview by Metr. Vitaly which he gave to the newspaper "Radonezh." In it Metr Vitaly repeated (as he did in the interview to the agency TASS) that "this question belongs exclusively to the Church of Christ. And the Church of Christ is waiting for the time when the Lord will be willing to reveal to us those relics." Then the Metropolitan in an lengthy way described the miraculous findings of relics, for example, of the body Artemy Verkopolsky and declared, "This is what we are waiting for now... And all this hassle

(excuse my expression), which has lasted for almost 20 years, is nothing but to take us in and that's all. It is absolutely beyond our dignity to believe in such fables. That's my word."

The Metropolitan also related as if a "fact" numerous false dreams ascribed to St. John of Kronstadt over recent decades that supposedly the Tsar Martyr appeared to him and said, "Do not look for my remains!"

As early as the end of January the same paper (N R S) published an extensive article entitled, "Expertise Verifies the Authenticity of Royal Remains." At the insistence of the General Prosecutor, more than 400 "fragments" were shipped from Yekaterinburg to Moscow for final analysis with the promise they would be returned to Yekaterinburg. The local authorities (certainly not because they venerate the Imperial Family) are very much concerned they may lose income from the expected pilgrims and tourists who would come to venerate or see the "remains" and therefore were afraid to let them out of their hands. "As related by the senior Criminal Prosecutor Soloviev, the expertise was built in particular on the analysis of so-called mitochondrial parts of DNA. Previously scientist thought that this DNA particle passes from generation to generation without any changes... Yet, the latest examination of the bones of Grand Duke George Alexandrovich (the brother of the Tsar) who was buried in St. Petersburg in 1899, proved beyond a doubt that the skeletons found in Yekaterinburg belong to the Imperial Family... Now we in the General Prosecutor's Office, are sure, even the most skeptical, that there is no doubt of the authenticity of the remains."

It seems that Metr. Vitaly does not read the Russian language or foreign press. He held in his hands so long ago the book by Sokolov that almost all the details of the investigation, including many photographs made by him of the object he found, are all forgotten. Sokolov found only a finger "used to manicure" and a small bit of fat (which he had no time to analyze), but otherwise what was found by the investigator was put by him in a small box. By no means can these be called relics: parts of shoe buckles, corsets, splinters of precious stones, dentures, glasses, etc. which were identified by witnesses as belonging to the Imperial Family. This very box was put into the foundation wall of the memorial church in Brussels.

When the pit into which the bodies of the Imperial Family were thrown by the murderers was discovered in 1979, it was found that the bodies were naked since no remnants of clothing were found. They were burned together with the very hacked up and burned bodies of the Heir and one of the Grand Duchesses.

Rashly and lacking knowledge of the subject, Metr. Vitaly put himself into an awkward position when he happened to be of one mind with the MP, but even she, with gnashing of teeth, must accept the authenticity of the "remains" of the Imperial Family. Otherwise we would be hearing her protests against the burial in Petropavlovsky Krepast. In conjunction with these latest discoveries of contemporary forensic science, the refusal to accept a particle of the Tsar martyr's relics unofficially offered to him by one the investigating committee is also on his conscience. This was received instead and divided up among several priests of the ROCOR.

#### A BELATED REACTION

A bishop of the OCA, Tikhon (of San Francisco) on March 3 published on the Internet with a short commentary a letter addressed by Metr. Vitaly to Archb. Mark regarding the latter's activities in "dialogues" with the Moscow Patriarchate. The Metropolitan's letter bears the letterhead of the President of the Synod of Bishops and is dated 6/24 February, (actually, 24 January/6 February) 1998. An unofficial English translation reads as follows:

Your Grace, the Right Reverend Master,

I just now received, quite accidentally, through private persons, "THE STATEMENT" of the participants of the ninth conference of the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad on the territory of Germany).

Vladyko, no one ever, neither Sobor, nor Synod, nor I, gave you permission to conduct these ongoing conferences, persistently leading towards a final resolution, as is written in your statement.

Vladyko, I have already written to you last time: you have a right to act as a sovereign [gospodin] in your diocese. However, outside of your diocese, you have no right to enter into an agreement with

anyone. No one has given you this right. Our collective [sobornoye] decision was that if any one accidentally happened to meet a bishop of the Moscow Patriarchate, then one should not estrange oneself, it is permitted to chat with him about this and that. However, you, Vladyko, have no right to make such systematic, resolute statements.

On this basis, Vladyko, I must to have recourse to the following punishment [nakazaniye]: From this day on, you are no longer a member of the Synod. Your case will be discussed at the Synod's session, and you have the right to attend only the session that will be concerned with your personal case.

Regretfully, as sorrowful as it is, I am forced to react because this causes a colossal temptation amidst all of our clergy, in Germany and in all Europe. The priests, for some reason, were silent. They didn't tell me anything, nor did you inform me of this.

I repeat once again, with deep personal regret and grief, that you have compelled me to take this strict measure.

I remain a sincere well-wisher of Your Grace,  
+ Metropolitan Vitaly

To clarify: the Synod is the standing committee of ROCOR that usually meets every two or three months, while a Sobor is the convocation of all the bishops, usually held every two years. It is from this standing committee that the Metr. has ejected Archb. Mark.

This Internet message was addressed to Fr. Alexander Lebedev and was publicly posted by error. One gathers from the public correspondence between Bishop Tikhon and Fr. Alexander that the latter considered the rumors about this incident as "fantastic". To prove to him that this was not rumor, but factual, a bishop of the OCA not only published the text of the Metropolitan's letter, but also informs us that he has a text of Archb. Mark's reply, but "I'm definitely keeping Archb. Mark's reply secret. ROCOR members surely do not want to read this sort of thing on the [Internet]." Bishop Tikhon quite correctly notes that the First Hierarch of the ROCOR has no right to individually "punish" another bishop, without a decision of the Synod or the Sobor of Bishops.

Unfortunately, the Metropolitan should have taken measures to restrict Archb. Mark's activities at least some 4 years ago, if not earlier. He should have presented Archb. Mark with a written accusation and even were he not a member of the Synod, summoned him to a Synod meeting to explain his actions. As it stands now, Archb. Mark and his defenders in this case have a legal right to oppose the Metropolitan's decision. While making the decision regarding Archb. Mark, Metr. Vitaly also did not take into consideration that the members of the Synod are elected and appointed by the Sobor of Bishops and only this body may make changes in the former's membership.

The fact that a bishop of the OCA (actually a branch of the MP) had copies of this correspondence between hierarchs of the ROCOR gives one reason to suspect that they were leaked by Archb. Mark to provoke a movement sympathetic to him.

Archb. Mark's case will be deliberated upon during the upcoming Sobor of Bishops to be held at the beginning of May.

#### A TRIP OF ARCHBISHOP LAURUS TO RUSSIA

The Secretary of the ROCOR Synod of Bishops, Archb. Laurus, has traveled to Russia on several occasions and, unfortunately, he is often criticized by the ROCOR parishes in Russia because he is mainly interested in visiting parishes and monasteries of the Moscow Patriarchate, rather than our own churches in Russia.

As the bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" reports in issue # 12 (33) for 1997, Archb. Laurus while in Moscow showed up at a combined assembly of the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" and the historical-patriotic society "Heirs of Alexander Nevsky". The bulletin informs us that "the list of political and religious speakers at this event was quite heterogeneous," including such as a representative of the MP, Abbot Cyril D. Vasiliev, president of the organization "Pamiat" ("Memory"-- a sort of arrogantly fascist group) and a number of scientists, writers and poets.

The bulletin continues: "The appearance of Archb. Laurus in such surroundings seemed strange even to many of the participants at this event, who thought that 'a certain imbalance exists between the

MP represented by a dissident abbot and the ROCOR, represented by the Secretary of the Synod himself.' The level and atmosphere of the event, which Vladyka Laurus honored by his presence, clearly did not correspond to his rank and status, which was immediately taken advantage of by the liberal Russian press, which recalled the too intimate contacts between the infamous and scandalous "Pamiat" and former representatives of the ROCOR in 1993."

Archb. Laurus spoke immediately after Vasiliev, who said that now is not the time for reason, but "to create a powerful, steel fist, with which to strike enemies" and Abbot Cyril, president of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods in the MP.

The bulletin concludes its report about this event with the words: "During the evening an ambiguous call was heard in the presence of a hierarchy of the ROCOR to work for a 'reunion' of the ROCOR and the MP. One can only feel regret that Vladyka Laurus was ill advised on the political situation in Russia by some one and involuntarily happened to participate in a dubious political event."

The editor of this bulletin, A. Soldatov, noted that in spite of very well intentioned articles, the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" occasionally publishes very blasphemous ones, for example, an article signed by "Professor Shvyrkov" from the USA.

#### LENTEN EPISTLE

of His Eminence, Valentin, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir,  
to the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church

The Holy Church, like a mother loving her children, always takes care of our salvation. With the approach of the Great Fast, she offers us in advance a narrative from the Gospels about the Publican and the Pharisee. She is advising us, that prior to repentance, we should acquire profound humility because without humility there is no salvation. The bragging and pride of the Pharisee were condemned and even fasting and good deeds did not save him and did not justify him.

Continuing and developing the thought of humility, our Mother Church offers us the parable of the Prodigal Son which demonstrates the endless mercy of God. The Prodigal Son not only wanted to straighten out his ways, but resolved inwardly, got up and went. This is what is most important: he resolved and **acted on his decision** and for that received a new garment and a ring on his finger, which symbolizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments of the Church of God.

Verily, the Lord stands by the door of our heart and knocks and calls us with the voice of mercy, compassion, with gentleness, trials and chastisements. We have to listen to the voice inside our souls and respond to the Lord's call, and then, get up and go, as did the Prodigal Son so long ago. He stood up and went to his Father, and when being near, fell on his knees and said, "I have sinned before you and I am not worthy to call myself thy son, but accept me as one of thy hirelings."

The Holy Church instructs us also with the thought of death and the Terrible Judgment and indicates six acts of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, receiving strangers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and consoling the imprisoned. How understandable to the believing heart are the words of the Apostle Paul that **alms triumph at the Judgement!**

The Holy Church urges us to repentance and prayer before the Great Fast and with her prayer: "Open unto us the doors of repentance...", "Direct me, O Theotokos, upon the way of salvation..." and Psalm 136 "By the waters of Babylon..." which speaks of the weeping and agony of the Hebrew people, who were at one time given over to the king of Babylon and held in captivity for 70 years, just as now the Russian Orthodox people are held captive under the godless and their allies -- the false brothers of the Moscow Patriarchate which stained itself with lies, collaborations, treason, Ecumenism, financial dealings, and many, many sins "of which it is shameful even to speak."

The Sergianists -- the agents of the Moscow Patriarchate -- pride themselves like the Pharisee and in stead of repentance, nod towards those who repent and say: "We thank Thee, O Lord, that we are not as they are..." and declare that all those who are not like them are excommunicate from their church. They dare not present their organization as a Church of God, "mother Church", rather than falling on their knees and saying: "We have sinned gravely before Thee, O Lord, by covering up our weaknesses and sins with the name of Thy Holy Church, and driving the inheritance of God -- Orthodox people -- into great scandal and temptation."

They exchanged their monastic names for pseudonyms, the sound of the words "Bishop of God" pains their ears, but "Businessman Bishop" is sweet to their ears. Instead of truth they have sown lies; steadfastness they have exchanged with cowardice, friendship with betrayal, brotherly love with hatred. They have lost faith in the Sacrament of Confession, a jewel in the eyes of the Lord of sincere repentance, and therefore they remain silent in sinful darkness. They have no courage to publicly repent before mankind, before their own believers to whom they have been lying for many years. They think to lie to their flock that under the vestments of clergy they hide awards and medals that they have received from the crucifiers of Christ: that they glorified tyrants and murderers and called them "God-given leaders" or "exceptional statesmen"; so that, finally, they themselves, under the influence of their own lies, have begun to believe in *what it is required to believe* and not what Christ teaches.

And do they really believe in God? Did not St. Seraphim of Sarov speak about them when he said that the bishops of the Russian land will become so profane that they no longer will believe in the basic doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? Has this not become true before our very eyes?! When one journalist said to a prominent hierarch of the Moscow Patriarchate, "I do not believe in the Terrible Judgement," the latter laughingly replied: "I also do not believe!"

But they do believe in the power of money, which they hurry to obtain, disregarding the Church regulations and not abhorring money changing. But are these huge finances spent on deeds of mercy? With how many churches standing in ruins, they look to grab churches which were not restored by them.

By accident or intentionally? New facts of history tell us that Metr. Sergius (Stragorodsky) not only helped the godless revolutionaries to solidify their power, but also assisted in the completion of the Revolution, the destruction of the Russian government, and hated the Tsar Martyr Nicholas II. How can his disciples -- the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate -- lift up their voices in defense of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, when they are most afraid to offend the persecutors of Orthodoxy and the murderers of the Imperial Martyrs; when their teachers bequeathed to them the sharing in the joys of atheists and the considering a blow against them a blow against themselves?

So now, when a decision has been taken to bury the relics of St. Tsar Martyr Nicholas II and his family, the Moscow Patriarchate is afraid to offend the persecutors of Orthodoxy and "to cast a shadow" on the murderers of the Imperial Martyrs.

Instead of urging believers to offer a general repentance for the sin of apostasy from God and for the Tsar's murder, the Moscow Patriarchate seeks from the powerful of this world and from famous scientists a verification of the authenticity of the remains of the Imperial Martyrs, leaving no place for faith in their searches, for God's providence.

Standing upon the threshold of the Great Fast, we have to watch "that we walk carefully" and redouble our prayers to the Lord of Hosts that He assist us in getting through the salvific and most healing way of Lent by prayers and good deeds, so that we might approach the glorious Resurrection of Christ as also the resurrection of our souls.

May the Lord God help all of us and may He bless our good beginning. Amen.

Archbishop Valentin

#### A POOR PAPER SUFFERS EVERYTHING

A local newspaper "Suzdal Gazette" at the end of January published a report entitled "New Church in the Village of Borisovskoye". It describes a consecration festival of a new church presided over by Evlogy, Archb. of Vladimir and Suzdal. "With the blessing of the Patriarch of All Russia, Alexis II, seven months ago with the help of some sponsors, the construction of the church was begun. Now there stands a small, but cosy, functioning Church of St. Victor which makes the parishioners very happy."

In fact, there has been in the village of Borisovskoye a large church for some time, fully restored and belonging to the Diocese of Borisovskoye and Sanino (ROFC) which the Moscow Patriarchate tried to seize, but failed. In addition, the Moscow Patriarchate did not build a new church, but, when it became evident that she could not get the existing church, converted into a church a small building which used to be a kerosene store. Moreover, the Patriarchate obtained this building not seven months ago, but at least 5 years back, if not earlier.

Are not the words of the Lord proved by the Patriarchate, when He said that the devil does not stand by the truth because he is the father of lies?

## ROCOR ISHIM DIOCESE IN RUSSIA IN STRANGE COMPANY

The present President of the Russian Federation declared this year to be one of "agreement and reconciliation." Following the wishes of the President a joint declaration by various faiths was issued in Siberia. It states:

"We, the representatives of the registered religions of the Za-Urals (Beyond the Urals) assembled in the presence of Deputy Governor of the Kurgan Region, V. F. Okhokin, in support of the effort of Pres. B. N. Yeltsin to make this a year of agreement and reconciliation, and realizing the necessity to fulfill the law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" and also observant of the general declaration of human rights which proclaims that "every human being has a right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion... the freedom to change his religion or convictions... the freedom to confess his religion or persuasion privately or in common with friends, to public or private ordering of doctrines and performance of religious rites" are very much concerned by manifestations of intolerance in religious matters, do declare that in our relationship with the state and on inter-religious organizational and personal levels, we will follow these principles:" Then there are listed 8 paragraphs stating adherence to humanistic values (such as politeness, openness, fairness), a respect for human rights and basic freedoms, rejection of confrontationalism, readiness for interconfessional dialogues regarding problems which create strains in society, and similar generally accepted humanistic values of the civilized world.

It is interesting to note the signatures of the participants in this assembly. The first is of the Secretary of the diocesan administration of the Diocese of Kurgan-Shchadrinsk (MP) and then the Mufti of Cheliabinsk and Kurgan, the spiritual leader of the Baptists of Cheliabinsk, Sverdlovsk, and Kurgansk regions, the administrator of Siberia's Metropolia of the Truly Orthodox Church of the Kiev "Patriarchate" (Bishop Barukh), the dean of the Kurgan region of the Ishim-Siberia Diocese of ROCOR ("Vladimir Karelin", who seemingly was ashamed to mention his episcopal rank in such a "distinguished" company), the pastor of the Church of Kurgan, the pastor of the Communion of Evangelical Christian Baptists, the Pastor of a Christian Church of the "Zhatva" (Harvest), the imam-hatyb of the Muslim community of Kurgan, the pastor of the United Evangelical Christian Baptists of the city of Shoumikha and a representative of Kurgan's missionary center of the International Society of "the Conscience of Khrishna".

In this bouquet of contemporary false teachings and heresies only a Roman Catholic and rabbi are missing. Unfortunately all the co-signees have Russian names, except for the Muslims, and this shows how widespread the sects have become in Russia.

Inevitably the question arises, was it really necessary for a representative of the Diocese of Ishim-Siberia to participate in such a multicolored religious company?

## A TRIP OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WCC TO RUSSIA

After observing that a within a number of local Orthodox Churches an anti-ecumenical movement has begun to appear and for a long time troubled by this, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Konrad Raiser, decided it was time to visit Russia.

According to the bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of Feb. 18 went to Russia on the invitation of Patr. Alexis II accompanied by a group of Protestant and even "Orthodox" theologians with the hope of mending the rather strained relations. Most of their time was spent visiting church services, meeting with Alexis Ridiger and his Synod and visits to the Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary located in the St. Sergius Lavra and so on.

"The intention was to put ourselves in front of some of those who have asked critical questions and make an honest attempt to explain, to interpret, to respond", said Raiser.

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of Feb. 12-18 published an extensive interview with Raiser by the journalist Larisa Skouratov which was held in the Danilov Monastery, the MP headquarters.

In answer to her questions, Raiser said, "We came at the invitation of His All-holiness the Patriarch. We had the opportunity to meet with him and members of the Synod and the staff of the Department of Foreign Relations [of the MP]. In St. Sergius Lavra we met with members of the

Theological Committee. In Moscow we met with teachers and students of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Institute. Also a visit to the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy is on the schedule."

Speaking at a press conference, Raiser said that "the present visit is part of the efforts undertaken on the part of the WCC to clarify relations with the Orthodox Churches, members of the WCC, and strengthen the influence of Orthodoxy upon the fellowship of churches."

During the discussions which were held, Metr. of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, Cyril (KGB agent "Mikhailov") "advanced the principle of equal representation in the Council of 'confessional families': Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant and this can serve as a forum for the meeting of the basic Christian families."

A spokesman for the Patriarchate, Victor Petliuchenko, declared that Raiser's visit was a success and that "it was important for delegates of the WCC to hear the critique of the Ecumenical Movement and all the manner in which it was expressed... often with no concrete arguments."

"If the changes do not take place," he continued, "the difficulties will accumulate and the internal pressure will make it impossible to preserve the WCC."

The Ecumenical paper reports very sparingly about protests which met Raiser and his entourage (if it was not altogether silent), but they were numerous and very heated. The bulletin still had to admit that in the Church of St. Catherine, Raiser was asked about the outrageous pagan rituals which it termed "supposed" and which occurred during prayer services (at which representatives of the MP participated) at the Assembly of the WCC in 1983 and 1991 in Canberra, Australia. Raiser replied that the Australian and Canadian participants in those services were Christians and not pagans, but due to their ancient culture, some pagan rituals were included. He added that the information about this was deliberately distorted by anti-Ecumenical groups in Russia, which circulated video cassettes of those services.

The very conservative Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods distributed leaflets condemning Raiser and demanding all ties with the WCC be cut. The Brotherhood published on the front page of the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" (# 3-4 of 1998) the following declaration:

"We, the laity of the Russian Orthodox Church, openly declare that in our opinion the visit of the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches Raiser is neither beneficial nor welcome for the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, we are convinced that this visit is organized by supporters of the heresy of Ecumenism with the aim of forcing the episcopate, the clergy and the laity of the ROC to maintain its membership in the WCC.

"The World Council of Churches, contrary to the assertions of the apologists for Ecumenism, is not a harmless discussion club, but an organization pretending to the status of a kind of pre-conciliar presence with a frame of reference of a transformation into a so-called 'Ecumenical Council' composed of members of the WCC. In the depths of the WCC there has already been formulated its heretical dogma -- the so-called theory of branches, its liturgical rites -- the so-called washing of feet and so forth. Therefore membership in the WCC is blasphemy and apostasy from Orthodoxy. We hope that the ROC will exit from this 'international of heretics.' "

These Orthodox brothers are in no way mistaken in their prognosis of the future.

The newspaper of the Greek Archdiocese (of the Ecumenical Patriarchate) in America "Orthodox Observer" published on Feb. 20th the news that no later than 2003 an "All-Orthodox Council" will be held in Geneva. This information was accompanied by a photograph of the joyously smiling two Patriarchs who recently met: Constantinople and Moscow, who supposedly quarreled about parishes in Estonia and are rivals over seniority.

Yet the "Nezavisimaya Gazyeta, Religia" ("Independent Gazette, Religion") in # 27 of Feb. 18 describes the events of this visit of the Secretary General quite differently from the Ecumenical press.

It was very encouraging to learn from its description of Raiser's visit to the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary that the clergy and students categorically rejected the heresy of Ecumenism.

At this meeting Raiser himself spoke as did Nicholas Lossky a professor at St. Sergius Institute in Paris, the son of the Sophianist Vladimir Lossky. According to this report after their speeches the auditorium became quite lively when the opportunity came for the audience to express itself. A microphone stood in the center of the hall which was approached by students and clergy who one after another expressed their dismay that the presence of Ecumenists in their hall besmirched it. Raiser was directly confronted with the question why he had come there.



Two monks, Priest-monk Clement (Berezovsky) and Monk Savvaty (Titkov) declared that it seems Raiser had never read Holy Scripture and supports and organization that preaches homosexuality. These statements were greeted with loud enthusiasm by the whole auditorium. Then the students began to furiously attack Lossky declaring that "what he talks about has nothing to do with Orthodoxy. You are a heretic!"

The seminarians then stated that those bishops and clergy of the ROC who participate in the Ecumenical gatherings do not represent the Orthodox Church but only themselves. This demonstration on the part of the seminarians was in reality not only a strong attack on the policies of the Patriarch and his Synod, but also of Metr. Philaret of Minsk who was present in the hall.

One cannot but rejoice that surely due to the influence of monasticism these future pastors of the Russian Church (and perhaps even arch-pastors) finally clearly grasped the essence of the Ecumenical and Sophian heresies, demanding an end to connections with them, and without fear of the presence of Metr. Philaret (KGB agent "Ostrovsky") a whole group of clergy boldly came to the defense of Orthodoxy.

#### A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE "HOLOCAUST"

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of 12-18 February published an extensive article by Archpriest Sergius Hakkel of the Moscow Patriarchate entitled "I am Joseph, Your Brother." This is how the future Roman Pope, John XXIII, addressed a Jewish delegation when a famous Papal encyclical of sorry memory was issued regarding the Vatican's relations with the Jews.

The subject of this article has been, so to say, a very touchy one for nearly 15 centuries. The author draws a parallel between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox, especially the Russian, Church. Almost half the article is devoted to a history of the so-called "Holocaust" or catastrophe. He hopes that the Russian Church will follow the same path as did the Vatican at the beginning of the 60's and preach from the ambo and teach in her seminaries that the Jews had nothing to do with the Savior's Crucifixion; only the Romans were guilty of crucifying Christ.

Fr. Hakkel tells us that "there exists a simplistic conception that the Holy Scriptures and Tradition should not be subjected to any kind of changes. Not one iota may be changed without one becoming a heretic and being put under a curse." By the way the Holy Church never "cursed" anyone. She only solemnly proclaims that so and so no longer belongs to her and one would think the Fr. Archpriest should know that distinction.

The author criticizes not only such Holy Fathers of the Church as St. John Chrysostom ("whose rhetoric is out of date") or St. Gregory of Nyssa, but even the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian himself, giving as "an example the 'negative' use of the word 'Jews' in the Gospel. The Evangelist uses this word 35 times... As soon as Russian Biblical scholars would become concerned that the teachers in schools and preachers in Russian churches understood this, then Orthodox Christians would once more have the opportunity to conduct dialogues with the Hebrews." By the way, in the newspapers and journals of the 60's one could read demands on the part of Jewish rabbis that Roman Catholics stop using the Gospel According to St. John since it is a source of "anti-Semitism."

Of course, Fr. Hakkel after becoming an Orthodox priest does not remember that the dialogues with the Jews, as we see from the Gospels, was begun by the Savior Himself and then was continued by the Holy Apostles, who for several decades *preached Christ*. And what but dialogues (for almost two millennia now) are the questions of the Pharisees and Scribes to the Savior and His replies to them in the and outside of the synagogues as well as similar discussions with the Apostles?

The services of Passion Week provoke special indignation from Fr. Hakkel. "Such services," he writes, "like Matins of Holy and Great Friday are considered to have been composed in accordance with the Church's teachings. Meanwhile the authority of this service derives exclusively from its use over the course of many centuries. This service was never approved by an Ecumenical Council and it would not take an Ecumenical Council to produce a new version or to abolish it... Such reforms have been proposed from time to time, for example, in 1960 by the Greek theologian C. Alivisatos. But so far nothing has happened and we all still *take part in this strange service*." It would seem that Fr. Hakkel has not looked recently into a catechism and has forgotten that everything in the life of the Church which is hallowed by centuries of use bears the name of Holy Tradition and carries a significance equal to that of Holy Scripture.

Further on, this "Orthodox" priest tells us that "the Holocaust did not help us to see the significance and beauty of the Jewish religion". And this, in turn, hinders us from seeing all the fullness and greatness of our faith.[?!] Surely, we Orthodox need to call a council similar to Vatican II."

Of course, Fr. Sergius does not want to recall the words of Christ, "Behold, thy house is left to thee desolate..." (Matt. 23:38), nor the tearing of the temple veil which visibly showed that the Grace of God had departed from the former holy temple; not to mention the cries of the Jews "Let His blood be upon us and upon our children." He forgets the words of the Apostle Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians that "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha" (that is, excommunicate until the Second Coming of the Lord). Or perhaps he hopes to prove to us that the contemporary Jews love Jesus Christ? Yet, the only thing he has in mind is the "significance and beauty of the Hebrew religion."

In connection with Fr. Hakkel's article it is worthwhile to recall an outstanding article by the engineer Abraham Zissman which was published in the now defunct newspaper "Rossiya" by N. Rybakov in the 1960's and also in the paper "Svet" ("Light") # 16, August 2, 1960. This article was written in response to a very tendentious book called "About Russian Judaism", which Zissman found to be quite slanderous and therefore objected to it fully realizing that among his Jewish countrymen his article would be met with much criticism.

He realizes that the first confrontation between Russians and Jews took place as early as the time of Sviatopolk, the son of St. Vladimir Equal to the Apostles, when the Jews became too eager in their tax collecting and as a result provoked such ire that they were beaten and the Jewish population suffered the first pogrom in Russia. Recognizing that from time to time Jews in Russia were restricted in some rights, he at the same time also points out that when the famous "settlement line" (within which Jews could live permanently and was 2 and 1/2 times the size of France) was abolished by the order of Tsar Nicholas II, almost no Jews left the places where they lived. He also sadly remarks that he is ashamed to admit that his other Jewish countrymen actively supported the German army fighting against Russia in World War I. In his opinion, the "Jewish question" had nothing to do with religion, and of the main cause of hostility by Russians towards Jews he says the following: "We are silent about the active participation of Jews in leftist organizations in Russia, run by socialists of all hues. We say nothing of the fact that a large percentage of Jews were involved in underground propaganda activities, were always opposed to the government. We are silent about the role which was played by our fellow kinsmen during the Revolution of 1917 and in particular during the early years of the reign of Bolshevik Communism." On pre-Revolutionary internal passports citizenship, ethnicity and religion were listed. The author of this article informs us that he was registered as Russian citizen of Jewish ethnicity and Jewish religion. Yet this in no way kept this distinguished and honest Jew from maintaining his religious ties with his kinsmen and at the same time declaring that he admires Russian culture, loves his native country and is a sincerely loyal citizen. If there had been more such "Zissmans", there would have been no "Jewish" question in Russia, just as there were no "Tartar" or "Yakut" questions.

After decades of atheism sown in Russia with the ideas of the Jews Marx and Engels, those same Jews severed their ties with their former traditions and after a period of godlessness have started to become baptized. A immense number of mixed marriages between Russians and Jews starting with the Revolutionary times of 1917 also resulted in numerous baptized Jews. Today we see among the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church (mainly in the MP) not only part-Jews, but also full-blooded ones, who become Orthodox Christians. Certainly, one cannot exclude the possibility of betrayal on the part of some newly-baptized Jews, yet, this happens with no more frequency than we see in cases of Russian born and baptized Christians. There is no need to look far for examples. What are such "priests" as the Renovationists like Kochetkov, Borisov, the Ecumenist Sviridov and the like -- and now this Hakkel? However, considering the significant number of baptized Jews, one has to pose the question, has not there begun to be manifest in our time the chosenness of the Jewish people, whose bitterness was "temporary" and the remnants of which, in the words of the Apostle, will be saved before the end of the world?

## A MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WORLD BANK WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Shortly after World War II the World Bank was established on the initiative of the US government in Washington to assist economically underdeveloped countries, however, the activities of the Bank have been much criticized by religious leaders.

As the "Ecumenical News International" of February 18 informs us, a meeting was held in London between the president of the Bank, Mr. Wolfson, and higher ranking representatives of some religions. The meeting was to be co-chaired by Mr. Wolfson and the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey.

The meeting, which was called "World Faiths and Development" was held on February 18-19 in the Archbishop's Lambeth Palace. Among the participants were Roman Catholics, Orthodox (from both the Ecumenical and the Moscow Patriarchates), Lutherans, Bahai's, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Taoists.

According to the joint statement made by the Bank at Lambeth Palace, "the main aim of the dialogue is to broaden opportunities for common understanding and action in tackling the critical issue of global poverty. It is designed to help the Bank and the faiths to reach a better understanding of each other's ideas about approaches to development and possible obstacles in the way of achieving desirable development aims."

It seems that behind these nebulous phrases there is hidden something more serious. An advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury on world problems (?), Mr. Andrew Perkis, said: "The meeting is a huge potential breakthrough because the World Bank appears to be saying that it needs to engage in a serious way with non-material factors like the spiritual, cultural, and environmental" and the president of the Bank, Wolfson, believes that "it is vital to build a strong relationship with civil society, and that means its important work with religious groups "

As the bulletin mentions, "through its loans the World Bank has enormous influence."

## CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIA

The official newsletter of the Greek Diocese of Denver (Colorado) "Diocesan News" in its December 1997 issue published an article entitled "Episcopal Authority regarding Economia." It purports to be based upon an article by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) "The Basis on which Economia May Be Used in the Reception of Converts." But in the 8 columns of this unsigned article there is not a single quote of his works, while his correspondence with the Secretary of the World Conference of the Episcopal Church in America gives a very clear understanding of Metr. Anthony's conception concerning the ancient means used to receive heretics into the Church by economia via various rites as dependent on the ecclesiastical structure: the first rite is through baptism, the second through chrismation, and the third through the Mystery of Confession. However, Metr. Anthony quite categorically states that all schismatics and heretics are alien to the Church and receive the Grace they lacked only through union with her. Thus a heretical clergyman in individual instances may be received by a bishop keeping his rank without ordination, but this same heretical clergyman, if received by a priest, remains a layman. As Metr. Anthony writes, referring to several canons and particularly the 1st Canon of St. Basil, "Heretics have no Apostolic succession (they are all laymen), nor sacraments, but if some of them are accepted as priests and even more, without repeating the water of Baptism, this is not because they are recognized as baptized or ordained to clerical rank, but because in the Sacrament of Chrismation or even simple Confession, they are given the grace of Baptism and clerical rank." Then, in explaining the allowance of economia for the sake of ecclesial benefit, Metr. Anthony cites as an example the acceptance by the Russian Church by the third rite of about 3 million Uniates, when after being subjected in Poland to Roman Catholic terror, they again were within Russian borders and began spontaneously to return to the Church.

Justifying with the commentary of Metr. Anthony on the episcopal use of economia *in special cases*, the Greek Archdiocese with the consent of the Ecumenical Patriarch resolved *without grounds for it* to declare "by extreme economia it recognizes as normative heterodox baptisms as performed according to the prescribed form from the following confessions and churches: a) Anglo-Catholics, b) the Anglican Communion (the Church of England and Episcopalian Churches, etc.), c) the Assembly of God,

d) the Baptists, e) the Church of the Brethren, f) Lutherans, g) Methodists, h) Moravians, i) the Non-Chalcedonian and Monophysite Churches, j) the Old Catholics (the Polish National Church, the Church of Utrecht, the Liberal Catholic Church, etc.), k) Presbyterians, l) the Roman Catholics, and m) the United Church of Christ."

From this list of Churches one can see among them utterly minor sects, like the "Church of the Brethren" and the "Assembly of God."

But then there follows a very important explanation:

"This decision is respected by all hierarchs and all synods of the Orthodox Church in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and it is consonant with similar determinations by the synods of the jurisdictions comprising the Standing Committee of Canonical [sic] Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA). This decision is not called into question nor refuted by any canonical hierarch simple because he personally disagrees with it; instead, hierarchs respect the principle of conciliarity and the decision of other hierarchs made in consideration of the prevalent circumstances within their dioceses and made in accord with the consensus of their synods."

With this outrageous decision almost the entire "Ecumenical Church" unconditionally signed on to the recognition of heretical baptisms. If one is accepted as valid and salvific, then there is no reason not to recognize any other "sacraments."

Almost all Local American Orthodox Churches are represented in this Standing Committee of Bishops.

#### ANOTHER BLASPHEMY AT MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE CENTER

The newspaper "Pravoslavnoye Obozrenie" ("Orthodox Review") published by one of the dioceses of ROCOR in its # 1 issue for December 1997 published a photograph of a shoe horn which is available for all the guests of the Danilov Hotel, which is attached to the Danilov Monastery, the present administrative headquarters of the Moscow Patriarchate.

In the center of the handle of this implement in an oval is an eight-bar Russian Cross with the letters "G" and "K" on the sides and underneath the letter "D". These letters commonly appear on Russian images of the Crucifixion denoting the first letters of the Russian words for "Sponge", "Spear" when these objects are also depicted. In the place of this "D" (for Danilov?) usually is the letter "A" for Adam, as Tradition tells us that the skull of Adam came to rest at Golgotha after the Great Flood. Along the entire handle in Latin characters is written "Hotel Danilovskii".

Evidently, the compulsive cupidity of the Moscow Patriarchate has no limits and its bishops cannot even stop at an obvious blasphemy.

Those who happen to fly on Delta or Aeroflot Airlines know that their passengers are offered water from "Holy Spring" bottled in the Kostroma Diocese. This can even be had in carbonated form! The revenue from the sale of this water provided the diocese with an clear profit of one and a half billion rubles.

It is with regret that we have become acquainted with the "Declaration" of the participants of the Ninth Conference of the Clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate in Germany.

The given Declaration manifests, I am profoundly convinced, an irresponsible use of demagogic phraseology, lacking any sound reasoning whatsoever, and leading to letting in innumerable ecclesiastical problems for the Russian Orthodox Church at the end of the twentieth century.

Recently no question has been so overinflated as that of the unification of the MP and the ROCOR. It is most grievous to note that most often these pronouncements are uttered from the mouths of people with impulses alien to Church truth, thus sowing discord in the minds of their spiritual children. In order to correctly understand my position I ask that you keep in mind the following points:

1. The tragic separation of the Russian Church in 1927 was the result of the signing of the infamous and grievous declaration of Metr. Sergius (Stragorodsky). All are aware that even to the present day, neither this act itself, nor its zealous adherents, have been officially condemned in Russia by the administration of the MP, even though this would be the first step toward improving the health of the Church's position in Russia.

2. One fact that aggravates the separation of the MP and the ROCOR is the non-recognition of the multitude of New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia whom the MP blasphemously rejects, demanding from the state authorities their prior political rehabilitation, something which was never the case throughout the history of the Russian Church. On the contrary, since it has been liberated from state control, the MP for some time already could have unconditionally glorified all the New Martyrs, meanwhile they temporize keeping an eye on which direction the political wind is blowing. And how shameful and painful it is to read in the present Declaration of Archb. Mark of Berlin and Archb. Theophan that the principle reason for our separation, that is the blood of millions of New Martyrs, they term "misunderstandings" and some sort of "ignorance", terms which to me are incomprehensible. (Cf. Section 1 of the Declaration.)

3. The present administration of the MP constantly tramples upon the ecclesiastical canons and doctrines of the Holy Church by actively participating in the panheresy of the twentieth century, Ecumenism, and in the World Council of Churches. The recent process of secularization of the Church within Russia and the metamorphosis of her administration from a totalitarian into a commercial structure has become a norm of life. (There are many examples of this: opening commercial operations in dioceses, amongst which are selling tobacco and alcohol, money laundering and cooperation with the mafiosi.) Not limited to such as this, the MP continues, from earlier decades, to be the servant of alien nationalistic interests of the Russian rulers and to become a more active power in the political arena.

4. The fact of the existence of the ROCOR as the free part of the Russian Church of itself manifests its great service to Orthodox people in Russia, who to her last drop strives to defend the radiant countenance of Orthodoxy from all encroachments upon it. Our voice for almost 80 years now is the only one which bears witness to the truth of God in Russia. We also heed the cries and sighs of the zealots for the purity of the Faith in our homeland, which are especially loud precisely now. And if the "unification" with the MP for which Archb. Mark works diligently, has already begun to dawn, then why from precisely within Russia do so many pastors seek a martyric escape from the spiritual characteristics which unswervingly draw the post-Soviet ecclesiastical administration? (But we know well what price is paid for seeking the loftiness of Truth, which at times is at the cost of a life. For example, take the threats which the recently murdered Protopresbyter Alexander Zharkov in St. Petersburg received before going under the omophor of the ROCOR.)

5. From the very beginning of its canonical existence the ROCOR deemed itself a temporary, free part of the Russian Church, called to serve God in righteousness and love. At the given moment of the anti-Church powers attempt to blame the ROCOR for an absence of love in this affair of uniting two parts of the Russian Church.

As a consequence of all that has been set forth above, I consider that the time for union has not yet arrived. The MP and the ROCOR were never as far apart from each other as now. We always co-suffered with the Church in Russia while she found herself under the yoke of the godless state. Now, however, "liberated" from it, the MP openly turned against us even its Orthodox people inside Russia. (For example, the statements of Patr. Alexis about the ROCOR, the affair in Hebron, the attempts to seize our churches in Europe and America). And in this difficult time each bishop must be answerable for his holy flock as never before, for his each and every verbal or printed word.

We must diligently be aware that genuine unity between the two parts of the Russian Church is comprised not in a unification of ecclesial administrations, but in a unity of faith, a firm stance within it and in love. The question of this unity can be resolved only by a future Free All-Russian Council of the Russian Orthodox Church similar to that of the Free Great All-Russian Council of 1917-18, if the all conditions come together for the summoning of such a council in the future. At this, may God grant, someday future council will be the requisite open and honest discussion to decide all the questions that in the 20th century plagued our Church existence.

Those who self-appointedly distribute various epistles in a spirit of "unity" and "love" in fact still further disrupt our flock and sow even more discord in their minds and souls, are lacking in genuine love because, in the words of the Apostle, love is not disorderly (I Cor. 13:5).

Bishop Kyrill