



# CHURCH NEWS

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CHURCH NEWS  
639 Center St.  
Oradell, NJ 07649

Tel./Fax (201) 967-7684

## THE TSAR CONSTANTINE CATHEDRAL FEAST IN SUZDAL

According to bulletin Vertograd Razsylvka #265 of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, on the patronal feast day of the cathedral of St. Constantine and his mother Helen in Suzdal, the festive service was presided over by Metropolitan Valentine. The Metropolitan was joined by the Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino, Theodore, the Archbishop of Sukhumi and Abkhasia, Seraphim and the Bishop of Khabarovsk, Ambrose.

After congratulating the flock on the occasion of the feast, Metropolitan Valentine appealed to all present to carry on the preaching of true Orthodoxy, and to disregard the current sorrows and persecutions. Vladyka pointed out that at present time, difficult days of persecution for the ROAC have arrived, and one should not be surprised at that, because the True Church, according to Christ's words, will be always persecuted. "If the Lord has granted us some short rest, it is in order that we would prepare ourselves for a new hunt and persecutions". The present persecution, said Metropolitan Valentine, is raised by the "customary enemy of the True Church", the Moscow Patriarchate. They are using the former clerics of the ROAC, Osetrov and Krasovsky, as their tools, and just recently they were not ashamed to turn for help to the fascist organization of Afghan-Chechen veterans "Nashe Delo" (Our Cause or mafia). "These people," said Vladyka, "have been sent to Suzdal in order to threaten, to pressure, to intimidate. Their aim and the aim of their lords in the Moscow Patriarchate are only one—to annihilate our Church. They threaten with death the 'victims', they threaten with death also myself and our clergy. But I am not afraid of death, I have lived my life."

Then Vladyka appealed to all the faithful to stand fast in the truth, no matter what might happen to him or other pastors. "The Church was always built upon blood," he stressed. "From the blood of her faithful children there will arise new Archpastors, new Christians. This is the power that makes the Church undefeatable. Be faithful to the truth, the True Orthodox Church, do not be afraid," the First Hierarchy of the ROAC commanded the faithful. "Today communism and atheism have become obsolete, but in their pre-death convulsions they still attempt to strike the reviving Russian Church. The people, who are still possessed with the spirit of atheism, the spirit of lies or the spirit of faint-heartedness and cowardice in the face of lies – primarily these are hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate and their collaborators – do not rest, they are ready even to commit murder." According to Vladyka's words, Suzdal's authorities: mayor, public prosecutor and militia "...do participate in the lawlessness and take no measures to stop it."

When the correspondent of the radio program "German Wave" came to the mayor in order to speak about the persecutions of the ROAC, he was rudely denied the interview. As is known, Suzdal is a sibling city of Germany's Rotenburg and therefore, between these two cities there exists a close and friendly relation.

The mayor of Rotenburg visited Suzdal on several occasions, and along with him were arriving many German tourists also. It seems now though, that the new mayor of Suzdal is not interested in this!

## SOME MORE ON TERROR IN SUZDAL

The Orthodox bulletin Vertograd in several issues has updated the details on the terrorist acts against the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church happening in Suzdal. According to report of May 28<sup>th</sup> (#261), the action of revolutionary fighters "Nashe Delo", sent from Moscow – is visibly more active, especially after the publication of the outrageous article by Nevolin in *Russkii Vestnik* (Russian Herald) entitled "Vampires". At present, the terrorist group has split into two parts: one terrorizes the parishioners and children, while the other watches over every movement of the Hierarchs and clergy of the ROAC around Suzdal. "On May 24<sup>th</sup> two men openly tailgated in their white "Niva" (#402) the automobile of Metropolitan Valentine, driven by Protodeacon Vladimir. While Fr. Vladimir was parking the car, the "Niva" blocked the driveway and the two men openly moved to attack him. The attack was prevented only because Archimandrite Irinarkh and priest monk Theophan rushed to his assistance, causing the terrorists to leave in a hurry.

The supporters of Osetrov continue their hooligan actions against the Russian Church. On eve of May 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> they broke almost all the windows in the Synodal building. Simultaneous the bandits have admitted that at the present time, "we have received the order just to 'watch'...but if we get the order to 'bang' some one -- we will do it." Last Sunday several cars came to Suzdal to reinforce the group "Nashe Delo". They met with their cohorts residing in Suzdal and had a conference with them.

According to Vertograd, "It seems that the financial difficulties concerning which *Russkii Vestnik* has reported are resolved and now the extremists have begun to be active in Suzdal." It became known that the "military project" was paid "by some one A., well known in the patriotic circles."

In Vertograd's issue #265 it is reported that, "The lawyer of the diocese of ROAC, Sergei Mochenov, who defends the Metropolitan and also recently became a representative in the City Council, was threatened by the "power support", who on several occasions came to his house and demanded that he should stop defending the Church."

The pettiness of the persecution reaches to such an extent that the gangsters have collected about 300 signatures (and that of the 12,000 residents who voted that the title "Honorable Citizen" be awarded to the Metropolitan) that he should be stripped of his status as "Honorable Citizen of Suzdal"!



Despite all the horrors of Suzdal's situation, thank God, the Russian Orthodox people do not capitulate and in all ways defend their Church, presided over by the First Hierarch, Metropolitan Valentine.

Thus, on May 30<sup>th</sup>, in the name of the clergy, monastics and parishioners of the ROAC, a petition was sent to the State's Committee of the Duma (parliament) regarding Civil Unions and Religious Organizations, describing the terrorist acts of "Nashe Delo". It was stressed therein, that the obvious connection of the Moscow Patriarchate with this group strongly discredits the MP in the eyes of Suzdal's faithful.

One hundred and two parishioners in Suzdal have sent an excellent open letter to Patriarch Alexis with copies to the Archbishop of Vladimir, Eulogy and the State Duma. Under the present situation of terror, which is supported by the authorities, those residents of the tiny city who have signed this letter are undoubtedly risking quite a bit.

The Catacomb schema-Abbess N. has sent to Alexis Ridiger the following open letter:

"Your Holiness!

Please listen intently from the height of your throne to the voice of a humble nun. I live and save myself by the grace of God in the Catacomb Church, the Church of the 'Tikhonites'. Now the Lord has so arranged that our Church has her own, so to say, officially registered 'open' part – the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, which is headed by Metropolitan Valentine (Rousantsov). My words will be unpleasant for you, but please find the courage to hear them publicly.

For many years you have been serving the Moscow Patriarchate and for all of this time you were either directly, or in union with the godless authorities, persecuting the Catacomb Church. You and your brethren were lying about us, labeling us anti-soviets, counter-revolutionaries. A while ago you have publicly declared on the radio that there is no Catacomb Church and if there ever was one, it disappeared in the thirties. You have said this, being perfectly well aware that there was a Catacomb Church; she exists and we have never disappeared.

We understand why we are hated so much on your part. We are hated not only by you, but also by your organization. You have always lied about us and persecuted us. Now you have started a cruel persecution of our Church in the person of her First Hierarch, Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal.

Vladyko, we know that at one time you were close friends with our First Hierarch, Metropolitan Valentine. You served together, prayed together. But then your paths separated. Our Vladyka had the strength, the faith, to recall the commandments of Christ about the Last Judgment and the blessedness of Paradise. He has found the strength to repent in his heart, not just in words, but also in deeds, and to return to the suffering and persecuted Catacomb Church. His sealed his repentance by his deeds. He severed all his ties with the Moscow Patriarchate, despite the threats and persecutions on the part of the formerly strong KGB. He has entered the path of serving God, the True God, has repented before the people of his participation in the heresies of Sergianism and Ecumenism and devoted himself to the ministry of the Russian Church.

You, Vladyko, have not done this. You have remained on the former path.

And you cannot forgive him, you cannot forget, because he stands before you as a living reproach, a living unmasker, a living voice of the Catacomb confessors, martyred for Christ's truth, for the Church. And he does expose, tirelessly exposes, and calls upon your conscience.

We desire you and your brethren to know that we are not afraid of your persecutions. To suffer for the Church's truth as our fathers have suffered, the saintly New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia – is not fearful, because God is with us. But it must be fearful for you. You have made a union with the mafia. You do not abhor even this violation, a union with killers and criminals. In order to annihilate our Church you are ready for everything, even for murder. It is fearful that at the same time you serve the Divine Liturgy, glorify the New-Martyrs, speak nicely about the revival of Russia. It is fearful that you deceive millions of people.

May the Lord be your Judge. But be aware, that by you manhunts and persecutions you (or not personally you, Kirill of Smolensk or some one else) – will achieve nothing. Even if you manage to remove the leadership of our Church, close her with the assistance of the civil authorities as an organization, you will not be able to destroy the Catacomb Church. There will always be some people, with pure souls, who strive to live according to the holy fathers, to imitate the saintly martyrs, who do not want to participate with you and your church in the heresies of ecumenism and other ones.

I pray to God that this my letter would touch your heart."

It is self evident that the name of this Catacomb schema Abbess couldn't be released.

#### **"INTOLERANCE HAS TO BE CREATED AROUND FR. VALENTINE"**

Under such a title our editors have received an article by A. Sviridov, by a fax from the newspaper "Prizyv" (appeal, call) of June 14<sup>th</sup>, #98, Russia. The newspaper reports that, "Presently in Suzdal unique phenomena are occurring, concerning which our "Prizyv" has written on numerous occasions. The so called 'Metropolitan Valentine' – is a unique personality in many respects. This is one of the few clergymen throughout the whole history of Orthodoxy, who as an octopus moves his tentacles and leads the whole city, even far away beyond its borders. He has corrupted not only many faithful but also the government's structures.

Suzdal's residents are concerned by a political element [Nasha Delo], because the supporters of Valentine are instigating the faithful [of the MP] against the Russian Orthodox Church, [MP] calling her a gangster organization." (underlined by us, Ch.N.)

"With tears in his eyes some one recently said: "Valentine is everywhere. Until this boil is not squeezed out, nothing good will happen in Suzdal. We want to go to one united church. The schism goes on not only in families, but also between close relatives, when the sister goes to the church of the Moscow Patriarchate, while her brother is rushing to the promised goods in the ROAC. A schism occurs in the souls of the people. Within them is cultivated hatred against each other and this is the most frightening..."

"To those who were born and grew up in Suzdal it is very painful to watch this unlawfulness. Suzdal needs help. For example, the citizens have asked the activity of Valentine's supporters on the internet to be stopped. Their publication Vertograd does not cease to spread slander against any one who opposes Rousantsov. Just a few days ago, for unknown reasons, there was performed a search, sanctioned by the public prosecutor, in the dwellings of the rector of the St. Stephen Church in Kideksha, Fr. A. Osetrov"...[was this not done in order to demonstrate their "equity" and under this pretext have a search made in the Metropolitan's quarters and during it to throw some narcotics, pornographic pictures or even a gun? Ch.N.]

"According to the opinion of the representative of the State Duma, Gennady Churkin, one cannot invent a greater blasphemy and spiritual decomposition as in the case of Anatoly Rousantsov (secular name of Metropolitan Valentine, Ch.N). Life should go according to this principle: if one must live with the wolves, than cry as a wolf. If Valentine is acting in this manner, why should we accept this? We have to fight back in a struggle with this dirty man. It is good that you publish leaflets and demonstrate the films about this Rousantsov. It is necessary to unite and to create a situation of intolerance around Valentine. No matter what, he cannot bribe everyone."

The impudence of this newspaper has no equal! All the acts of terror against the First Hierarch of the ROAC, her hierarchs, clergy and even faithful and children – namely come on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate, her clergymen (Osetrov and Krasovsky) as well as their hired gangs. There is only one correct point from Prizyv: "The significance of Metropolitan Valentine in Suzdal is his high moral weight, and this gives no rest to the furious Moscow Patriarchate"

If in the Vladimir region there would be any concept of lawfulness, than all the instigators for the 'intolerance' against Metropolitan Valentine should be brought to a trial and judged according to the law of the Russian Federation, which forbids the "stimulation of the religious enmity" (par. UK RF 282)!

## THE CONFERENCE OF THE CHICAGO-DETROIT DIOCESE OF THE ROCOR(L)

The magazine *Pravoslavnaya Rus* (Orthodox Russia) #9 has published the resolution of the meeting of Chicago-Detroit diocese, unfortunately, with no date. According to the group photograph of this meeting, it happened before the tragic fall of Archbishop Alypy. The resolution is the following:

"Gathered for the diocesan convention, we, the clergy of the Chicago-Detroit diocese want to stress our faithfulness to our First Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, as well as our diocesan Hierarch, Archbishop Alypy.

Every one of us knows from experience what the support of our flock means! When the parish is harmonious and united, the clergy can successfully labor on the field of Christ's Church. But a priest or a deacon deprived of the support of parishioners has a very hard time. No less, every Bishop needs the support of his clergy!

Therefore, at this convention we now affirm our love, respect and obedience to our lawful hierarchy and at the same time we condemn those schismatics, those fanatics, who throw their rage, false teachings and arbitrarily destroy the peace within Church.

In expressing our trust to our canonical hierarchs, we also ask them not to cease to do everything possible for the pacification of our Church Abroad as well as the whole Russian Church; and not to forget us in their prayers before the Lord" (Underlined by us, Ch.N).

The Serbs have a proverb: an old song according to a new tune. Here again we hear of rapprochements against the schismatics, fanatics, false teachers and arbitraries", and the rest is offered, no matter what – to be faithful to their hierarchy and they beseech the ROCA hierarch to please bring peace to the two Churches: the one Abroad and Moscow Patriarchate! Interesting that this diocesan resolution does not mention a single example of false teachings within the Church Abroad.

## AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY ARCHBISHOP MARK TO THE "NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA" (INDEPENDENT GAZETTE)

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, Mark, the Archbishop of Berlin-Germany and Great Britain, gave a very extended interview to the well-known newspaper in Russia "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" (Independent Newspaper).

Probably supposing that an interview published in Russia might not reach the mass public abroad, Archbishop Mark decided that it is possible to partly open his cards. The interview starts with a rather detailed biography of the Archbishop. In it he fails to mention that while still being a layman he was a very active member of the NTS (Nacionalno Trudovoy



Souz - National Labor Union) which at the end of the thirties was infiltrated by the KGB and that he traveled to the USSR with the literature of this organization and was arrested there.

Then the journalist questions him about the change of the First Hierarchy of the ROCOR and despite all this, the continued activity of Metropolitan Vitaly, who is recognized by some as the Head of the Church, in particular by Bishop Barnabas. Archbishop Mark gave sufficient and historically correct information about the retirement of Metropolitan Vitaly. Then the journalist asked for the reason for the deposition of Bishop Barnabas. Archbishop Mark explained that Bishop Barnabas became unsatisfied with the position of vicar and, according to his words "at that time it was ordered that he become a rural dean only for the parishes in France (as it is known, it is not a bishop's position, but that of a priest), he did not obey this conciliar decision and was placed under suspension by the Church."

According to Archbishop Mark's words, "he was made use of by certain extremists among the clergy there. This group consists of only 10 individuals: 8 priests and 2 deacons." These clergymen actually presented the most important and impressive part of the clergy in France and their "extremism" was a reaction in protest against the ecumenical contacts of Bishop Ambrose and his close relations with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. On several occasions, along with their other complaints, these clergymen were asking the Synod of Bishops not to appoint to their diocese Bishop Ambrose, but all their requests were simply ignored by the Synod.

The reporter did not miss the opportunity to inquire about the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church – Metropolitan Valentine. Concerning him Archbishop Mark said that "he was defrocked for serious misdeeds, and therefore cannot be either a bishop or a priest. For us he is nothing more than a monk."

The "serious misdeeds" of Metropolitan Valentine were contained in the fact that he did not recognize as legal his suspension, which was enacted without even presenting him with the accusations against him, and then the deposition in absentia, as decreed by the ROCOR, in violation of the elementary judicial procedures of the trial.

The more we follow this interview, the more "interesting" it becomes. Now the journalist approaches the matters of relationship between the Church Abroad and the MP. He asked: "The last Council of Bishops of the Church Abroad in the year 2000 re-evaluated the perspectives for its relationship with the MP and, because of this, many Orthodox in Russia began to hope that a reunion of the two Churches was possible. What are real prospects for such unity?"

Archbishop Mark replied: "Our new approach to this question is based, first of all, on the very fact that there have been changes in the religious life of the country. At the Bishop's Council of the Church Abroad (in October 2000) a talk was heard concerning the Council that had recently been held in Moscow. As is known, the foundations of the social conception of the Russian Orthodox Church were made known, and in many of their points, they changed our old views of what sort of Church the Moscow Patriarchate was. What I have in mind is those points where the independence of the Church from government is discussed. We took this as a condemnation (?!) of 'Sergianism'. What was especially important to us was the glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia at that Council, since we have already long ago canonized them, and had venerated them for more than a decade."

Archbishop Mark craftily fails to mention that among the real new Martyrs canonized by Moscow Patriarchate, there are also a number of renowned sergianists and that she categorically refuses to accept among the New Martyrs St. Joseph of Petrograd, the main founder of the Catacomb Church.

Then Archbishop Mark continues: "At the Council in 2000, a Commission was set up to study the questions of the mutual relations of our Church and the Moscow Patriarchate. You have mentioned two Churches. I have never recognized this, and never shall: we are not two Churches, but two parts of the one Russian Church. (Everywhere underlined by us, Ch.N). Since the beginning of the 1990's when it became possible for Russians to have some sort of human contacts with the West, even then the question of rapprochement arose. It was right here on the territory of the German diocese, that from 1993 we began to have discussions with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. In these discussions, one bishop and four priests from each side took part. I represented the Church Abroad, while Archbishop Theophan (Galinsky) represented the Moscow Patriarchate. We usually met twice a year, and discussed all the questions that we considered important for overcoming the present divided state. And I must say, at these meetings we found many new possibilities for overcoming these difficulties. Thus, in my view, this was a very valuable experience, and I profoundly very much regret that it was so rudely broken off by the Moscow Patriarchate."

To the question of the journalist in which way the MP broke off the dialogue – Archbishop Mark referred to the seizure of property of the Church Abroad in the Holy Land and in particular, of Hebron. Nevertheless Archbishop Mark continues: "This was particularly unpleasant for me, and the cause of pain, since I was personally responsible for these monasteries in the Holy Land, and could do nothing to prevent what happened. **Despite all the discouraging circumstances, our meetings with the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate still continued for a time, but our flock abroad did not understand this, and therefore it became necessary to break off the meetings.**"

That there was no way to prevent the seizure of Hebron – Archbishop Mark shamelessly lies. No less than half a year before the seizure was accomplished, an Arab, the mayor of Hebron, met with Bishop Anthony (Grabbe), and not knowing that he was no longer the Chief of the Mission, based upon former acquaintance, he handed him a complaint against the acting Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Theodosios (Clare), saying that he had made an agreement with him concerning Hebron, which was forwarded by Bishop Anthony to the acting Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Archbishop



Laurus. In his cover letter, Bishop Anthony offered his help in this matter. But he did not receive even a document of acknowledgment, stating that his letter was received by the Synod!

The reporter also inquired if Archbishop Mark met with Patriarch Alexis and if the matter of relationship between the Church Abroad and the MP were discussed. Archbishop Mark affirmed that in 1997 he met with the Moscow Patriarch, but "we had time only to touch upon these subjects briefly". From this interview it became obvious that the late Bishop Mitrophan (Znocko-Borovski) also met with the Moscow Patriarch.

Then Archbishop Mark was asked how he views the future possibilities for union: "The [ROCA] Synod relinquishing its powers? Dioceses subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate and the Moscow Synod? Or would it be on the model of mutual co-existence, mutual recognition and eucharistic communion?"

The following answer was given to this question: "Firstly, there is the question of the problems mentioned above (which are not explained, Ch.N.) and secondly of the possibility in principle of eucharistic communion. In the document which we signed at the end of 1997 with Archbishop Theophan, it was so stated: we, at our level, see no obstacle in principle for eucharistic communion. I think this is a serious question. I signed the document, as did Vladyka Theophan, at my own risk, without having consulted any of the members of our Synod and brethren. Nonetheless, I hold to such a view, and I think this might be a next step, where two Church Councils could recognize the existence of such a possibility. Beyond that it would be correct, with the conditions that there be progress on both sides, to continue the work of the commission, which could meet and discuss, for example, with observers from each side at the other's Councils. This is my personal opinion. I have not discussed this question with anyone, and do not know how my brethren might react to it."

Is it not amazing that Archbishop Mark, without consulting the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR, takes upon himself such a responsibility, which is subject to the Synod's decision, if not the decision of the Council of Bishops?! Actually, for this alone he should be put under ecclesiastical trial, but as we know, nothing of that sort has happened. The fact that he openly admits to his binding talks in an interview to a newspaper, just proves that the Synod of Bishops knows it very well too and in no way condemns it.

It is also interesting that Archbishop Mark sees "no obstacles in principal for eucharistic communion" with the Moscow Patriarchate, pretends not to notice that she continues in her "sergianist" principles and actively participates in the ecumenical movement, which was anathemized by the Church Abroad, to which he still officially belongs.

In continuation of the above question, Archbishop Mark says: In a more distant perspective, this might take the form of co-existence, and further on, of communion in the form suggested already by Patriarch Alexis II. In one of his interviews, he saw it as natural that the Church Abroad has its own life, its own characteristics, which have developed in these 80 years, and no one should forget them . . . Therefore some model of mutual recognition is needed, one that would gradually become a kind of autonomy."

We have written on numerous occasions several years ago, that in order to lure the people abroad, ignorant in the church matters – the autonomy will be offered to them!

The reporter asked if Archbishop Mark should be considered the main initiator of negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate? He "modestly" replied: "I think that the issue is not me personally, but the fact that our diocese has the peculiar role of being a geographical fore-post of the Church Abroad regarding Russia. We meet people from Russia, including priests and bishops more often than others do. Even back in the 90's our interest in Russia was much greater than was the case of other dioceses of the Russian Church Abroad. For example, this discussion you and I are having is taking place in the monastery of Venerable Job of Pochayev, where since 1945 service books have been published in Church Slavonic, as well as booklets on Church history and theological themes which were then sent to Russia. Not in a single other diocese of our Church was there anything like this . . ."

Here Archbishop Mark lies again. From the very beginning of the war of Germany against the former USSR – our monastery of St. Job in Lodomirova (Chekho-Slovakia) in an enormous amount was printing church service books and popular booklets and through a friendship of various German soldiers and officers was forwarding many packages into sections of the USSR occupied by German troupes. A whole wagon filled with books of this monastery happened to stay in Karlsbad at the time of the German capitulation where it was robbed partially by the smart book traders and sold later and partly taken by the Soviet army. However, a part of these books the Synod of Bishops managed to save and take with them when fleeing the Bolsheviks. These books were given out to newly established parishes in the refugee camps in Germany and Austria.

The Monastery of St. Job was established by the monks who escaped the communists in Lodomirova, in particular by Archimandrite Job (Leontiev) – a direct descendent of the field marshal Souvoroff on the mother's side.

Besides the exclusive church matters, the interview also touched upon the relations with the civil authorities in Russia as well as with the Roman Catholics.

The opening of his cards by Archbishop Mark outlines the nearest moves of the game of the Church Abroad behind the scenes. After all, according to his seniority, Archbishop Mark (especially considering the incurable illness of Archbishop Alypy) – becomes the Deputy President of the rather old and sickly Metropolitan Laurus. What a sad perspective for her in the future!



## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHAOS CREATED BY BISHOP BARNABAS**

In our extraordinary issue for the month of June #6 (107) we have related about a conflict that happened between Bishop Barnabas and the Russian Hierarchs: Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin [ROCA]V. As was expected, their joining the group of Metropolitan Vitaly resulted in their suspension on the part of the Synod of Bishops of Metropolitan Laurus.

Since Archbishop Lazarus demanded from Bishop Barnabas a formal apology and declared that should the opposite occur, he will use the right "given them (the hierarchs in Russia) by the order of the First Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, in his letter dated 11/26<sup>th</sup> of March to create an independent new hierarchy in Russia" – the matters got very confused. There is no hope that such a power hungry and selfish person as Bishop Barnabas will ever apologize, therefore the following is to be expected: Bishop Barnabas, together with "Bishop" Vladimir will force Metropolitan Vitaly (who for a long time has ceased to be responsible for any of his signatures and decisions) to suspend, and probably even depose both Hierarchs in Russia.

According to unofficial sources we received from Moscow, Archbishop Lazarus already contacted Metropolitan Valentine, asking him to enter into communion with him, but at the same time he did set a few conditions for such a communion.

Since Metropolitan Valentine is guided by one particular principle: once a traitor – always a traitor – it is very doubtful that he will be accepted. In such a situation, there remains nothing more for Archbishop Lazarus to do, but to create a new (fourth?) hierarchy within the body of the suffering Russian Church!

## **DARKNESS OVER HOLY RUSSIA**

Hunting after the clergy and threats of the physical reprisals upon them, the desecration of churches, beating up of the faithful, litigations and slanders in the media. . . One would believe that the daily events of the period of the militant atheism in Russia, together with communism, had sunk into oblivion. Alas! All of this is an everyday event in contemporary Suzdal, where Vladimir's regional authorities, along with the obvious toleration on the part of the city's clerks and militia have arranged for the persecution of Metropolitan Valentine (Rousantsov), the President of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROAC). In what way did this man not please the authorities, who beginning in 1973 was ministering to his flock, who has restored or even built in Suzdal about twenty churches, and three times in a row was elected by the residents as their representative in the City's Council? The official reason is pedophilia. One should think that such matters are to be decided only in the court. One court session already was held and fell apart, because the witnesses have renounced their statements and no demonstrable facts were available. In a normal democracy, a trial in such a case is thrown out, even more so, because the 'witnesses' admitted that they had been bribed. It is obvious that due to an order from above, a new trial was scheduled. But what is most important, is that outside of the court hearing, a real persecution against Metropolitan Valentine and his clergy has begun. The plotters slander in the press, throw fire bombs into the monks' cells, break all the windows in the diocesan center, beat up parishioners and clergy, break into the churches and desecrate the altars. And what is most frightening, they hurt the children, since they openly ascribe to them immoral relations with their pastor.

Among the parishioners there have already been some heroes, like young Ivan Saveliev, who did not become fearful, but loudly defended his Metropolitan when the slanderers gathered Suzdal's residents for a concert with popular performers in the city's tourist hall, and then displayed a dirty video with accusations against the persecuted Metropolitan, which they have composed themselves. May the Lord not permit that within the ROAC there would be martyrs: such threats are already heard against the Metropolitan himself and his faithful supporters. . . . The Campaign against this Church is very well planned. There was even thrown into the city a group of rascals from the nationalistic organization "Nashe Delo" (Our Deed), which supposedly has as members the veterans of the Chechen war. The organization has opened in Suzdal her own branch, and it seems their only purpose is to fight against Metropolitan Valentine.

The accusations of pedophilia of late have shaken the Catholic Church in America. Such people might happen to be also within the Orthodox Church, although she does not have a celibate clergy, therefore the problem is not so urgent within the married clergy, but remains within the Monastics. According to a very accurate expression of one archpriest, who knows well the Moscow Patriarchate, those of her bishops who have received a good start during the soviet period are to be classified in three categories: married, "gay" and Mafiosi. Even if one would think it is an exaggeration, there is at least a partial truth. Have we ever heard of at least one scandal connected with a hierarch of the Moscow Patriarchate? Then why so much passion regarding a Metropolitan, who is not young, who suffers from diabetes and has to be hospitalized from time to time?

The true reason for the persecution is that the First Hierarch of the ROAC does not please the Patriarchate, with which he has been in conflict already since the time when he was an Archimandrite in 1988, when he refused to collaborate with the KGB, and he was to be transferred to another distant parish. The parishioners stood up for their pastor, but in Moscow they were not even received by the authorities of the MP. In 1990 Archimandrite Valentine joined the jurisdiction of the

Church Abroad, where relatively soon he became a Bishop. Immediately a slanderous campaign was started against him, which unfortunately was heard abroad also. This was finalized in the break between the Church Abroad and establishment of the ROAC.

In contrast to the Church Abroad, which after the destruction of the USSR lost its head and began to fall apart, the Church of Metropolitan Valentine is growing. The Latvian Church has joined her, parishes in Europe and America have opened. The existence of the ROAC is a mute reproach to the Moscow Patriarchate. No doubt that only within the depths of this particular organization is one to look for the inspirers of the present persecution.

In the end, the practical performers of this campaign, most likely, will receive a reprimand. The information about what is going on is already being received in certain organizations defending the rights of the faithful, such as Keston-College, which focuses on religious issues.

The Suzdal scandal might become next in turn to blow over the prestige of the Russian Federation, which strives to be incorporated into European structures. There is probably already unpleasant scandal for Putin with the Russian Catholics. And what if there is to be added the one in Suzdal? And this is not all. I know that in the process of preparing our next series of articles, the reporters of the prestigious American magazine *Conde Nast Traveler* are planning a visit to Suzdal. They also plan to visit the convent of St. John of San Francisco, under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Valentine. The *Traveler* is being sent to all major tourists agencies and many rich people, who love to travel, also subscribe to it. One line about the shocking things happening in Suzdal and many American tourists will not show up not only in Suzdal, but also in the pearl of the Golden Ring (the most popular area around Moscow). Unfortunately, everything that is taking place now is one more indication that under Putin, the democratic situation has deteriorated and is worse than it was under Yeltsin, while the lawlessness remains as usual. In response to the complaints of the people who have suffered in Suzdal, the militia plainly replies, well, if some one should be killed – they will then investigate the matter.

I write about this not simply because it is our moral duty to stand up for the persecuted. In Russia there are also parishes of the Church Abroad. When they finish up with the ROAC, they will turn toward them also. Besides, here abroad one still feels the enmity against Russia, which remained from soviet times. We still remember the article by John Robson published in Ottawa's newspaper *Citizen*, in which the author called Russia "a piece of [excrement], wrapped in cabbage". The outrage of the readers forced the editors to apologize and to take this article from their electronic version of the newspaper. The zealous Russian functionaries from Suzdal and Vladimir not only give an opportunity for russophobia to such Robsons, but they also make us blush for our historical fatherland.

Eugene Sokolov

(Canadian newspaper #12, June 6-13, 2002)

#### **FROM THE UNPUBLISHED (a letter of Bishop Gregory to Archpriest Lev Lebedev, of April 13/26<sup>th</sup> 1994 in Kursk)**

Dear Father Lev!

I have received your letter dated April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1994. I think it is necessary to respond to it, although it is very tendentious.

In the resolution of the Synod dated March 23<sup>rd</sup>/April 15<sup>th</sup> it remains unclear how the Synod interprets his situation after the activation of the Patriarch's Synodal regulation issued by the combined presence of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council of November 7/20<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

This regulation was at that time and also for the future, of particular, supreme lawful importance for the Russian Church. It has no special period to come into force, except in the liberation of the Russian Church from the restriction of her rights on the part of the soviet government. It advises on the immediate restoration of the church administration as soon as there would be favorable circumstances.

The Synod of Bishops Abroad in the first point of the "Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" describes its Church in the following manner:

"The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is a part of the Local Orthodox Church, temporarily autonomous on a conciliar basis, until the abolition of the atheistic government in Russia, according to the Regulation of the Patriarch, the Holy Synod, and the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council, dated November 7/20<sup>th</sup> 1920 #362."

The second paragraph of the same Statute says:

"The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad governed by the lawful diocesan administration, consists of parishes, church communities and monasteries with the sacred objects belonging to them."

The administration of the churches in Russia by the organs of the Church Abroad is not foreseen even in a single paragraph. Despite this, this subordination did happen, although there existed no additional regulations; however, it was decided by us, that we are allowed to punish the Russian Hierarchs for their 'disobedience'.

Our latest Synodal decision mistakenly evaluates the regulation of Patriarch Tikhon #362. To base the latest Synodal Ukaze upon it is a tremendous mistake. The compliers of it do refer to it, but it seems, they have not read it and in any case, did not study it.

The Regulation was preparing the flock for the soon to come persecution and a temporary disappearance of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration. It is especially important that this Regulation also gave the recipe of how to restore



the church administration after its annihilation. At present time, it is exactly this, according to the Patriarchal Regulation, that Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine are attempting to do, who enlightened him. But our Synod proclaimed a war against them when they started to meticulously follow the Patriarch's Regulation, #362. Unfortunately, our Synod allowed the interpretation of it in a distorted manner.

The hierarchal position of the Patriarchal Synod and the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council attached to it, which issued the Regulation of November 7/20, is much higher than the Councils Abroad and, since it was established by the Patriarchate as a law, it cannot be repealed in any way by our level of authority, **which in principle declined the challenge of restoration of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Power in Russia.** (don't understand). The Regulation gives detailed instructions of HOW to restore the church administration in Russia.

The expediency of our time points to the necessity to follow the Patriarchal Regulation #362.

At present the situation is very complicated. Note: the Regulation of November 7/20, 1920 consists of a whole number of methods for its fulfillment. Actually, the Russian Bishops started to act in some orderly manner only when they were united. To the good intentions of Vladyka Lazarus was added the administrative experience of Vladyka Valentine.

The efforts of the KGB agents to remove the latter by way of various accusations was crushed by the absence of proof. You write about their big amount, although you did not need to vote. But I was obliged to vote and such material never reached me. Actually, there was one complaint only, instead of two or three. But even these can be accepted only from persons with a completely blameless reputation. But the complaint which was received came from a person belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate and a member of an extremely dubious organization 'Pamyat' (Memory). And the rest were just unfounded rumors. The Church administration has to be guided by the definite facts and not by the conversation which, moreover, come from notorious enemies.

What was received by Vladyka Valentine himself and what through the help of donations received from us – we are also well aware of. They are reaching us, but the photographs of multitudes of people in the church processions also reach us.

Of course, the circumstances of the transitional period usually leave many things unaccomplished, and especially when our "own" try to interfere.

You do not like Vladyka Valentine, but many priests and now also Bishops do follow him. Now, according to you what do we have to do?

At present, our hierarchs have to make a choice: to be guided by the Patriarchal Regulation about the establishment of a Provisional Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration, or to follow our own "Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" and cease ruling in Russia, but in such a case, in the present situation, they would first have to remove several "inconvenient" paragraphs of the Statutes.

Unfortunately, the enemies of the revival and normalization of the ecclesiastical life in Russia managed to create an artificial schism in the midst of the opponents of the Moscow Patriarchate. But still, we do have a living power – the parishes of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine. Is it expedient to disregard this living power by pushing it to become a warrior organization against the Synod Abroad?

Here you also so vigorously attack me, although you do admit that there is a necessity for more ordinations. Well, they were made, and immediately a movement to weaken them arose. According to my knowledge, they are very worthy Bishops. And now what?

Because of your personal dislike of Bishop Valentine, these new Bishops might be weakened because of the accusations of the enemies of Vladyka Valentine, and if he were replaced by someone totally unfit or even no one at all, as it was done for nearly three years, something even worse might happen.

I am not a theorist, I am a practical worker. Almost immediately I realized that we do not have much time to use: presently, two things need to be addressed: we have to increase the number of Bishops and parishes, although we do not feel this way, even though on many occasions I have spoken and written about it; and the propaganda against Bishop Valentine, the most dangerous person against the cause of Antichrist -- might create within us an internal schism in time, when our unity is a must and which many try to overturn, in the hope that they are doing this with the best intentions.

Vladyka Lazarus and Vladyka Valentine understand perfectly well the importance and meaning of preserving eucharistic communion, despite the insults to them. Nevertheless, if it is broken – the Russian Hierarch are not to be blamed for it in any case.

For a long time I believed in the necessity to have more bishops, not the old ones, who were raised by the courses of KGB. As far as I know, the recently consecrated Bishops are exactly such people.

The Agents managed to suggest to us mistrust toward Bishop Valentine. To a certain degree such carefulness is necessary in principle, but one has to take into the account not only the minuses (and who does not have them?) but also the pluses. The creation of a diocese with hundreds of parishes in such difficult circumstances – is a sufficient recommendation. One may not reject it.

I cannot understand why you are so ferociously attacking me, although you admit that "one has to agree with the majority of my reproaches"?

Now, please explain to me, why have you with such ferocity attacked me regarding this case? How widely have you circulated your polemic letter against my report to the Synod?

This letter will arrive during the Paschal period. Christ is Risen! On the occasion of this bright feast I wish all the best to Matushka. I wish you to greet it and have a blessed Paschal season.

May the Lord's blessing be with you. Your well-wisher,  
Bishop Gregory

**NO answer to this letter of Bishop Gregory to Fr. Lev Lebedev was ever received!**

## THE SAD METOMORPHOSIS

I once met with Fr. Victor Potapov during the summer of 1991 and before that I was a zealous listener to his religious programs which he led on the "Voice of America" for many years. In 1994 for the first time I arrived in the USA. At the invitation of Fr. Victor I came to Washington, lived in his hospitable home, and served in the church where he is the rector.

At that time we were like minded pairs: both of us were nauseated by "sergianism", both of us blamed the nearsighted and ambiguous politique of the Synod of the Church Abroad, which it lead in Russia. I especially appreciated that Fr. Victor came forward against the unjust suspensions which his leadership was subjecting the Russian bishops to.

The years have passed by and our bishops were forced to separate from the Synod Abroad and my meetings with Fr. Potapov became less frequent. . . . And when the year 2000 arrived, in the course of the Church Abroad there came a change: her hierarchy, which previously always considered the Moscow Patriarchate to be a puppet, now not only recognized her legality, but also declared a willingness to begin negotiations with her.

To my great sadness, Fr. Victor is now among those hierarchs of the Church Abroad, who without any hesitation have not only accepted the new course, but even more than others is working to hasten the process of rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate. The obvious affirmation of this was shown in the interview of Fr. Archpriest, which he gave to the newspaper "V Novom Svete" (In the New Light) # of May 31<sup>st</sup>/June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002). We read there:

"I am a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and I have served her for more than 30 years. I quite responsibly state – not one of our former First Hierarchs at any time in the past or present affirmed that the Church in Russia is without grace. . . ."

". . . We have always recognized the Moscow Patriarchate as a genuine and grace filled Church."

"I painstakingly studied all the epistles of our First Hierarchs, beginning with Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky)...no one ever made a judgement concerning gracelessness."

Alas, Fr. Victor, to put it mildly, is cunning. True, there was not a special conciliar regulation about the gracelessness of the Moscow Patriarchate, since in past times she was not even considered to be a Church. This is what was written regarding this matter by the newly glorified First Hierarch of the Church Abroad, Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky):

"This pseudo-church has been twice anathemized. His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and the All-Russian Church Sobor anathemized the Communists *and all their collaborators*. This dread anathema has not been lifted until this day and remains in force, since it can be lifted only by a similar All-Russian Sobor, as the canonical, supreme, ecclesiastical authority. A terrifying thing happened in 1927, when the head of the Church, Metropolitan Sergius, by his infamous and apostate Declaration subjected the Russian Church to the Bolsheviks and proclaimed his collaboration with them. And thus in the most exact sense was fulfilled the expression in the prayer at the beginning of Confession: 'having fallen under their own anathema!' For in 1918 the Church anathemized all the confederates of Communism, while in 1927 she herself joined the camp of these collaborators and began to laud the red, God hating regime – to laud the beast spoken of in the Apocalypse.

As if that is not enough, when Metropolitan Sergius promulgated his criminal Declaration, then the faithful children of the Church immediately separated themselves from the Soviet church, and thus the Catacomb Church was formed. And she, in her turn, anathemized the official church for its betrayal of Christ."

And here is an important detail: the quotation above is taken by us from the letter of St. Metropolitan Philaret who addressed it in 1980 to no one else, but namely Fr. Victor Potapov. . . So, one wonders: how is it that the venerable archpriest who has painstakingly studied all the epistles of our First Hierarchs did not manage to look inside a letter addressed directly to him?

But let us return to the interview in the newspaper "V Novom Svete": it concludes with the passage:

"During soviet times we were considered to be ferocious anti-soviets. But we never were the enemies of Holy Russia. In November of the last year there was a reception in the [Russian] Embassy. One of the guests was the Secretary of the ROCOR Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan. Beyond this, he and Metropolitan Laurus have received a personal invitation from the President to pay a friendly visit to Moscow. I hope that during this year Vladyka Laurus will be able to visit Russia. If this happens, one may hope that the process of rapprochement between the two sister-Churches will become irreversible."

I believe that the optimism which is expressed by father Archpriest is shared primarily by the clerics of the administration of the President of Russia. After all, before them lies is a radiant prospect – public support of their dubious policy will be given not only on the part of the lawless and mercenary Moscow Patriarchate but also by the Church Abroad, which was famous for her holding to principles and inviolability.



On the shelf over my desk there is a little booklet published in the beginning of nineties of the last century. I pick it up, open to page 9 and find the familiar paragraph:

"For a long time I could not understand why the separate representatives of the Russian émigrés, who have devoted so much effort to wrestling against communism, permit themselves today to not notice the terrible consequences of the communist infection, which continues to torment the Russian Church? What is it that demands from the Church Abroad by any means to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate – one of the last institutions, which has preserved the remnants of this communist infection?

Is this not to be explained by the fact that the resistance of yesterday's wrestlers with communism was just a superficially political movement, and not something deeply spiritual? Perhaps after so many years of tense political wars their strength to analyze the terrible results of the subordination of the Moscow Patriarchate to the godless state came to an end? Is it not that many stand on the path of the lowest resistance, because their spiritual feelings became blunt, and therefore, compromise, lies and other occurrences happened to be accepted as something normal?

At present the completely loyal people, who too easily forget the ecclesiastical history of our times, say that it is not necessary to criticize the Moscow Patriarchate, but to help it. In all of this one vaguely recalls those disorders within some émigré groups which occurred after the Second World War and then during the Khrushchev "thaw" period.

Yesterday's party members have supposedly rearranged themselves outwardly, but under the flags of other parties and new ideologies, they still sit in the Russian government and in the mass civil organizations. The heavy legacy of communism as usual is present everywhere, where yesterday's communists continue to play their role.

The evil sown by the devil and his faithful Bolshevik servants continues to torment until today the ecclesiastical body of Russia. We may not pretend that this is not so... The facts of the history of the Moscow Patriarchate are not distant from us by many years. What is sown in the past will grow in the present and in the future."

These sound and until now topical reasonings are written by no one else, but by Fr. Victor Potapov himself in the spring of 1992. And the booklet I am quoting from was published in 1993 in the city of Toliatti under the title, "God is betrayed by Silence".

During the last decade, the "sown evil" gave very visible fruits. The corruption of the Patriarchate has reached an unprecedented size, the hierarchs have started businesses, trade tobacco and alcohol, sell petroleum and diamonds, establish banks, have stained themselves with friendship with dubious politicians and open criminals, are totally stuck in ecumenism...

However, staying in his "beautiful far away's", Fr. Victor supposedly does not notice it and there appear to him dimly "Sister-Churches"... In short, today he spreads the very same ideas against which he so vigorously protested some ten years ago...

One may label it in no other way, but a sad metamorphose.

Archpriest Michael Ardov

While with pleasure we publish the excellent article by Fr. Michael Ardov, we feel we may slightly supplement it. Speaking that **no one of** the First Hierarchs or councils of the ROCOR ever spoke against the Moscow Patriarchate's gracelessness, Fr. Potapov ignores the epistle "To the Entire Christian World", signed by the President of the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR Metropolitan Anastassy. Regarding the Moscow Patriarchate it is said in this epistle: "While existing abroad and having our own independent administration based upon the providently issued Regulation by Patriarch Tikhon (in connection with the open persecution of the Church of November 7/20<sup>th</sup>, 1920 #362) we consider ourselves to be in spiritual unity with the hidden Church, but not with the official administration of the Moscow Patriarchate, which was permitted to exist by the godless government and which follows all its instructions and is presided over by Patriarch Alexis (Simansky, Ch.N.). We cannot recognize the canonical validity of his election because he and his predecessor were elected not according to the rules established by the All-Russian Council (in 1917), but according to the instructions of the godless government, in violation of the 30<sup>th</sup> Apostolic canon and the 3<sup>rd</sup> canon of the VII Ecumenical Council.

For this reason, while not recognizing Patriarch Alexis as our ecclesiastical authority, we however maintain faithfulness to the Russian Orthodox Church and consider ourselves to be her integral part" (Church Life #8-10, 1961).

Speaking of a possible union of the two "sister-churches", archpriest Potapov has forgotten how different these "sisters" were in appraising the very same events. At the period of intense persecutions of the Church by the godless, no one else but the contemporary Patriarch Alexis II, while being in charge of all the MP matters – has cruelly persecuted the only one of the MP Bishops deserving respect, one might say, – Hermogen (Goloubev), who did not follow the commands of the godless and not only did not close a single church in his diocese, but even managed to build two or three more! At that time the hierarchs of the MP were spontaneously closing churches in their dioceses and the very same archpriest Victor Potapov at that time quite properly was admiring the courage of this Bishop! What could have made him now, being in total safety and in material security, to so ingloriously sell himself to the Moscow Patriarchate in which nothing has changed during the last decade?!

The bulletin Ecumenical News International of June 12<sup>th</sup> reported that in view of the next Olympic games, scheduled for 2004 in Athens, upon the initiative of the Greek government, it was proposed that for this period the below mentioned nations would declare a truce. The Roman Pope and Athens' Archbishop Christodoulos met this initiative with pleasure. It was immediately supported also by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as well as the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Georgia and Serbia. Besides, about 100 prominent clergymen have joined this project. Among the cosigners are also Jews and Muslims. Sixty ministers of foreign affairs and important political personalities, including China, Iran, Ukraine, Germany, Yugoslavia and the Arab League, signed the appeal. The Palestinians have announced that they are ready for the truce and also, that the Greek government has already approached India and Pakistan.

The president of the Conference of European Christians, the Greek Metropolitan Irenaeos Kaligiogis (in France) has declared that: "This is an occasion for reaffirming the age old spiritual current against war conflict. Even if no truce occurs, we will at least have made people aware that this was the practice in past centuries."

No one would argue that one has to try to avoid wars, but the effort of "Orthodox Patriarchs" and prominent clergy to create an international truce just because of some sport contest quite obviously has nothing at all to do with any religion!

### **THE ISRAELI ARMY HAS DESTROYED A CHRISTIAN SHRINE**

The National Catholic reported on June 21<sup>st</sup> that in the Palestinian section of the West Bank, in the village Aboud, on May 31<sup>st</sup>, Israeli troupes, "without warning and without explanation" destroyed a cave, venerated from the beginning of third century as the place, where Saint Barbara the Great Martyr was beheaded by her father.

The Israeli troupes claimed that they had been looking for terrorists and had no knowledge of the religious importance of this place. The Syrian priest Halaweh said: "We have asked the soldiers why they did this, and they said they did not know it was a holy place, but this is not true, because soldiers in this area know every house, they know each place in Aboud."

According to present situation in the Near East, the Christians must be prepared that the Israeli army "will not know" of any holy places in the East, until one day they "would not know" of the existence of the Holy Sepulcher!

### **THE PASSION FOR PROFIT HAS NO LIMITS**

Our publication has almost never published anything that does not refer to religious matters. However, this time we feel there is a chance to amuse our readers with a photograph below, which was published by the New York Times on May 24<sup>th</sup>. The correspondent, James Bennet, has reported that Dr. Avigdor Cahaner on the farm Rehovot, belonging to the Hebrew University in Israel, has developed a new breed of chickens, with no feathers at all.

The "value" of this new breed it is found in the fact that in mass production the process of plucking is eliminated and there is the possibility to save electricity on air-conditions in chicken houses. However, the poor chickens dislike the sun and they suffer from heat in the open air.

One is hardly able to distort the Lord's creation more than was done by this contemporary human being because of his passion for profit!

