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## **AN APPEAL TO OUR READERS**

With this issue we already begin our fifteenth year of publication. We annually appeal to our esteemed readers for assistance to help us continue this publication with their donations. As some of our readers write us, especially from Russia, the published information about church events is for many of them the only one they receive and trust.

Of course, all of us know that prices rise not only for postage, but for the reproduction of our issues as well as for subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, without which such a publication is impossible. We are especially grateful to some of our readers, who on their own initiative send us a donation even in the middle of the year.

We again ask all those who do NOT want to receive our publication, to let us know and in this way avoid for them the undesirable mail and for us – unnecessary expenses. The Editors

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**CHURCH NEWS**

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## AN EXAMPLE OF CONTEMPORARY SPINELESSNESS

According to information from Vertograd (Razsylka # 331) the mayor of Suzdal on December 17<sup>th</sup> called an extraordinary meeting of the City Council at which, following a proposal of the "Committee to Battle the ROAC" (such was created in a hurry) – he proposed to deprive the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of the title of "Honorary Citizen of the City".

This title was bestowed upon Metropolitan Valentin several years ago in gratitude for his benevolent activities for Suzdal: helping schools and kindergartens, the restoration of 18 churches, the establishment of a Sunday school, Christmas parties for children and so on. Due to his efforts Suzdal, a city unknown in the West, became a tourist attraction for those from abroad.

Due to the strained situation in Suzdal, for the first time in 12 years the Diocesan Administration did not have Christmas festivities (a concert, stage presentation and supper) for the local children out of fear of provocation. The children, however, did receive gifts in the church.

At the last Christmas celebration there were at least 200 children present and no one asked their parents which Church they belong to.

In a same manner, as he was deprived of the position of elected representative on the City Council, despite the fact that at first the council refused to support the proposal of the "Committee to Battle the ROAC", the mayor managed to pressure the Council members and they voted "yes".

This shameful vote graphically demonstrates what a person is worth in today's Russia. After all, the mayor's pressure was applied not on two or three members of the Council, but on more than 10 of them and Ryzhov himself is not a resident of Suzdal and doubts exist concerning the legality of his election to the mayoralty!

Can one seriously believe that in the contemporary Russian Federation Communism is "finished"?

## NATIVITY CELEBRATIONS IN SUZDAL

The Mayor of Suzdal, A.Y. Ryzhov presented the parishioners of Suzdal diocese with an unusual "gift," and through them to the whole ROAC, when he officially deprived the First Hierarch of the title of "honorary citizen of the city". Metropolitan Valentin voluntarily declined this title along with other awards in July of 2002; however on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002, there was an extraordinary meeting of the City's Council regarding this matter at which an official regulation was adopted. It is necessary to note, that Mayor Ryzhov has on several occasions expressed his support for the so-called "Public Committee to Battle ROAC in Suzdal Area" (Russkii Vestnik # 29-30, 2002).

So despite the fact that the parishioners of the ROAC "in Suzdal area" are law abiding citizens and she is duly registered by the state, based only on the legal actions against her Head and the conviction verdict, which at present is being appealed in the Supreme Court, a war has been declared against the Russian Church and her parishioners, with the silent consent of the city mayor.

In Suzdal the constitutional rights of parishioners to freely practice their faith are constantly violated. The situation in the once peaceful city remains very tense. Over the past year, the faithful of Suzdal's ROAC were subject to insults, threats, and beatings. Numerous fires were set in buildings in the town belonging to ROAC or her members and the life of the elderly residents has been endangered. The reports regarding beatings, fires and hooligan actions either were not investigated by the law enforcement authorities or, if the cases were accepted, they were processed very slowly, reluctantly and finally would be closed, never even reaching the prosecution. The war continues in the press and has spread outside the Russian Federation. For example, the Latvian "Our Gazette" # 35 of September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001, published the next in a series of "expose" articles about ROAC. The title of "priest/pervert" speaks for itself. In them there even the names of prosecution witnesses are confused and one of the "victims," 14 year old Yegor Derevianko, was presented as an archpriest and the father of several daughters. But considering the tense situation in the city and possibility of provocations, the Church Administration was forced to discontinue a long tradition, so much loved by the Suzdal residents, and cancel the Christmas performances in order not to risk the physical and moral health of the children.

And, despite all these worries, the celebration of the Nativity took place. The festive service was performed in the Cross-Nicholas church of Suzdal. Four bishops concelebrated with the Metropolitan and, as in the past, the church was full. The faithful came from Vladimir, Moscow, and Kursk as well as from other cities.

The festal choir sang beautifully. It consisted of former graduates of the Suzdal Sunday school who long ago found their path in the life, but who are grateful for the good which was done them by the Metropolitan, who opened to them the world of sacramental church life, making them participants in the services, traveling with them to the sacred places of Russia and the ancient cities of Western Germany. Many of them brought their children to the Christmas performance, which for the first time since the persecution of Suzdal residents by the MP began, this year was performed not in the large hall of the Diocesan Administration of the Vasiliyevskaya St. 4, but in the residence of the Metropolitan. As before, after a short performance and the singing of Nativity hymns, the children of the Sunday school and all the children present received gifts. The evening had a cozy family quality.

Vladyka Metropolitan addressed all present by saying that despite all the misfortunes and temptations of the Church, the "little flock" need not fear, but should increase their prayers to the Lord, so that He would send consolation and strengthen their faith, patience and love. Because, as the Nativity Epistle of the Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir



Valentin states, "Again and again the twilight of a wintry night learns of the ray of the brilliant Divine announcement of the Good News: the great mystery, the God Logos manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3: 16) the Son of God become incarnate and become the Son of Man, while remaining the Son of God, in order to uplift us fallen into sin, to the "first blessedness".

The Internet mailing of Vertograd # 340 adds the following information about the celebration of the feast of Christmas-tide in Suzdal. In particular it is related that during the vigil service for Nativity in the door of the Cross-Nicholas church the presence of some members of the Nashe Delo gang were noticed and during the night the decorative lights over the entrance door to the church were broken!

The administration forbade this year the traditional procession to the Kamenka River for the blessing of water on Epiphany. Therefore, within the fence of the Tsar Constantine Cathedral the triple Great Blessing of the water was performed. As Vertograd reports "besides residents of Suzdal, hundred came from neighboring villages to the festive celebrations, as well as pilgrims from Moscow, Vladimir, Kursk, Viatka, Ivanovo and Yaroslavl".

## **LATVIAN ORTHODOX, INDEPENDENT OF MP, SUBJECT TO PERSECUTION**

Such was the conclusion of the State Department of the USA, when it published the annual analysis of freedom of religion in the former Soviet block.

In the Latvian "Law on Religious Organizations" (Pgrf. 7, part 3) the discriminatory situation remains unchanged: one church, one state. In connection with such a policy, all the Orthodox who do not want to join Moscow Patriarchate are considered schismatics and are subject of persecution.

Actually, for 7 years now the Autonomous True Orthodox Church of Latvia has been refused legalization. This September, for the first time since existence of the independence of the republic, the President of the Committee for Rights and Civil Affairs of the Latvian Parliament, addressed the hierarch of the ATOCL as Archbishop Victor and has informed him that the Sejm Committee decided to rescind the discrimination paragraph. However, factions in the Parliament, which are lobbying in the interest of the MP in Latvia, did not permit this law to be altered.

The new elections to the Parliament held on October 5<sup>th</sup> saddened the supporters of Patriarchate because the majority of voters refused to trust them.

## **HUNT FOR THE "TRUTH"**

In our December issue we published information that St. Archangel Michael parish in Gilford (England) founded by Mr. Vladimir Moss again jumped to the side, and after being in six other jurisdictions, for the third time has returned to jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly's ROCOR (V), after leaving the ROAC under the pre-text that supposedly, Metropolitan Valentin is "covering up" ... "the heretical teachings" of Priest-monk Gregory (Lurie).

It is worth noting, the erudite woeful "theologian" decided to get in touch with Metropolitan Vitaly only when it became quite obvious to all people acquainted with the canons, that he has violated the canonical Epistle of the Third Ecumenical Council addressed to "Sacred Council of Pamphylia, regarding Eustaphy, their former Metropolitan", after he retired and unlawfully established his own hierarchy of the "ROCOR", and in this manner has created a schism within it!

If one were to substitute the name of Metropolitan Eustaphy with the name of Metropolitan Vitaly, one could believe this epistle had been written in our time and for us.

On January 5/18<sup>th</sup> Vladimir Moss published on the Internet his "Open Letter to Bishop Sergei of Mansonville". From it is clear, that he and Hieromonk Augustine, with the knowledge of "Bishop" Sergius have decided to go to Canada in order to meet with Metropolitan Vitaly. "However, when we arrived in the skete, before we could even introduce ourselves, Ludmila Rosnianskaya refused us permission to see the Metropolitan or even wait in the reception room until he was ready to see us. Although we were not prepared for a cold welcome from her, the extent of her inhospitality, and complete dominance of affairs in the skete, shocked us profoundly.

"When we recounted our experience to you the next day, you were sorry, but made it clear that there was nothing you could do. You admitted that Ludmilla might be controlled by foreign forces, and that the situation was scandalous; but the Metropolitan wanted her, you said, so that was the end of the matter. So, even the Bishop of Mansonville has no control of Mansonville!... Of course, the scandal of Ludmilla has been known to Russian Orthodox Christians of all jurisdictions for several years. If the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus is "the Synod of the divorced", that the Synod of Metropolitan Vitaly is well known to be the Synod ruled by a woman. We, too, knew about this, but it is only now, when we have seen the situation at first-hand, that we understand the full horror of it".

It seems, that Mr. Moss has a sort of dictatorial power, because for the nearly 30 years of the existence of this parish, which in searching for the "truth" has changed jurisdictions 9 times, it still has not dispersed! Nearly all members of this little parish are English converts.

The main reason for the insult of Mr. Moss toward Metropolitan Valentin is that he offered to be a "diocesan theologian", but the Metropolitan has ignored his offer.

It is not without reason that Church history proves that main cause for the majority of heresies and schisms is pride and self-esteem.

## ANTI-SEMITIC LETTER OF JERUSALEM PATRIARCH TURNS OUT TO BE A FORGERY

As we reported in our May issue # 5 of 2002, under some political pressure the Israeli government had agreed to recognize the existence of Jerusalem Patriarch Ireneos, although some members of the government considered this agreement to be an error.

According to the English language Israeli newspaper, "The Jerusalem Post" of December 27<sup>th</sup>, the Jerusalem Patriarch is suing the newspaper Ma'ariv for publishing (even before his election) a forged letter addressed to Palestinian Yassar Arafat in which there were several sharp anti-Semitic phrases.

The spokesman for the Patriarchate, Fr. Gabriel, announced at a press conference that the letter was a forgery, aimed at spoiling the good relations of Patriarchate with the Israeli government.

Fr. Gabriel also expressed his surprise that the forged letter was also published a year after the recognition of Patriarch by the government!

There are reasons to believe that the forgery was made by some one within the Patriarchal staff, and that the letter had no outgoing number!

The Rabbi David Rosen, international interfaith director of the American Jewish Committee and adviser to the Government on Christian affairs declared that the matter of this letter was investigated and that investigation proved there was no base for this.

According to information from Jerusalem, after the evening service of the Theophany vigil the Patriarch held a reception. The representatives of the OPS conveyed to the Patriarch the greeting on behalf of the Society's President Bishop Anthony (Grabbe). His Beatitude gracefully accepted the greetings and mutually greeted Bishop Anthony. He also recalled how in a former good time he had traveled with him to Jericho and said he wished Bishop Anthony could take care of the multitude of Russians in Jerusalem.

When serving as Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, at that time Archimandrite Anthony managed to create especially cordial relations with the Jerusalem Patriarchate and he was the only Chief of the Mission, who in all her history was awarded the decoration from the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre.

## THE END OF ATHOS?

The Internet agency LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU on December 19<sup>th</sup> published information that the Monastery of Esphigmenou, being persecuted by the New Calendarists, is to be expelled from Mt. Athos in the near future because it refuses to recognize the Ecumenical heretic – Patriarch Bartholomew. This Patriarch recently has announced that the monks (117 of them) would have to leave their monastery, having existed for 1,000 years, "without further ado". They were declared to be "unrepentant, schismatics and subject to excommunication."

The expelling of Orthodox monks would be performed under the pretext that, according to the Greek constitution, no schismatics or heretics are allowed to dwell on Athos.

Regarding this issue, the Synod of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece already on July 27<sup>th</sup> of 2001 published a press release in which it stated that the persecution of monks of Esphigmenou is a violation of the Greek democratic constitution and deprives the faithful of their rights. Athens's Archbishop Chrysostom II condemned the efforts to violate the rights of a minority (Esphigmenou monks) among the 19 monasteries, which recognize Bartholomew.

According to the newspaper "Ethnos" of December 2<sup>nd</sup>, all the monks were presented with individual summons and asked to appear on December 5<sup>th</sup> in groups of 25 to answer the 88 charges.

The monks have answered these charges in written form stressing that the accusations are baseless and they did not appear in person.

At present, rumors are circulating, that when the zealots will be expelled from their monastery, they will be replaced by monks from other monasteries, with a new abbot, who is a member of the ruling committee in Athos.

Meanwhile, this group will be stationed in the Russian St. Elias Skete, having all the rights of genuine Esphigmenou Monastery, until the time when the New Calendarists will be able to expel the Orthodox from Mt. Athos.

According to the Internet Vertograd/Razsylka #338 "The Ecumenical Patriarch and Sacred Kinot (the supreme governmental body on Mt. Athos) have informed the monks of Esphigmenou that they have to leave the monastery before January 28<sup>th</sup>. The monks responded to this order by saying that they "will sooner meet their end as martyrs, than leave the monastery"

A bit later information about the future of Esphigmenou Monastery, published on the Internet by the MP Three Hierarchs Parish of Garfield, NJ, the authorities, according to Abbot Methodius, in preparation to evict the monks have already cut electricity to the monastery, stopped the supply of food, heating oil and even medical supplies, and at the gate of monastery police are waiting for the order to evict them.

The lawyer of the monastery, Ifigenia Kamtsidou, complains of this violation of the basic justice. The persecution stopped and persecutors have dispersed.

However, this is not the very first effort by the New Calendarists to evict the monks of Esphigmenou. This was tried in 1974, when the monastery has displayed its famous black flag with the inscription: "Orthodoxy or death".



Unfortunately, the further policy of the monastery went astray. The leaders of the monastery elected to remain with Archbishop Chrysostom II (Kiousis) of Athens who eventually ordained Archimandrite Paul (Stratigeas) who at one time belonged to Cyprianos' group.

The history of Paul is a long and stormy one. As Bishop Gregory of Denver (belonging to the ROAC) has informed us, Chrysostom II at that time did not decide to immediately ordain Paul. In 1994 Archbishop Chrysostom severed his communion with the ROCOR under pretext that it had entered into communion with Cyprianos. Hoping to get the ordination in the ROCOR (unfortunately it had earlier illegally consecrated his uncle Bishop Peter; Metropolitan Anastassy wanted to put the guilty 2 bishops before a spiritual court, but died before that could take place) – Paul approached Metropolitan Vitaly, but he did not ordain him. Than Paul joined the Cyprianos group and started to publically and rudely attack his former Archbishop Chrysostom II!

It is very amazing that despite the former insults on Paul's part, Archbishop Chrysostom not only took him back into communion, but wrote in his publication that he is "a very righteous man" and "the only hope for Orthodoxy in America"!

The ordination of Paul Stratigeas was performed by Archbishop Chrysostom II on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1998, despite his numerous public declarations in favor of Ecumenism. At some time we published them in "Church News."

According to Bishop Gregory of Denver, the "subsequent acceptance of Paul was the turning point in the history of the monastery's position in confessing Orthodoxy. They had accepted Ecumenism in the person of Paul and continued to commemorate Chrysostom II Kiousis, and now it seems that they are going to suffer the consequences of their apostasy from the true Faith. The loss of their monastery and the dispersion of their monks seems imminent".

Despite all the vacillations of "Bishop" Paul Stratigeas to obtain consecration and his numerous public statements about ecumenical beliefs, --- the monks of Esphigmenou have accepted his as a lawful bishop, although their former Abbot Evthymios warned Chrysostom Kiousis, that if Paul were ordained by him, the monks would cease to commemorate the Archbishop.

This monastery was the very last guardian of Orthodoxy on Mt. Athos and if the efforts to defend their rights to stay in their monastery fail, one can see that being totally in the hands of modernist heretics, sacred Athos soon will turn into being a profitable tourist stop for the Masonic Greek government. Even some 10 years ago there was raised the question of total modernization of Athos, by means of installing electricity, modern roads, converting the monasteries into museums (to be managed by a few monks), building several hotels for tourists and even permitting women to enter there!

It seems, that we are very soon to witness the actual end of Mt. Athos as such.

We also believe that-- this story might be very instructive! to the Russian dreams and the seekers of Greek Old Calendar jurisdictions in Russia!

**Editor's Note: We apologize to His Grace Bishop Gregory for just quoting part of his article. It will be published in full in our next issue.**

## **POLITICS INSTEAD OF HOMILETICS**

The newspaper of the Greek Archdiocese in America, "Orthodox Observer" for December has reported that in the tiny Muslin kingdom of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, on the initiative of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, under his auspices there was a 3 day long 10<sup>th</sup> Islamic-Christian Dialogue Conference.

150 religious leaders, scholars, and representatives of various charitable organizations participated. At this Conference there were Arabic speakers, representatives of Orthodox, "Oriental Churches", Catholics and Protestants who gathered from all the parts of world.

The Conference issued a Declaration, consisting of 10 points, all of which called for the "continuation of dialogue", to promote social justice, "to remove the obstructions that stop people from understanding properly and correctly their religion (p. 7), to spread the proper understanding of Islam and Christianity through education by the press" and "other foolish words".

However, at this Conference under the auspices of the "Orthodox" Patriarch, not a single word was heard about the truth of Orthodoxy!

## **ANOTHER DESECRATION OF PATRIARCHAL CHAPEL FAILS IN BELGRADE**

The Internet publication of the MP of the Three Hierarchs parish in Garfield, NJ has published information that on the day of Western Christmas, in the chapel of the Serbian Patriarch Paul, an Anglican communion service was scheduled. This is far from the first such time that the Patriarch let heretics use his chapel for their services.

However, this time, due to the zeal of Serbian youth, the service did not happen. Some 50 young people, with icons and candles in hands did not allow the desecration of the chapel.

According to a description from a student of the Belgrade Theological School, Jovan Jovich, who was to attend this mass, among those waiting to enter, were the English Ambassador and a number of other diplomats. As he described it: "a group of unknown, mostly younger people, gathered in front of the Patriarchal palace and would not allow visitors to enter into the church in which service had to be celebrated. They refused to obey Patriarch Pavle who addressed the group and it was only when Metropolitan Amfilohije asked them to leave, they left. By than time the Anglican priest and his

congregation had already left and no service was held". Metropolitan Amfolohije was a disciple of reknown Fr. Justin Popovich.

It is interesting that this student of theology declared, that he "would like to apologize to all who were hurt by this incident and say that this has nothing to do with the students of the Serbian Theological School. I'd also like to wish a merry Christmas to all our brothers Christians who celebrate Christmas according to Gregorian calendar".

However, the Anglicans still served their communion service in the church of St. Symeon Myrovletes. Gathered there around the church Orthodox Serbs were yelling: "We do not need Catholics here" and "you desecrate the father of St. Sava".

The words of student Jovich testify that all the Orthodox behests of St. Justin Popovich are totally forgotten in the Belgrade's Theological School!

The grandson of King Alexander I, the heir to the throne, Alexander II, who was raised in England, also expressed his disgust over the Orthodox young people, who ignored the appeal of Patriarch Paul "not to disturb this Christian holiday in the spirit of Christian and brotherly love", unfortunately – a heretical holiday!

The police, just observed this demonstration from the other side of the street, but did not interfere in any way.

It is a pleasure to know that the courageous Orthodox youth came forward to defend the Church from the criminal tolerance of the Patriarch and Metropolitan Amphilohije!

### **METROPOLITAN CYRIL MIXES UP SANTA CLAUS AND GRANDFATHER FROST!**

According to the very same Internet edition, Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk ("Mihailov" in KGB) categorically disagrees that the church does not recognize Santa Claus. "How can there be no Santa Claus when there is a Santa Claus in every Seminary? Santa Claus is a cultural tradition in Russian and other nations. There's sure to be a Christmas tree", said the Metropolitan!

It seems, the "Orthodox" Metropolitan has no idea that the Russian people have special veneration for St. Nicholas and have never made of him an American clown, but before the Revolution used the pagan traditions and created a mythical Grandfather Frost. Unfortunately, according to recent information, there appears a tendency in Russia to turn the inoffensive Grandfather Frost into a living figure, which was even born in Velikii Ustiug! One must think that this is all the unfortunate result of decades of Communist atheistic propaganda.

The Metropolitan also does not see any conflict in the different dates for celebrating Christmas. "We have no written sources which indicate that He was born on this day or on a different day. We celebrate the event, not the day", he said.

When asked about observing the fast while celebrating the civil New Year, this hierarch responded with: "It is a very personal issue". However, he hopes that 100% of the faithful will follow the tradition although, not being too strict about it. "Fasting is purely voluntary. People observe the fast as strictly as they can. The fasting discipline is so tough that few people observe the fast fully nowadays".

It seems, that Metropolitan Cyril himself will lighten the fasting regulations on the civil New Year!

### **NEW STANDARDS FOR SIN BY CATHOLICS**

In connection with the wide spread scandals within the Catholic Church, "The New York Times" of December 24<sup>th</sup> published details of the deposition made for the court by John McCormack the Bishop of Manchester, MA.

He was questioned in connection with covering up of fornication and pedophilia in particular of Priest Roland Cote.

The bishop declared that there is a big difference with whom has the priest sinned: if with his parishioners – it is very bad, but if with outside of parish than: "You know, one is an activity where you have a trusted relationship with a parishioner. The other is an activity where you're on your own. I am very concerned about that. He was a young person. But it's quite different from being with a parishioner". It is interesting, that a bishop calls a sin an "activity"!

Considering, that all the Catholic priests at their ordination take vows of celibacy, the deposition of Bishop McCormack sounds very strange!

According to the same newspaper, the Boston diocese through its lawyers asked for the dismissal of all suits regarding 400 sex abuse cases on the grounds of separation of Church and state and that the government is not entitled to regulate the internal procedures in such cases.

### **THE RESULTS OF CATHOLIC MODERNISM**

A newspaper "The Christian News" of December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003 published an interesting analysis of contemporary Catholic statistics. According to the article, the beginning of the fall in Roman Catholicism was the Second Ecumenical Council of 1962-64 which was chaired by Pope John XXIII and decreed to go in step with modernism and make drastic reforms of all their construction, starting with the mass. At the opening of the Second Vatican Council a lot was said about the necessity of Catholicism to come out of "ghetto," to revise their liturgy and missals and even rewrite the Bible.... The Catholic adherents to tradition warned about catastrophic results of such reforms. Now, according to the published statistics:

Between 1930 and 1965 in USA were 58,000 priests: now there are 45,000 and it is expected that by 2020 there will be some 31,000 priests and of them, no less that a half will be 70 years old.



In 1965 1, 575 were ordained priest, but in 2002, only 450. In the same 1965 only 1% of the parishes had no rectors, now there are 17%.

The number of seminarians between 1965 and 2002 fell from 49,000 to 4,700 and of 700 seminaries 2/3rds were closed.

Between 1965 and 2002 there were 180, 000 nuns, there now remain 75, 000 and their average age is 68 years.

In 1965 there were 3, 559 Jesuits and in 2002 there are only 389!

As a principle, Catholics under no conditions are allowed to divorce, however, after Vatican II Council they found a way out: it is not a divorce, but an annulment. Due to this or that reason: the marriage was not legal. In this manner in 1968 there were annulled 338 marriages, but at 2002 the number reached 50,000.

It is also reported that 10% of the teachers in religious schools consider contraception to be permitted and 70% Catholics from ages 18-44 consider the Eucharist to be "symbolic reminder" of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic reform experience could be a very useful also for "Orthodox modernists"!

Is not this substantial loss of Catholics what has forced them to restore their dwindling ranks at the expense of Orthodox people in Russia?

## PARISH LIST OF THE ROCOR (L)

For decades the ROCOR has published a detailed list of all the parishes, indicating the address and telephone not only of the parish, but also the name of its rector. However, to form a complete picture of the number of parishes, also to see the Russians and non-Russians, is a very difficult and time-consuming task.

To begin with, nearly all its dioceses have clergy which minister to several parishes. This alone complicates the possibility to make an accurate record. Then, for example, in Western Europe, out of 13 parishes there are 8, where the rector is listed as vacancy!

Nevertheless, we did try to make some effort to review this address list and according to our records, there are some 250 parishes and communities. They are ministered to by 211 Russian clergymen (including deacons) and 145 non-Russian clergymen, also including deacons.

We have discovered in this list certain significant inaccuracies. For example, retired Abbot Gerasim (Romanov) is listed as being in the Kazan parish in Newark, NJ, but who for more than a year has been a member of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church and for more than a year has not been there.

In the Chicago-Detroit diocese, her Administrator is listed as Archimandrite Peter (Lukianov) and he himself is also listed as... the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem! It seems, these two positions, on two different continents – can be in no way combined.

In the Canadian Diocese there is listed the skete in Mansonville, while it is a common knowledge that it belongs to Metropolitan Vitaly, who resides there.

Already for six years in a row the ROCOR monastery in Hebron (which was seized by the MP in 1997!) is listed as belonging to the property of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

An amusing "document"!

The question is: for what reason it this done? Is it possible, this is to hide the sad truth from the flock?

## SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

As was expected, the schism created by Metropolitan Vitaly now brings forth its rich, but destructive fruits.

On the Internet a polemic has started between "Protopresbyter Victor Melekhov, secretary of the ROCE and Archpriest Joseph Sunderland, the Dean for Western America" and "Priest-monk Paissy (Malykhin) Editor in Chief of the Listok". The polemical article in Listok is entitled "Melekhov's insanity or hysteria of a Boston schismatic". Gradually, other clergy became involved in it, for example Archpriests Benjamin Joukoff and Valery Rozhnov.

The entire tragedy consists in the fact that both parties are wrong and each one in their own manner, although both are partly using correct arguments, while at the same time totally ignoring their own first wrong step.

Priest-monk Paissy at one time very properly criticized the Epistle of the ROCOR's Council of Bishops in year 2000 and soon after that was suspended from priestly ministry. When deciding to leave the ROCOR he joined Metropolitan Vitaly, who just recently violated the canonical Epistle of the Third Ecumenical Council.

Metropolitan Vitaly has **twice** publicly acknowledged that he presented a letter of his resignation, and according to canons, from that moment on had absolutely no episcopal powers.

"Protopresbyter Victor Melekhov" who once was in the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly and has left him -- for almost 15 years was in the jurisdiction of the Boston hierarchy, where he was elevated not only to the rank of proto-presbyter, but even became an Exarch for Russia! Quite unexpectedly he decided to join Metropolitan Vitaly, who totally ignored the fact that Melekhov by the decree of the very same Metropolitan Vitaly had long ago been defrocked!

However, this does not prevent Melekhov (although being according to the canons in retirement) from demanding from Metropolitan Vitaly a "confession of faith". It seems, he has no idea that the "confession of faith" might be requested by one hierarchy from the other, but by no means by 2 clergymen with more than dubious legality!

The critique by Melekhov of a number of epistles and regulations of the ROCOR – has valid reasons, although he only now notices the earlier errors of Metropolitan Vitaly, starting with his outrageous Christmas Epistle in which he falsely interprets the meaning of “anathema”. Still in 1994, under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly there was published the Council’s Epistle in which it was stated that “the time has arrived for a lively association with all the parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, which became separated due to historical circumstances”. During the tenure of Metropolitan Vitaly and with his knowledge Archbishop Mark established relations with the MP in a form of meetings “at the round table” with bishops and clergy of the MP. It was not Metropolitan Philaret, but Metropolitan Vitaly about whom in the Russian newspapers writers A. Nezhny and Soloukhin stated that with his election as Metropolitan the judgment about the MP became significantly milder.

Metropolitan Vitaly was quite indifferent toward the canons. At the Council of 1994 in Lesna (France) Metropolitan Vitaly declared that Bishop Gregory was hindering the work of the Council by constantly referring to the canons, while “there was work to be done”!

Metropolitan Vitaly’s opinions about the Moscow Patriarchate became more oriented to the “right” much later and then, one must think, under the influence of Protodeacon Ivanov-Trinadzaty and Bishop Barnabas.

Already in February 1989, Bishop Gregory wrote to Archbishop Anthony of Geneva that he was “shocked that the Metropolitan in his accompanying letter expressed sympathy with the idea of some agreement on our part with the Moscow Patriarchate” (Underlined in the original, “Ch. N.”).

The letter mentioned here was, actually, an article signed “a layman” from USSR, proposing negotiations with MP about union.

At the same time also Paissy quite correctly opposes Melekhov, although, contrary to all the evidence, he insists there is no way one can believe that Mrs. Rosniansky has “captured” the will of Metropolitan Vitaly. This fact indeed was common knowledge for a number of years while Metropolitan Vitaly resided in New York!

While defending Bishop Barnabas, Hieromonk Paissy (since we have no information of him being defrocked) believes that Melekhov slanders him when insisting that he (Barnabas) has “no clear ecclesiology”!

Unfortunately Bishop Barnabas’ (who totally lacks any theological education) lack of a “clear ecclesiology” was revealed during his criminal actions in Russia! He was the one who disgraced the Church Abroad by participating in the widely publicized ride with the Nazi-style organization “Pamyat”; using a Synod letterhead and in the Synod’s name appealed to the Kievan Metropolitan Vladimir (who in a few months became a “Kievan Patriarch”) for “prayerful communion”; he was the one who started the persecution of Bishop Valentin, after getting from the circles of the MP a slanderous report about him which he widely distributed; it was he who, at the meeting of the Council of Bishops in 1994, criticized ALL 5 bishops in Russia and asked the Council to appoint HIM ALONE to rule all their parishes! A wonderful “ecclesiology”! In other words – the main initiator of the disorders of the church life in Russia is definitely Bishop Barnabas’ lust for power and honors. All the rest is just a logical development of the destruction he initiated.

From the canonical point of view all of the polemising clergymen are in the very same uncanonical position, because from the very beginning, the hierarchy they have joined --- became uncanonical and by now has quite obviously spit within herself!

The Internet information from Vertograd # 340 of January 20<sup>th</sup> published a curious “Declaration” of the ROCOR (V) Synod of Bishops regarding the position of its Secretary:

“In view of the uncertainty created by various information via the Internet regarding the position of the Synod secretary of the Orthodox Church Abroad under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, we feel a need to remind everyone that starting on October 23/November 5, 2001, the Synod Secretary is no one but Mitered Archbishop Benjamin Joukoff”.

Then his telephone and address are listed. This Declaration is signed by Metropolitan Vitaly, “Archbishop Barnabas” and “Bishop” Sergius, without mentioning their titles and positions.

It is doubtful that any one has ever heard of the appointment of a secretary who lives not only very far from the headquarters, but even on another continent!

From the second ‘declaration’ regarding the “administering of parishes of the ROCOR (V) in Russia,” it is obvious that on the “Council” (of which no one has any knowledge) which happened on October 23<sup>rd</sup>/November 5<sup>th</sup> 2001, Bishop Barnabas was elevated to the rank of “Archbishop” with the title of Cannes and Europe and therefore, all the parishes are under him of ROCOR “existing in Europe”. What an extensive diocese, almost equal to the jurisdiction of the First Hierarchy!

Is not this a clear sign of mercy of the Lord that the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church (which the Church Abroad has branded with the name of “the Suzdal schism”) despite the vicious persecutions by the Moscow Patriarchate – during all the 8 years of its independent existence not only remains intact, but even gradually grows? Meanwhile, the former ROCOR, which has betrayed the testaments of her 3 great last First Hierarchs and within only 2 last years has split into four parts: 2 abroad and 2 in Russia.

Unfortunately, it is to be expected that those schisms will continue to grow in the future.



## A PARADOXICAL DECLARATION OF THE HERARCHY OF ROCOR (V)

ROCOR (V) Hierarchy, established under Metropolitan Vitaly, on January 5/18<sup>th</sup> # 4/03/R has published an amazing document, published in the Internet by Vertograd/Rasyilka # 341 of January 11/24<sup>th</sup>, 2003, with the following content:

"In connection with the confusion provoked among our God-loving flock by various accusations of the hierarchs and clergy of our Church, which were initiated by Fr. Victor Melekhov most recently – we feel obliged to declare the following:

"From the moment of his acceptance into our Church in November, 2001, Fr. Victor Melekhov, as it is characteristic for his leadership character, on many occasions attempted to influence the administrative life of our Church, while he took upon himself a title of the Secretary.

"This unsuccessful effort to become the head of the administration of the Church, led him to use a method of false accusations of hierarchs and clergy who stood on his path. Proceeding from suspensions upon some clergymen, he started to accuse the whole Church, insisting that, supposedly, in the reborn ROCOR Church under Metropolitan Vitaly nothing has changed from period of the former Synod, which has apostatized from its usual path. He tried to undermine the trust of the faithful children of our Church, accusing them of "until present not accepting the conciliar faith". He slandered all of those working for our Church, calling our Church an "outrage in sins and delusions in faith". He has stimulated unrest in Russia, while ascribing the fault for this to the hierarchs of the ROCOR.

"Because of these actions. Fr. Victor falls under condemnation of 6<sup>th</sup> canon of the Second Ecumenical Council and of other similar canons.

"However, besides what is written above, the condemnation of Fr. Victor already was under way. Indeed, in 1986 and 1987, the Hierarchs of the ROCOR had made a decision regarding clergy who have left for the so-called Boston schism, and among them, Fr. Melekhov. The schism was created because of violations of moral standards which occurred in the Boston Transfiguration Monastery with the aim of avoiding thorough investigation of the case by the Synod of Bishops. The "preaching the true Orthodoxy" which supposedly was betrayed by our hierarchy covered this up.

"Regarding the moral violations of the Abbot Panteleimon and the monks of the Boston monastery, as well as those who left into schism, there are the resolutions of the ROCOR of September 4/17<sup>th</sup>, 1986; December 1/14<sup>th</sup> 1986; February 4/17<sup>th</sup> 1987 and of August 19<sup>th</sup>/September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1987.

**"In accord with the above, the reception of Fr. Victor Melekhov as a clergyman is to be considered as made imprudently due at that time to our unsettled administration and the absence of archives. Being under suspension by the decree of Synod of Bishops of February 4/17<sup>th</sup> 1987, he, as well as all other clergy who followed Archimandrite Panteleimon, and who have not repented and continued to serve, in view of this resolution, have, according to resolution of the ROCOR Synod of Bishops of August 19<sup>th</sup>/September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1987 have defrocked themselves. Now, the former Priest Victor Melekhov may save himself in the bosom the ROCOR only as a layperson.**

We appeal to our God loving flock not to submit to agitations and all the possible accusations of hierarchy and clergy of our Church. Despite the personal errors, which happen due to human weakness, all of us confess the true Orthodox faith and do treasure it more than anything in the world and accept none of the contemporary teachings and deviations harmful for Christ's Church and for the sake of saving our souls. Our Church, being a small flock, is a lawful successor of the 1000 year old Russian Church, which the Moscow Patriarchate cannot be. Of this not only our faithful know, but also our enemies, who through long efforts managed two years ago to inflict a crushing blow upon the free Russian Church and who being disappointed by her revival, now try to destroy her. In this destruction, under the cover of reasons that appear good, now the former priest Victor Melekhov also participates.

We also appeal to them to restrain themselves from church damaging detailed discussions of any church problems on the so-called Internet forums. Very often they reveal self-reliance, while being ignorant and irresponsible in matters of the ecclesiastical structure and who do not live guided by the love of Christ and therefore, intentionally or not, direct their thinking toward the destruction of pastoral authority and inflict cruel blows upon the Church.

Let us hear the words of Apostle: "Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all interpret? Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have no charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (I Cor. XII: 29: XIII: 1)

May the Lord bless the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and grant unto them his bountiful mercy.

Metropolitan Vitaly  
Archbishop Barnabas  
Bishop Sergius  
Bishop Vladimir  
Bishop Bartholomew

This amazing composition requires a whole number of comments, and, by the way, also an explanation of the reasons for the creation of the "Boston schism". We would not react to this shameful to the ROCOR (V) document published through the Internet, were it not for the fact, that due to his advanced age, Metropolitan Vitaly cannot remember the details of the exit by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery from the Church Abroad, and a whole group of "bishops" who have co-signed with him misrepresent the facts.

A short while before the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, the Synod's Chancery has received several complaints about the Abbot of the Transfiguration Monastery, Archimandrite Panteleimon. According to the existing consistory rules, all these complaints were forwarded to Archimandrite Panteleimon for a response. Very soon the response from Archimandrite Panteleimon was received with the enclosure of a personal standard letter from each complainant in the following style: "I, sinful monk so and so, due to my sins was not able to observe the very strict monastery rules and therefore had to leave the monastery." The second step in the investigation was to find out, why the complaints were written in such a standard form. However, by that time Metropolitan Philaret had suddenly passed away and in his stead Metropolitan Vitaly was elected. Very soon he ordered the Secretary of the Synod, Bishop Gregory to either immediately submit a letter of resignation or to be tried on unknown charges. Seeing that he had no support among the clergy, Bishop Gregory has forwarded a "petition" to be retired. In another words, the future legal procedure of the investigation of this case was already in hands of his successor, Bishop Hilarion.

Holy Transfiguration Monastery was respected not only among the Old Calendar Greeks, but also among the American converts to Orthodoxy. There were more than 30 American parishes under the immediate influence of the monastery, among them the parish in Worcester, where the rector was Fr. V. Melekhov.

Upon finding out about the complaints about Fr. Panteleimon, Metropolitan Vitaly was approached by a number of American clergy, who defended Fr. Panteleimon. Upon receiving them, Metropolitan Vitaly promised them one thing, but acted quite differently, that is – he totally ignored the basics rules of an ecclesiastical trial.

The Synod, in particular, decided to send Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles to investigate. The "investigation" consisted by Archbishop Anthony only into the material goods and property of the monastery. Being there a very short while, the right reverend "investigator" departed. (By the way, the "case" of the Chief of the Jerusalem Mission Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe) the investigation was also entrusted to Archbishop Anthony, who during the "interrogation" was not ashamed to ask from the "interrogated" – a donation of \$50,000 to finish his cathedral in Los Angeles! He received the answer that the money, obtained at that time from the Israeli Government, belonged to the Mission and the Orthodox Palestine Society, and not to him, Archimandrite Anthony.) Then the monastery was visited by Archbishop Mark, who also spent about one day there, however, he was able to report to the Synod that he has noticed homosexual tendencies among the monks.

Then an ecclesiastical trial was set up. The star of the accusers was the person of... Monk Mamont, who was already married and who, before leaving the monastery managed to steal its computer!

All these violations upset a whole number of clergy, and among them also Victor Melekhov and following Fr. Panteleimon they left the Church Abroad.

Pretty soon the civil trials started. Especially scandalous was the suit by the Synod, who wanted to get Fr. Victor's church in Worcester.

In this suit, as witnesses were present: Metropolitan Vitaly himself, Archbishop Anthony of L. A. and the new Secretary of the Synod, Bishop Hilarion. Both, the Metropolitan and the Archbishop contradicted most of the statements made by the Synod's lawyers, however, the most scandalous was the deposition on this trial by Bishop Hilarion. The lawyer has asked him: if he knows certain Professor de Rosier? Bishop Hilarion responded with categorical denial: he even never heard this name!

Then he was presented with his own letter to Professor Rosier in which he asked him to come to a parish meeting and report back to him all of the discussion. Blushing and stuttering Bishop Hilarion tried to read it with the lowest possible voice, but the lawyer demanded that he read it loudly and clearly. The Synod lawyer Helen Zezulin could not control her shame and emotions and exclaimed in Russian: "Oh, my God."

This trial was lost by the Synod, and was followed by an appeal, which was also lost.

At some time we have received the minutes of this scandalous deposition of Metropolitan Vitaly and the Secretary of the ROCOR, Bishop Hilarion.

This case was so scandalous and known to all the Orthodox in America, that the claim that the Metropolitan Vitaly accepted Melekhov "imprudently due at that time to our unsettled administration and the absence of archives" does not, as Russians say, stand on its feet.

Metropolitan Vitaly, who violated the canons by establishing his own hierarchy after he retired, cannot be considered the "successor of the 1000 year old Russian Orthodox Church" and his own actual schism in no way is different from the false theological and canonical paths of the Moscow Patriarchate. And the "enemies, who through long efforts managed two years ago to inflict a crushing blow upon the Russian Church, and who are disappointed by her revival, now try to destroy her" – undoubtedly know that in particular 2 years ago nothing remained of her, while her "revival" is nothing but the emergence of more and more schisms in Russia and Abroad.

## THE SPIRITUAL "REVIVAL" OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

The Internet publication of the parish of Three Hierarchs in Garfield, NJ, has published the report of All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion about the celebration of Feast of Nativity in Russia. It is reported that 69% people will celebrate Christmas. This seems not too bad, but...

Only 27% plan to be in the church at that day. Another 18% declared that "it all depends on circumstances", although the majority (54%) admitted they do not plan to be in the church!



Only 12% observe the St. Philip fast and 88% have no idea of the fast's regulations.

9 % said they would exchange the gifts with relatives and friends.

Another statistic, published by the Independent Research Center ROMIR, after questioning 2,000 persons came to the conclusion that 60% believe in God, another 21% believe in existence of some supreme power, spirit or mind. 16.5% does not believe in any "supreme essence". 45.9% said they never pray. 13.7% pray every day – 9.8% once a week and no more than once in half a year – 9.9% pray, yet 69.3% called themselves Orthodox!

Only those can speak of a spiritual revival in Russia who believe the statements of the Moscow Patriarchate, which claims to have 60 million parishioners, while the reality is indeed, very depressing.

### **ON THE CYPRIAN SYNOD OF "RESISTANCE"**

The Internet agency Vertograd/Razsylka # 339 of January 3, 2003, reported that at the Synod meeting of Metropolitan Kallinikos – Bishop Angel of Saloniki was received into communion with 12 priests and 2 large convents, after presenting his "confession of faith".

The ideology of Metropolitan Cyprian consists of the idea that the "ill members" of the Church, even if they are heretics, still remain within the Church, because no Ecumenical Council as yet has condemned them. Therefore, they, being New Calendarists, are free to receive Communion. The Cyprianite Synod is not recognized by any Greek Old Calendar jurisdiction.

This has not prevented the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly to establish communion with him and this communion continues also under Metropolitan Laurus.

In his article, published by "Church News" in September-October, 1994, Bishop Gregory sharply criticized this evil communion and ended his article with the phrase: "We need to consider if our Council has entered upon a path of treason to the Holy Fathers' traditions, or has only permitted an error which it is not too late to correct at the session next November in France?"

This issue with the article critical of the group of Metropolitan Cyprian was mailed to every hierarch of the ROCOR.

The exit of a bishop, 12 priests and especially 2 of his largest convents, has considerably weakened the position of this deceiver.

It is interesting to see if this departure will affect the position of father and son – the priests de Castabaljac in case their daughter and sister has left these convents for another jurisdiction.

### **"ORTHODOX CREMATORIUM"**

A newspaper "Rus Pravoslavnaya" published in St. Petersburg in its issue # 9-10 published a letter to the editors signed by a resident of Novo-Sibirsk, Serge Pastukhov, who complains that "one more misfortune has come upon our Novosibirsk diocese. Near the city (the capital of Siberia – Novo-Nikolyevsk–Novosibirsk) they have started building a crematorium. Next to it there are a convent and a monastery. The convent is to serve the incurably ill and the monastery clergy are to administer the crematorium. There will be a chapel-church at the crematorium (emphasized by "Ch. N."). It will be built and after death, they will incinerate Orthodox people. Is this the Christian way?" "...I add that there is talk that such crematoriums will be built in all major cities and that this is being done with the agreement of the church administration of the ROC and it has blessing from the highest level".

The author of this letter also complains that for years there have been talks of a local clergy and laity council, but which is, for various reasons, blocked "from above", while such a council could solve many painful questions for the faithful.

The blocking of a local council from "above" easily explained by the fact that the "administration" of the Moscow Patriarchate quite reasonably is afraid of speeches by average clergy and lay people criticizing its Ecumenism and all too close ties with the civil authorities.

### **FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS**

#### **(an address of Bishop Gregory to the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR, 1990)**

Having no official duties I have free time on my hands so I can follow what is going on in the Russian Orthodox Church. All the more so because I have preserved my old connections.

I ask the members of the Synod of Bishops to permit me to share with them information, which seems to be rather important, especially in connection with the rumors going around. There is a lot of talk about the situation of the church in connection with the so-called "perestroika". There is one side which all of us may call positive. I mean, the significant lifting of censorship. There are things being published about which it was not possible even to dream earlier. The reaction in our society toward such liberalism reveals the optimists as well as the pessimists.

We may call pessimists those who do not immediately burst with enthusiasm when they see in Soviet magazines nice articles about religious matters, sometimes even critical of the Moscow Patriarchate. Some of the latter's co-workers even permit themselves to express sympathy toward the Church Abroad.

The publication in a newspaper of the life of the St. Martyr Grand Duchess Elisabeth certainly is a positive sign. But when such things are permitted, which do not have a basis in permission from the law – it is sufficient for us not to forget

that the USSR remains ideologically a Communist state. Gorbachev himself on several occasions reminded everyone of that.

There is a significant difference between not using the restrictive laws in practice and the total abolition of them. The formula of Gorbachev, that everything is permitted that is not forbidden – has a double tactical feature, but not that of the lawful: today this is so – tomorrow it may be otherwise. So it was with Stalin's temporary cessation of persecution of the Sergian administration, which very soon was replaced by Brezhnev's persecutions. The institution of representatives remains in power and still lets one know of its existence. At present, some domestic changes are happening in the USSR, but these are by no means basic changes. Therefore, the anathemas invoked by the All-Russian Council and Patriarch Tikhon are not lifted by anyone and remain in full force. Many are so eager to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate, that, unfortunately, even religious people forget about this. They do not notice that the Moscow Patriarchate has changed the dogma of the Church and is preaching the Protestant teaching, which contradicts the Orthodox.

Gorbachev's perestroika with the return of some churches and official permission to use the new laws is looked upon by many as a new splendid era. However, some "charities" of the Gorbachev government actually are very limited. For example, it was announced that the canonization of St. Tikhon the Confessor was performed in the Dormition Cathedral. But it failed to mention that the cathedral was not returned to the Church and people were not allowed to participate in these festivities. Only a very small number of the faithful was admitted. The question of the relics of the Saint has also been put on hold, although the place of his burial is well known.

Bishop Basil (Rodzianko) writes enthusiastically about the canonization (while being silent about the above restrictions) wanting to see in this a fruit of "perestroika", which should, in his opinion, lead to the unification of the Church Abroad with the Patriarchate.

Bishop Basil writes of this in a "Sermon in Memory of the Feast of the Meeting" ("Novoye Russkoye Slovo," Feb. 17, 1989). Certainly he should understand, of course, that the main obstacle is not the Patriarch as such, but the acceptance in Moscow of a new dogma of the Church and so on.

It is more natural to think that Vladimir Soloukhin, who has no theological education and who also came forward with his appeal "Towards Unity", may not understand this. We will return to this matter later, and now let us see what is the present ideology of the Moscow Patriarchate regarding Ecumenism.

When the matter is about peaceful offers of the Moscow Patriarchate, one has to remember first, that she is more and more becoming a new version of Renovatism, towards which it is steadily being pushed by the Soviet government. C. Kharchev has spoken quite openly about it. He had a goal in mind: so to say, a peaceful re-education of the young clergy. He has not always achieved this goal, but at any rate, the senior clergy in the persons of the hierarchy is already re-educated and knowledgeable people have difficulty naming a bishop who would preserve his Orthodoxy.

The ideology of Ecumenism has little penetrated to the people, but it has poisoned the episcopate. In its external form it has a Masonic origin. At the beginning, Eumenism had as its goal the unity of all Christians, but this was widened and in the Moscow Patriarchate the goal now accepted is the unity of all humanity, ignoring the differences among confessions. Some 10 years ago I have reported to the Council that such an idea was expressed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios in his speech greeting the Papal representative, Cardinal Willebrands. Even then he pointed out the various phases in achieving the religious unity of all humanity. The first phase is unity with Catholics, the second is unity with all Christian confessions and, finally the unity of all religions, without exception. When we say "all religions", we have to keep in mind that there are also religions of a manifest or hidden satanic character. In the "New World" which is being constructed by the Masons and other future servants of antichrist, all religions are to be united under him. This was demonstrated on the last conference of the World Council of Churches in Canada. There was a procession of various, including non-Christian, religions which participated in this conference. At the head of the procession was a Greek Metropolitan in vestments and with the Gospel in his hands.

After these preliminary remarks, permit me to turn to the declarations published in the Moscow "Herald" (December, 1989) by the Archbishop of Smolensk and Kaliningrad Cyril made shortly before he was appointed to the post of President of the Department for Foreign Church Relations. At one time he was a secretary of Metropolitan Nicodem (Rotov).

Thus his interview with a correspondent entitled "Time to Act" is published in the Moscow "Church Herald" in the issue of December 17, 1978.

According to him, "At present, theology excludes the Christian meaning to problems facing the contemporary person". Rather, this is being done "by responding to the contemporary world". From this he turns to what "One can conditionally call the unity of the Church and the unity of all humanity. It is obvious that unity and survival are closely connected. Humanity cannot permit itself the luxury of separations and conflicts...."

Permit me to turn your attention to the following important words of Archbishop Cyril, which so much remind us of the ecumenist fruits of the Constantinople Patriarch, about which I have just spoken: "Ecumenism, the aspiration toward Christian unity, is a part of the search for human unity". Do not these words remind us of sentences about the general unity which were expressed by the Ecumenical Patriarch when he greeted Willebrands?

But Archbishop Cyril also adds the practical steps in achieving union with ancient enemies and persecutors of Orthodoxy. I mean the Muslims. He expressed a desire to develop dialogue with the representatives of Islam. How far these efforts toward such a rapprochement go can be seen from the desire of another member of the Moscow Synod, Metropolitan Pitirim, to publish the Koran. How far such rapprochement can go we can also see from a recent declaration



of the Patriarch of Alexandria Parthenios who considers Mohamed an Apostle yet we have not heard of a reaction by the other heads of the Churches to this blasphemy.

Archbishop Cyril didn't ignore the Church Abroad. To a question of the reporter about it he said nothing concrete. However, the Archbishop explained that "there are no theological differences with it, but also there is not complete unity. The reason is the political situation, which happened in our country after the Revolution. I cannot imagine that this separation will last a long time".

We all know that Archbishop Cyril did not speak the truth. He cannot be unaware of the resolutions that contradict this expressed many times by our Councils and all our First Hierarchs, starting with Metropolitan Anthony and ending with the present Metropolitan. He cannot not know of our irreconcilable stand toward Ecumenism as a flourishing new heresy. He cannot not know that Ecumenism is a direct renunciation of the ancient Orthodox faith in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. This is a direct rejection of the Apostolic words: "One God, one faith, one baptism". All of this is being discarded for the sake of the creation of a new world, which the followers of the future ecumenist servants of antichrist are trying to create.

Concretely, we cannot ignore the fact that the leaders of the present Moscow Patriarchate already serve them and we have to expect on their part various efforts in this or that way to involve even our Church Abroad in this degenerate group. I do not know what kind of promises we can expect for this, but, let us say, that if the Synod of Bishops, in violation of all its former declarations would enter into negotiations with the godless Soviet government, than imperceptibly it would be involved with the Sergianists, which we have for so long condemned. There would have to be a real and substantial change in the character and goals of the Soviet government before we could think of any negotiations. Otherwise, we would totally undermine the trust of the faithful toward the Church Abroad and would make impossible the work of Vladyka Lazarus.

In Soloukhin's article the tendency is obviously to ascribe to our Metropolitan agreement with actions that would contradict all our previous conciliar resolutions, starting with those of 1927.

Soloukhin writes that his proposal deals with three sides: the government (in our opinion Soviet-communist and godless), the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad. Actually, there are not three sides, but two, because, especially in such matters the Patriarchate is not independent. She is only the agent of the Soviet side. Therefore, according to Soloukhin's proposal, the Synod would enter into agreements with the Soviets. Even if in such a case they would be dressed in rases, the essence of the matter would be unchanged.

As admitted by Soloukhin, this "attractive" proposition practically leads to the reception by the Church Abroad of several ruined monasteries. With what means and resources, considering our lack of knowledge of the local people and conditions, could be realized? Our biggest monastery – Holy Trinity very doubtfully could spare monks to restore a monastery from its ruins. And with whom locally would it be possible to man it and how many agents of the KGB would be members of such a "restored" monastery?

I add also that Soloukhin's reference to the supposed agreement of the Metropolitan with his plans has led to conclusions and various rumors. It is said that he has already accepted some monasteries and that there is even an agreement on part of the Metropolitan to go to the USSR with the miraculous Kursk icon.

Such are the results of irresponsible rumors that seriously trouble our flock.

The church authorities cannot ignore this. If these rumors are spread by irresponsible people, who thirst for union with the Moscow Patriarchate and who do not understand what is she essentially represents, then, knowing the methods of Soviet propaganda we can assume that these rumors appeared not by themselves, but are planted in order to weaken the position of the Church Abroad before the surrounding world. This is an effort to silence this voice and, therefore, they demand our persistent public statements that there is no change in our positions.

Since the time when this report was written by Bishop Gregory certain changes have come about in Russia. Officially the Communist USSR has fallen and changed into the democratic Russian Federation. Indeed, censorship now is almost non-existent, and truly for a lot of money one can publish whatever one desires. It is no secret that yesterday's Communists within couple of days became "democrats" and successfully (especially in the provinces) occupy the same positions, with only the titles changed. We clearly see this in the case of the persecution of the ROAC in Suzdal, where the "former" KGB agents of the Vladimir region and Suzdal, while violating the constitution, abuse their powers without restriction. And regarding the Ecumenism of the Moscow Patriarchate: this has not changed in any way. Only, under pressure from the faithful, it has to limit ecumenical common prayer events and information about them, even if published, they become known only to people who are genuinely interested in church matters.

#### **ABOUT RECENT EVENTS IN THE CHURCH LIFE IN RUSSIA AND ABROAD (Independent statement of Bishop Gregory) February 26<sup>th</sup>/March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995.**

The news that has reached me about the resolution regarding the case of the Russian hierarchs can produce nothing but bewilderment in all those who are acquainted to some degree with the regulations of the Russian Church Abroad.

The invitation itself to Bishops Theodore and Agathangel for the Synod meeting, lacking any reservations whatsoever, testified to the recognition of their consecrations. This is especially obvious when one recalls the joyful announcements of the President of the Synod of Bishops about the previous resolutions which opened the way to the peaceful solution of

problems of the church administration in Russia. The hierarchs Theodore and Agathangel, upon arriving at the meeting, believed this to be true of their status. However, quite unexpectedly for them, the Synod raised not even the question of doubt about the legality of their ordination, but issued a suspension with the threat of defrocking five hierarchs out of seven of the existing bishops in Russia; this upon joining the Church Abroad could happen only by following the special judicial manner, advised in the Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. It should not be forgotten that one of the most important principles of the above mentioned Statute is that all its regulations refer only to matters concerning the Church Abroad, but in no way to matters in Russia. In the Statutes there is not a single word instructing the Synod of Bishops or his President to spread their authority to the Church in Russia. Certainly, this does not exclude helping the Church in Russia. However, there is a very big difference between help and jurisdiction.

If one studies the ukaz of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920, it permits the bishops to help set up a temporary Administration in Russia, but not the appropriation by them of a Russia-wide Ecclesiastical Authority. Thus it was sufficient that the Church Abroad rendered help when she ordained bishops for Russia, because the Communists had annihilated all the members of canonical Russian hierarchy.

When some parishes came into existence and also local laws concerning them, there emerged a number of brand new problems. Under the conditions of competition with the Moscow Patriarchate, which has betrayed Orthodoxy, there also arose problems which were not always understood by those abroad. The administration of the Church Abroad, not familiar with all aspects of church life in Russia, mostly reacted with silence, but from time to time would take upon itself the task of issuing ukases for the Church in Russia. At the same time, the Synod Abroad yielded to intentional provocateurs and became mistrustful of the Russian hierarchs, while having no other candidates for the pastoral ministry. Because of that, one error after another was made and as a result, and with the assistance of enemies of the Church, the relations between the Russian Hierarchy and the Synod of Bishops became very complicated.

In the end we see the Synod regulation of February 9/22<sup>nd</sup> of the current year which simply negates all the missionary achievements in Russia, by which all the open parishes who had joined were transferred to a hierarchy which took no part in this missionary work and even to the Metropolitan, who had not been once in Russia.

Thank God, our Russian Hierarchs remain true to the principles of preserving Orthodoxy, which had dictated all their missionary work. If our hierarchs from abroad will also remain true to these principles, then the two parts of the Russian Church can reunite. The sanctions against Archbishops Lazarus and Valentin, published by mistake, cannot be introduced in life, because they were made in violation of all the regulations of the Holy Orthodox Church and her canons, including the Statutes of the ROC Abroad.

Not one hierarch, who understands and is responsible, could participate in the destruction of the ecclesiastical discipline which was created over the past years, and replace the structure for restoring the Church in Russia, issued by the Patriarch Tikhon, with anarchy.

Signed + Bishop Gregory

This "independent opinion" by Bishop Gregory, which he wrote five months before his repose, was at that time published in our "Church News". But observing the total demise of the Church Abroad, we believe that even after seven years have passed, this opinion has not lost its significance and we have decided to publish it again.

## **AT THE LAST MINUTE**

### **About Christian Unity**

The Internet publication of the Three Hierarchs Parish in Garfield, NJ, reported on an ecumenical prayer event in Jerusalem, known as "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" which happened on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

This information stresses that with this act the Jerusalem Patriarchate has made a decisive step and she canceling her former opposition to ecumenical prayers.

Vatican Radio reports that Archimandrite Alexander participated in the prayers and greeted the ecumenical gathering and said that this prayer event has reconciled all believers in Christ. "Christ is among us", said the Archimandrite, who at the same time insisted that the Mother Church of Jerusalem has her visible expression in the person of Patriarch.

At the same time Archbishop Aristarchos, a member of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, declared that the Patriarchate has participated in the Week of Prayer "with reservations, but perhaps this is already a positive change in our attitude"!

Unfortunately, the Jerusalem Patriarchate which has always treated the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem with great respect – has never been squeamish about communion with the ecumenical Moscow Patriarchate as well as other ecumenist "churches". As far as we know this is the first case of participation by the Jerusalem Patriarchate in ecumenical prayers!

### **About the Kazan Icon of the Theotokos**

In the press, closely related to religious matters there were several notices that the Moscow Patriarchate is engaged in negotiations with the Vatican about the "return" of Kazan Icon of the Theotokos and even that this return is a condition for opening the way for the Pope to visit Russia.



The authenticity of the Kazan icon was raised very actively during the Worlds Fair, which opened in 1964 in Queens. With the involvement of this matter by the American (Russian) Metropolia the icon was exhibited in a special chapel and even was to be sold at an extremely high price.

At the prospect of possibly purchasing the venerated icon, quite a number of faithful approached the ROCOR Synod to make a worldwide collection in order to buy the icon. In reaction to this movement, the Synod of Bishop got in touch with the Icon Society in France as well as other experts.

The experts declared that the size of the icon on exhibit at the Worlds Fair does not correspond to the original. The icon on exhibit had an extremely ornate riza, scattered with jewels, what testified that it was especially venerated (possibly, by a wealthy family), but nevertheless, it was not the original. In view of this, the Synod of Bishops decided not to take up a world wide collection.

By the way, the history of the theft of the icon in a crowded cathedral shortly before the Revolution was very mysterious and there were a lot of rumors about it. The thieves were caught, but it appears that they destroyed the icon.

## Commerce and Religion

In December 2002 in the press the question was raised "What would Jesus drive?"

The "Ecumenical News International" on December 4<sup>th</sup> dedicated 2 pages to this "important" question, as well as the magazine "U. S. News & World Report."

We learn that a car should make 27.5 miles per gallon, while majority of them make only 20.7 miles. These are very popular and powerful cars, but they do "sin" against the principles of environmentalists, who worry about global warming. In November of last year there was even demonstration with several cars in Detroit with the demand to make the more economical cars.

The General Secretary of National Council of Churches, the nation's largest ecumenist body, together with Roman Catholics and Jews, presented the GM executives with a letter signed by more than 100 persons protesting air pollution.

Basing their action on the Gospel's words "love thy neighbor" the demonstrators declared that "We believe Jesus wants us to travel in ways that reduce pollution and consumption of gasoline".

"The New York Times" in the "Religion Journal" section published on January 25<sup>th</sup> an article explaining how one can advertise a clothing factory and yet express his religious beliefs.

In this way jackets are sold with a large inscription on the back "Jesus". There are T-shirts with the inscription "God is good" and on ties "God loves me"!

The producers stress that these inscriptions are not necessarily tied to Christianity. The new sport shirts, on sale in December, have printed on them cabalistic Jewish letters, indicating one of the 72 names of God. One recent catalogue, among various merchandise has a book with title: "What would Jesus eat?" During the year 2001 this profanation of religion with such clothing has increased the manufacturers' income by 150%.