

Chapter Six:

“How can he see a schism?”

Defining Spiritual Space, Place, and Authority in American Orthodox Rus’, 1923-1928

“It is not easy to picture the situation as to reform in the Russian Orthodox Church in America, because everything is obscured in a maze of a hundred lawsuits and other controversies. Yet these must be mentioned if the picture is to be accurate.” – Ralph M. Frink, September 1923<sup>1</sup>

“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.” – Psalm 146:3-4 (NRSV)

One afternoon in November 1923, John Kedrovsky, his wife, and their young son packed their trunks into a car and rode to St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Manhattan. Turned away at the front door, Kedrovsky went around to the rear entrance to the cathedral rectory, stormed past two aides who attempted to block his way, and took a seat at the dining room table. Wearing a black cassock, with the gem-studded *panagia* of an Orthodox bishop hanging from his neck, Kedrovsky produced documents he claimed gave him authority as Archbishop of North America and the Aleutian Islands. “I am the Metropolitan of the Soviet All Living Church,” he reportedly announced, “and I am here to take control of all Russian church property.” Kedrovsky sat at the table and loudly demanded to be heard, brandishing both his *panagia* and the sheaf of documents for effect. Cathedral attendants hastily made their way to a nearby police substation, returning with several officers to eject Kedrovsky. Metropolitan Platon (Rozhdestvensky), who had been lying ill in his upstairs rectory bedroom, deigned to come down and watch Kedrovsky be carried kicking and screaming down the front steps and into the street as his wife and son calmly followed behind. The ailing, yet still imposing Platon simply waved his hand, imploring the police to “Throw him out!” As an indignant Kedrovsky was deposited on the sidewalk, he left the

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph M. Frink, “The Russian Reform in America,” *Zion’s Herald*, September 5, 1923, 1138.

momentarily triumphant Platon with a thinly-veiled threat. “I will prosecute you,” Kedrovsky shouted. “I will bring down vengeance upon the Orthodox Church.”<sup>2</sup>

From 1923 to 1928, John Kedrovsky indeed brought down vengeance upon American Orthodox Rus’, tenaciously burying the North American Archdiocese in a tangled web of civil litigation intended to wrest hundreds of parishes—and their valuable property—into his control. Kedrovsky’s wrath, or perhaps more accurately his tenacious pursuit of power and control, exploited the weaknesses of a geographically expansive archdiocese already destabilized by several years of financial insecurity and administrative chaos. As previous chapters have illuminated, American Orthodox Rus’ was born out of the deep transnational connections—spiritual, patriotic, linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and financial—between the North American Mission and the Russian Empire. However, the uncertain period after 1917 placed strains on the mission as it tried to remold and replace these links in a post-tsarist context. In time, American Orthodox Rus’ would completely collapse under the combined weight of their absences. In April 1924, at the Fourth All-American *Sobor* (Council), the archdiocese would declare itself temporarily autonomous from the Church of Russia. Within a decade, the archdiocese would be but one among a confusing and acrimonious patchwork of overlapping Orthodox jurisdictions in North America. American Orthodox Rus’ would be irrevocably changed. And by decade’s end, John Kedrovsky would stand before the altar of St. Nicholas Cathedral each Sunday in the vestments of a bishop.

Of all the showpiece churches of American Orthodox Rus’, St. Nicholas was the most important. When the North American Ecclesiastical Consistory was transferred to New York in 1905, Bishop of North America Tikhon (Bellavin) used his first sermon in his new cathedral to praise the move as a yet another of, “...the gifts abundantly poured on your parish from the

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<sup>2</sup> “Clash for Control of Russian Cathedral,” *NYT*, November 8, 1923; “Grip on Trousers to Eject Bishop,” *Boston Globe*, November 8, 1923.

Heavenly Tsar and the Earthly Tsar.” He declared that “It is befitting also for the Russian hierarch to live precisely at this parish, which among all parishes is the most Russian. And your temple, which is the biggest and most splendid in our Diocese, should precisely be the cathedral temple.” Tikhon exhorted the community to understand that, “From now on your parish becomes the first among other parishes, and it should be like this not in word but in deed also.”<sup>3</sup>

As we have seen throughout this study, the cathedral was a crucial epicenter of the North American Mission’s growth during the age of emigration, and the administrative hub of a national network of social and economic aid for Orthodox migrant workers. The cathedral parish had seen moments of strength and community, from outpourings of support for departing missionaries like Frs. Ilia Zotikov and Alexander Hotovitzky in 1910 and 1914, to the blessing of ambulances destined for the European front near the Russian Consulate in 1916. After the revolutions of 1917, however, the community bore the full brunt of how the rise of bolshevism would change church life. It had prayed for Metropolitan Platon’s soul in 1918, then offered praise for his survival mere weeks later. It had seen its offices and rectory raided by the federal government that summer, then two years later felt the disruptions over the “English priests.” By the mid-1920s, it would be litigated, barricaded, re-consecrated, then left behind. St. Nicholas would become a contested site that represented the insular world American Orthodox Rus’ had become, a reminder of a world that no longer existed, and a place whose future proved unclear in an age of Bolshevism.

That it was John Kedrovsky who was claiming authority over the cathedral, and American Orthodox Rus’ by extension, was no small surprise. A cantankerous and unpopular priest who had been suspended in 1918 for his leading role in the independent parish movement, an informant during the federal investigation of Bishop Alexander (Nemolovsky) and his consistory, and a key

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<sup>3</sup> Saint Tikhon of Moscow, *Instructions & Teachings for the American Orthodox Faithful (1898-1907)*, Alex Maximov and David C. Ford, trans. and eds. (Waymart: St. Tikhon’s Monastery Press, 2016), 212-213.

figure behind the litigation that placed the archdiocese in receivership a year later (as described in Chapter Two), Kedrovsky had then disappeared to the obscurity of his independent church in Hartford, Connecticut. He unexpectedly reemerged during the summer of 1923, announcing that he would be traveling to Moscow to be consecrated a bishop. Marginalized by the church, Kedrovsky had turned to renovationism, a Russian Orthodox reform movement that championed many of the changes Kedrovsky advocated, including a married episcopate. As described in Chapter Three, renovationism had briefly emerged in the United States in 1918 through the brief surge of the independence movement. Yet as in Russia, independent clergy who espoused renovationist ideas struggled to form a cohesive or convincing movement in American Orthodox Rus', constituting a cluster of parishes that struggled without archdiocesan support.

By 1923, however, renovationists in Russia had gained the support of the Bolshevik government, trading loyalty to an atheistic regime for both the keys to shuttered churches and the hampering of ecclesiastical foes. Though reviled and rejected by much of the church, which continued to support now-Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), renovationist factions had temporarily put aside their differences and formed a nascent church that looked and acted much like the ecclesiastical body it purported to replace. Amongst its leaders was former Archbishop of North America Evdokim (Mischersky), who would help set the renovationists' sights on America. In Kedrovsky, they found a willing, if opportunistic instrument for seizing the North American Archdiocese for the renovated church. For Kedrovsky, it was a second chance at legitimacy long years of toil in his own, unapologetically independent vineyard.

American Orthodox Rus' was in an indisputable crisis at the outset of 1923. Alexander's departure, described in the previous chapter, had compounded the administrative uncertainty of the already-dire situation across the archdiocese, a crisis measured in debt and discord. Alexander

named Platon (Rozhdestvensky), the displaced Metropolitan of Odessa, as the *de facto* administrator of the North American Archdiocese. The convening of the Third All-American *Sobor* in Pittsburgh during the autumn of 1922 solidified Platon's position by electing him as the permanent first hierarch, a lifetime post, even in the face of a "counter-sobor" convened in Philadelphia. Yet even with the apparent support of his archdiocese, Platon's position would not be wholly clear. Events in Russia had left the church far more vulnerable than ever before. Lines of communication were now cut, the patriarch was under house arrest, and Platon's election lacked official confirmation and assent from Moscow. This uncertainty, with its clear power vacuum created by the rise of Bolshevism provided John Kedrovsky enough ambiguity, intrigue, and conflicting statements to make his own case look crystal clear.

As American Orthodox Rus' reeled, America's newspapers, magazines, and bookstore shelves were replete with lurid and sensationalistic accounts of life in Soviet Russia from refugee émigrés, journalists, clergymen, professional raconteurs, and politicians, amongst others. Balanced against idealistic descriptions lauding the Bolshevik leadership, the spread of communism into far-flung corners and exotic peoples, and stirring tales of modernization and industrialization, were just as many about violence, terror, destruction, and uncertainty. One frequent subject was state's repression of the Russian Orthodox Church and the persecution of its clergy. These developments had made American Orthodox Rus' an important part of a much larger global phenomenon in which the Russian Orthodox Church's presence outside the former empire's borders was forced to redefine itself in relation to (or perhaps against) both the Mother Church and the Soviet state.

This chapter looks to John Kedrovsky's property litigation to trace the decline and collapse of the pre-revolutionary American Orthodox Rus' in an uncertain age of Bolshevism. Probing a series of court cases and ecclesiastical conflicts concerning St. Nicholas Cathedral, this chapter

argues that the attempted normalization of post-revolutionary church life in the United States came through such civil litigation, not just through dialogue within the Orthodox Church itself. The cathedral cases made civil courts an arbiter of doctrine and dogma, the spiritual authority and legitimacy of ecclesiastical leadership, the holder of the church's purse, and even the nature of religious life in Soviet Russia. In these ways, non-Orthodox judges became critical mediators of what it meant to be a Russian Orthodox Christian in the United States after 1917. As previous chapters have shown, American Orthodox Rus' was as much about preserving a clear sense of connection with Russia as encouraging believers to participate in, and adapt to American life. Yet the Russian Orthodox experience in American civil courts during the 1920s showed that the church's efforts to maintain visibility and overt congruency with normative "Americanness" hadn't been altogether pervasive. Orthodox Christians already encountered great difficulty in explaining their faith in a decidedly heterodox United States, and would continue to struggle to find their voice in the precise and pressured environment of the courtroom. The decisions handed down in these cases highlight the extent to which Orthodoxy remained in tension with American life, struggling for legibility and recognition in a country that still perceived Christianity almost exclusively in its Western forms.

To compensate, John Kedrovsky and Platon would instead rely on surrogates, mostly mainline Protestants, who traded on their prominence and respectability to champion one Orthodox faction or another, often to further their own ecumenical or denominational interests. Kedrovsky would be supported by Methodists who acted out of progressive Christian altruism, seeing an opportunity to breathe new life into a church rife with over nine centuries of what they saw as backward superstitions, arcane ritual, and a reluctance to engage with the modern world. What was more, they viewed cooperation with a renovated Russian Orthodox Church—and a benevolent

Soviet government—as a means to preserve a small, yet active Methodist community clinging to survival under Bolshevik rule. Platon drew on the Episcopal Church, whose longstanding links to the “Eastern Churches” stemmed from nineteenth-century Branch Theory, and which had long been a critical ally to American Orthodox Rus’. This chapter explores how these surrogates—Methodists for Kedrovsky, Episcopalians for Platon—offered legal support, material aid, and public legitimacy, acting out of their own motivations for aligning with the Orthodox.

In his history of the church reform movement in the Soviet Union commonly referred to as the renovationist schism (*obnovlencheskii raskol*), Edward Roslof argues that without the devastating famine of 1921, renovationists would never have managed to seize power within the Russian Orthodox Church during the “ecclesiastical civil war” that followed. The same was true of John Kedrovsky, whose improbable resurgence in American Orthodox Rus’ during the late summer of 1923 came through an unexpected renovationist intercession tied to their state-backed rise in Russia. Understanding the final collapse of American Orthodox Rus’ following the departure of the ill-fated Alexander in 1922 means unraveling an intricate web of transnational connections, interdenominational intrigue, and legal fictions—all of which connect to the unification and state-backed legitimization of the renovationist factions in Russia beginning in 1922. In this way, John Kedrovsky’s path from the obscurity of a suspended and discredited priest to the married episcopate began in the Soviet Union, far from his Connecticut rectory and long before he arrived in Platon’s dining room calling himself an archbishop.

The previous two years had seen the struggling and sprawling communist state racked with a catastrophic famine, only to be saved by timely intervention from the very capitalist nations its

leadership routinely denounced, namely the United States.<sup>4</sup> As Lenin's government struggled to find the money to feed a starving peasantry, it set its sights not on the imperial crown jewels and other tsarist treasures seized when the Bolsheviks took power, but on gold, gems, and valuables held by religious "cults"—chief among them the Orthodox Church. This was a calculated attempt to use the famine as a vehicle to further subjugate and eliminate the church as a social force in Russian life. As historian Richard Pipes observes, "...Lenin was an expert at provoking strife, and once he decided to make war on the Church and dismantle what was left of its structure, he had no trouble finding a *casus belli*." The church would be forced to strip itself clean, at the risk of appearing indifferent to human suffering. "The antichurch campaign of 1922 was meant to destroy, once and for all, what was left of the autonomy of religious bodies," Pipes argues, "in other words, to carry 'October' into the ranks of organized religion, the last relic of the old order."<sup>5</sup>

The seizure of church valuables became the justification for a new and alarming rise in anti-religious persecution in Russia, arousing both international attention and ecumenical protest. The church had been a large part of famine relief efforts, having raised significant funds in a church-wide collection in 1921, yet the state's reclamation campaign would prove a far different experience. In February 1922, Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin) instructed parishes to comply with the state's orders, though he exempted any items required for liturgical use, such as chalices and other consecrated fixtures. Though the government initially signaled that it was open to Tikhon's compromise, this would change in but a matter of days. By month's end, the church would be ordered to surrender everything of value. Tikhon once again instructed that only items not

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<sup>4</sup> See Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 410-19; Bernard M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Expedition* (New York: Macmillan, 1927).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Pipes (1994), 347.



necessary for worship be turned over. The state responded with a vicious propaganda campaign that painted the church as indifferent to the people's suffering. The Commission for the Realization of Valuables, under the chairmanship of Leon Trotsky, oversaw what the state publicly hoped would be an orderly sale of church values into the foreign market. The reality was far different. Lenin's internal correspondence belies an explicit policy of terror and violence towards religious communities who failed to comply, leading to numerous violent, sometimes lethal incidents between police, soldiers, and pious believers opposed to the looting of their religious spaces.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the spring, summer, and autumn, dozens of priests, monastics, and laypeople would be placed on public show trials for withholding valuables. Staged as incidents of political theater, show trials proved exercises in the public humiliation and denigration of "counter-revolutionary" clergy, monastics, and pious laypeople.<sup>7</sup> Some were sentenced to death, others to lengthy prison terms. Among them were Frs. Alexander Hotovitzky and Ilia Zotikov, former American missionaries Tikhon had summoned to work in his Moscow consistory. During the summer, the appearance of Metropolitan Benjamin (Kazansky) before the Petrograd Revolutionary Tribunal received international attention. Betrayed to the state by his former spiritual child, Fr. Alexander Vvedensky, the international outrage intensified at both diplomatic and ecumenical channels when Benjamin was executed in August.<sup>8</sup> The arrest, trial, and execution of Russian Roman Catholic leaders Archbishop Jan Cieplak and Monsignor Konstantin Budkevich during the

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<sup>6</sup> Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, Vol. 1, (1981), 93-99; Pipes (1994) 347-356.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth A. Wood has contextualized these trials within a larger genre of fictional or performative show trials intended to dramatically instruct and sway opinion about the Bolshevik project. These were real-life, binding proceedings that contained elements of the agitation trial genre, often held in the same spaces, and became templates for agit-prop trials in subsequent years. Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 2005), 82-3 and 94-6.

<sup>8</sup> See Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, *Novye Mucheniki Rossiiskie: Pervoe Sobranie Materialov* (Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1949), 25-57.

spring of 1923 further aroused international outrage.<sup>9</sup> Yet the bulk of Bolshevik anti-religious activity was inflicted on the Orthodox Church. By that summer, long lists of bishops, priests, and other Orthodox victims of Soviet anti-religious persecution were circulating in the West, filtered through the Western press, the émigré Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) in Sremsky-Karlovtsy, Serbia, and influentially, the Archbishop of Canterbury at London's Lambeth Palace. Yet nothing attracted so much attention as the plight of Tikhon. In May, the patriarch was placed under house arrest at Donskoy Monastery in Moscow, charged as a “counter-revolutionary.” Tikhon became a public face of Soviet anti-religious persecution. Well known in the West from his youthful time in America, he was now pictured in Western publications looking sullen, gaunt, and tired, clearly aged far beyond his fifty-seven years.<sup>10</sup>

The trials, imprisonments, and executions of the patriarch and “Tikhonite” clergy in the Soviet Union during 1922 and 1923 were a part of what has been called the “church revolution,” a period of state-sanctioned, targeted persecution and violence that served to install leaders of the so-called renovationist movement<sup>11</sup> as the legitimate leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church. The renovationists represented a loose institutionalization and collaboration of liberal reform movements extant in Russia since the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Renovationists posited several changes that proved demonstrably unpalatable for most Orthodox Christians. These included the

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<sup>9</sup> Christopher Zuger, *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet Empire from Lenin through Stalin* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2001). See also Francis McCullagh, *The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1924.)

<sup>10</sup> Jane Swan, *Chosen for His People: A Biography of Patriarch Tikhon*, Second Edition (Jordanville: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2015), PAGES; John Shelton Curtiss, [FINISH].

<sup>11</sup> Much of the church historiography on John Kedrovsky contextualizes his actions in relation to the “Living Church.” The Living Church was indeed one reformist faction, and both Kedrovsky and his critics alike frequently used the term as a shorthand for the broader reform movement. I am choosing to use “renovationism” and the “renovated church,” rather than the Living Church, to acknowledge the diversity of the renovationist movement, as well as to reflect the more common Russian employment of declensions of *obnovlencheskii* (renovated).

<sup>12</sup> For the early history of renovationism, see James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981). The most complete history of the movement, particularly in its revitalization after 1917, is Edward Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

married episcopate, an expression of the renovationists' instinctive distrust of the monastic, or "black" clergy's hold on church administration. Renovationists were a foil against Tikhon, who maintained popular support through his denunciations of the antagonistic, atheistic state.

This was the second portion of Lenin's campaign to discredit religious belief, building atop the propaganda and violence of the reclamation campaign by trying to encourage internal dissent and schism within the Orthodox Church. To Lenin's government, the renovationists were a wedge that could serve to split, and in turn fatally discredit the Russian Orthodox Church as a social and cultural force. "Whereas the Bolsheviks could dismiss private religiosity as a sign of cultural backwardness doomed to extinction," Victoria Smolkin argues, "they saw in the Orthodox Church a powerful institution with symbolic and material capital that could be transformed into a political weapon, fomenting religious opposition abroad and mobilizing religious activism at home."<sup>13</sup> The institutional church represented a strong and cohesive force against the Bolsheviks' efforts to maintain power over a vast, multi-confessional state still reeling from years of revolution, war, and famine. This necessitated minimizing, if not silencing figures like Tikhon, whose widespread respect and international credibility stood in sharp and antagonistic opposition against the leaders of the Soviet state. It also meant supporting Tikhon's foes. Bolshevik leaders like Mikhail Kalinin and Georgy Chicherin believed that selectively and deftly supporting renovationist clergy could cause the church to collapse in on itself, bringing to fruition the atheist state Lenin espoused.

In what one church historian calls a "bloodless coup," the renovationists used a combination of deception and state support—predominantly through the imprisonment and persecution of key clergymen, beginning with Tikhon himself—to install themselves the Temporary High Church Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church until another All-

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<sup>13</sup> Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 28.

Russian *Sobor* could meet. After the patriarch and loyal clergy were placed under siege in early 1922, the power vacuum created by the imprisoned patriarch's absence had inspired the various renovationist factions to put aside their differences and coalesce into a somewhat cohesive movement. They were able to draw on the state's recognition as well. In May, renovationist leaders held two meetings with Tikhon, using veiled threats and implied violence during the second session to compel the patriarch to abdicate his duties. Tikhon named Archbishop Agafangel (Preobrazhensky) of Yaroslavl as his successor, yet by June, Agafangel too was under house arrest, leaving the patriarchal throne conspicuously vacant. The true circumstances that prompted Tikhon to cede his power would long be disputed. For the time being, however, he remained isolated at Donskoy Monastery, unable to communicate with those outside his immediate inner circle.



Figure 6.1: Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), c. 1920  
(LOC Bain News Service)

In April 1923, following a year of show trials, intimidation, and exile of “Tikhonite” clergy, the renovationists drew on the state's sanction to hold the Second All-Russian *Sobor*, which they claimed to be the successor council to that held in Moscow in 1917-18. Shunned by all but a handful of Tikhonite delegates, who attended its sessions largely to register their disapproval, the

council convened in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour to reverse many of the decisions of the ill-fated council of five years earlier. From the state's perspective, the council could serve to broaden the chasm between the "Red" and Tikhonite factions, and in turn further weaken the Orthodox Church. In total, over four hundred voting delegates met to discuss a variety of issues, from the institution of the married episcopate to the remarriage of divorced and widowed priests, constituting a wholesale restructuring of the Russian Church—and a rejection of the patriarchal system instituted at the 1917-18 church council. After several days of sessions in which they repeatedly offered praise and thanksgiving for Lenin and the benevolent Bolshevik government, the *sobor* placed Tikhon on ecclesiastical trial *in absentia*. On May 4, 1923, after a blistering speech by the high-profile renovationist priest Alexander Vvedensky, the *sobor* passed a resolution declaring that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus, His Holiness Tikhon, was now Citizen Vasili Bellavin, a layman. The imprisoned patriarch received the news at Donskoy Monastery, reportedly signing the council's document with a simple appendix: "illegal." Within days, "Citizen Bellavin" was transferred to Moscow's brutal Lubyanka Prison.<sup>14</sup>

Part of the renovationists' success in repressing Tikhon and making its public assertions of power over the Russian Orthodox Church was the support and cooperation of American Protestants. Shortly before the council opened, a group of Methodist clergymen accepted an invitation to travel to Moscow and learn about what they felt to be nothing less than a momentous reformation of one of the world's oldest Christian Churches. The group was led by Bishops Edgar Blake and John Nuelsen, two American-born clergymen who oversaw the denomination's missionary work in Europe. It too included the Boston-based Methodist newspaper editor, Reverend Lewis O. Hartman, and United States Senator William Borah of Idaho. Initially intended as an official

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<sup>14</sup> Curtiss; Swan; Pospelovsky; etc. (FINISH)

delegation of the Methodist Church, the uncertainty of the religious situation in Russia necessitated the denomination to insist it be considered an unofficial trip by individual Methodists. The delegation took it upon themselves, then, to determine the true religious situation in Russia, and in turn encourage more a more sympathetic treatment of the Soviet Union in American ecumenical and political discourse. Their handlers—among them Julius Hecker, a Russian-born, American-educated Methodist minister who openly supported Lenin’s government after his return to Russia—exposed them to a fantastical vision of a Russian Orthodox Church that was thriving under Soviet rule.<sup>15</sup> While scrutinized and criticized within their own church, the Methodists’ accounts of what they saw in Russia would be crucial to John Kedrovsky’s claims to authority and legitimacy. What Blake, Hartman, and other Methodists who joined in their support for Kedrovsky and the renovationists did not realize, or perhaps chose not to believe, was that much of what they had seen in Moscow had been an elaborate fiction, and much of what they would come to accept about renovationist clergy like John Kedrovsky was a lie.

Returning to the United States in May, Hartman turned to *Zion’s Herald* to report the “truth” about Russia, publishing a series of articles during the summer that showed that the delegation was inclined to believe the accounts of both the renovationists and the Soviet government. Hartman criticized “sensationalist newspaper reporters” that spread half-truths about the Soviet authorities, beginning with those of rival Methodist publication the *Christian Advocate*. Without seeing the situation for themselves, these American Methodists’ engrained prejudices about communism had led them to immediately believe negative reports about Russia. In Hartman’s view, “... never before in the history of the race has there been so much false and malicious propaganda directed

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<sup>15</sup> David S. Fogelson, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire:” The Crusade for a “Free Russia” since 1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For Hecker’s later life, see Alan Cullison, “Stalin-Era Secret Police Documents Detail Arrest, Execution of Americans,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1997.

against any government as has been published during the past five years in opposition to the Bolshevik régime.” Even if politically misguided and tactically problematic, Hartman felt “the Bolshevik leaders themselves are as self-sacrificing and sincere a group of men as ever attempted to guide any government on earth.” What they had seen was a country approaching full recovery from its massive losses in the Great War, the shock of two political revolutions, and a brutal civil war. “Before we left Riga on our way to Russia, we heard the most blood-curdling tales of conditions under Bolshevik rule,” Hartman wrote. “Moscow is as safe as Boston, and almost as normal in its business and social conditions. In view of the mass of false reports on the Russian situation such as the foregoing, how can the outside public get any idea of the truth?”<sup>16</sup>

The group’s naivety and inclination towards reform caused them to report on what they saw with baffling, unwitting ignorance, repeatedly recalling instances in which even a follow-up question or disposition for critical reasoning would have revealed much of what they saw to be an ecclesiastical Potemkin Village. This was perhaps no more evident than in their fact-finding on the most overt and violent aspects of Soviet anti-religious activities. One of the earliest and highest-profile renovationist bishops was Evdokim (Mischersky), formerly Archbishop of North America, who had gone to Russia for the All-Russian *Sobor* of 1917 and never returned. He was among the first to wholeheartedly embrace renovationism after 1917, in no small part due to the cloud of moral scandal that had driven him from New York.<sup>17</sup> Blake’s delegation met with Evdokim in Moscow, and were clearly drawn in by the English-speaking bishop, who in Hartman’s words, “...has been in America and has caught the spirit of religious freedom and the conviction that church and state should be separated... and was the first archbishop to recognize the revolution.” At the same time, Evdokim “...has kept his priests out of politics and boasts that none of his ten

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<sup>16</sup> “The White Light of Facts,” *Zion’s Herald*, June 6, 1923, 718.

<sup>17</sup> [This is discussed in Chapter Two]

bishops have been in prison.” They appeared not to understand, or perhaps were unconcerned as to what concessions could make such a claim possible.<sup>18</sup>

The delegation was also interested in the elements of religious “superstitions” tied to the old church the Tikhonites sought to maintain. They did not record their alarm over the renovationists’ acceptance of the so-called “exhumation campaign,” the state’s attempt to exhibit the decayed relics of saints for shock value, discredit the Orthodox clergy who maintained their shrines, and in turn inspire believers to abandon their faith.<sup>19</sup> These actions had garnered substantial criticism when they began in 1919. Blake’s delegation, however, saw renovationist support for the widely-reviled, and ultimately ineffective exhumations as bold and visionary. They viewed the veneration of saints as an outmoded and backwards form of religious devotion, and respected the *sobor*’s decision “to allow bones and other so-called sacred relics to be exhibited openly provided they were shown without camouflage and honestly labeled. Meanwhile every effort is to be put forth to break down the superstition represented by this custom.”<sup>20</sup>

[FIGURE 6.2: BLAKE WITH RENOVATIONIST LEADERSHIP]

A significant portion of the delegation’s awareness about the imprisoned Tikhon and the Tikhonite church came from renovationists and state officials alike, both of whom had condemned the patriarch and his followers as “counter-revolutionaries.” The Methodists came to accept that the Tikhonites’ alleged crimes were not that they were religious believers, but that they failed to properly capitulate to Soviet power. Meeting with multiple government officials, including Georgy Chicherin, the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the group was “...assured in every instance that the constitutional provision granting religious freedom was in full force and that there

<sup>18</sup> “The Russian Church Reformation,” *Zion’s Herald*, June 6, 1923, 723.

<sup>19</sup> See Robert Greene, *Bodies Like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> “The Russian Church Reformation,” *Zion’s Herald*, June 6, 1923, 725.



would be no opposition whatever to the worship of God, except where it was used as a cover for counter-revolutionary efforts.”<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, the Methodist delegation accepted the assertions of renovationist leaders like Alexander Vvedensky who painted a picture of the patriarch as a pathetic, hapless leader who had been rightfully deposed and imprisoned for his counter-revolutionary activities. “The career of Tikhon is one of the saddest in all the history of religion,” Hartman explained. “Tikhon could have led a spiritual revival whose influence would have shaken the world. He failed and was swept off the stage as a hopeless reactionary.”<sup>22</sup>

The crowning event of the delegation’s trip had been Blake’s address to the renovationist *sobor* on May 2, which Hartman printed in full. “Russia is in the midst of a stupendous social experiment,” Blake told the council. “For the first time in human history a political government has dedicated itself to the service of the common people. It has pledged itself to redress the wrongs of the toiling multitudes who hitherto have been exploited and oppressed.” Blake intimated close similarities between communist ideology and that of the early Christian church. And he declared that the Soviet experience as an imperfect vehicle to erode class distinction. Still, the renovated Orthodox Church the Soviets backed was a much-needed instrument to adapt the church to human progress and social change. Blake felt the Orthodox Church and the Soviet state could find a syncretic harmony. “We may not approve all the means and methods that have thus far been employed,” Blake said.

Indeed, we may strongly disapprove. Nevertheless, I do not see how a Christian church can do other than give itself sincerely, earnestly, and wholeheartedly to a movement that has so large a Christian ideal in view. It is given to this Council, if it will, to show beyond a peradventure that the church of Christ is ready to give its heart and hand to any and every government that dedicates itself to the service of the poor and oppressed.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “The Russian Church Reformation,” *Zion’s Herald*, June 6, 1923, 726.

<sup>22</sup> “The Russian Church Reformation,” *Zion’s Herald*, June 6, 1923, 723.

<sup>23</sup> “Bishop Blake’s Address Before the Council of the Russian Church,” *Zion’s Herald*, June 6, 1923, 727.

Blake closed by promising his church's unwavering support for the renovationist cause, beginning with a \$50,000 pledge (nearly \$750,000 today) to fund Methodist-style clerical education in Russia. "When your call came across the seas we answered with but one desire, and that to aid the Russian Church and the Russian people," Blake told the council. "If in anything we can serve you, you have only to ask. Tell us what you want, and so far as our resources will permit, it shall be done."<sup>24</sup>

Over the following year, Blake's Russia Fund raised over \$35,000 of the \$50,000 he promised the renovationists. It would help to reopen the theological academies in Moscow and Petrograd, and to bolster church publications.<sup>25</sup> Collected in small amounts from concerned Methodists across America, the responses to Blake's appeal demonstrated that while many within his denomination may not have universally agreed with his perception of Russia, they clearly endorsed Methodist support for Russian religious reform. "I am a very decided anti-Bolshevik, have no use for the Soviet Government, and do not believe it can long endure," Methodist temperance advocate Dr. Louis Albert Banks wrote along with his ten-dollar donation. Yet having read Hartman's accounts in *Zion's Herald*, Banks affirmed that "I heartily agree with you that the Christian people of Russia need educated Christian leaders... If I were able, I would gladly multiply it by a hundred." A New Jersey minister wrote, "I do not see how any student of history can expect Russia to be permanently transformed when the old régime of the Orthodox Greek Church remains unchanged. I thank God that Methodism had a little part in the awakening." A Maine laywoman paired her one-dollar donation with her opinion that, "Because most people have a wrong understanding of the Russian situation, what an opportunity for every preacher in Methodism to tell his people the truth and invite every one to contribute at least a dollar to aid in

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<sup>24</sup> "Bishop Blake's Address Before the Council of the Russian Church," *Zion's Herald*, June 6, 1923, 727.

<sup>25</sup> Donald Carl Malone, "A Methodist Venture in Bolshevik Russia," in *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States: History and Renewal*, S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 50.

bringing salvation to this people, that the ‘desert may blossom like the rose.’”<sup>26</sup> A prominent Methodist clergyman sent ten dollars with a lament that, “Wish I could make it a thousand.”<sup>27</sup>

Hartman and Blake’s enthusiasm for Russia was just as much a function of genuine interest in reform and ecumenical friendship as it was self-preservation for the Methodist denomination, which had a missionary presence in Russia dating back over a decade. Initially established for Swedish and Finnish Methodists living in Petrograd, Russian Methodism had grown in strength through the work of missionaries like Sister Anna Eklund to include ethnic Russians as well. As church historian Donald Carl Malone notes, “There was no need for the Methodists to move into Russia for they were already there before the revolution, and although the Methodist mission was not large, it was strong enough to endure the revolution and famine.”<sup>28</sup> Though the Soviets expelled portions of the Methodist leadership from Petrograd in 1918, state policy towards “sectarian” groups had softened by the early 1920s. As the Soviets worked towards dismantling the Orthodox Church as a social force in Russian life, they were more inclined to allow non-Orthodox groups such as Baptists and Methodists to expand their positions in Russia and operate somewhat more unmolested than the Orthodox. Parachurch organizations like the YMCA too found a place in Bolshevik Russia.<sup>29</sup> Like the renovationists, non-Orthodox Christian groups could prove an insurgent alternative, siphoning off believers and resources while contributing to idealized propaganda about the purported religious freedom of the young Bolshevik state. The American Bishops Blake and Nuelsen were both part of the Methodist oversight of Russia’s

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<sup>26</sup> “Well under Way,” *Zion’s Herald*, August 22, 1923, 1068.

<sup>27</sup> “Russia Fund Continues to Grow,” *Zion’s Herald*, September 5, 1923, 1133.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Carl Malone, “A Methodist Venture in Bolshevik Russia,” in *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States: History and Renewal*, S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 45.

<sup>29</sup> I’M WORKING ON THIS. Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Heather Coleman, “Becoming a Russian Baptist: Conversion Narratives and Social Experience.” *The Russian Review* 61:1 (January 2002), 94-112; Matthew Lee Miller, *The American YMCA and Russian Culture: The Preservation and Expansion of Orthodox Christianity, 1900-1940*

Methodist community. Both were clearly interested in working towards their denomination's survival, if not its growth in Russia—even if this would mean expressing support for the Soviets.<sup>30</sup>

Even with their denominational interests in the region, American Methodists were not broadly inclined to accept Blake's views about Russia. While undoubtedly formed in response to the abundant accounts of Russia in the American press, much less Red Scare fears of communism's global expansion, their opinions were also in part molded by Platon and his allies. Before the renovationist *sobor* began, Platon had circulated a letter to American denominations preemptively decrying the council and its renovationist leaders. In the letter received by the Methodist Board of Bishops, which was printed in the official Methodist organ the *Christian Advocate* in June, Platon assailed the renovationists as "...unscrupulous apostates" who had "...availed themselves of the destruction brought by the Soviet authorities to the Church to secure control of Church affairs." The renovationists had benefitted from the persecution, imprisonment, and execution of Tikhonite clergy, and now had their eye on America. In Platon's view, his diocese was the last bastion against renovationist influence. "Owing to the fact that [the North American Archdiocese] exists in a free country, far beyond the reach of the Bolshevist regime," Platon wrote, "it could, up to the present, successfully withstand the attempts of the Bolshevist agents, and of those of the 'Living Church,' to disintegrate this last stronghold of the legal Russian Church, and seize the diocesan administration." Along with his letter, Platon included a copy of resolutions passed at an April 17<sup>th</sup> meeting at the cathedral, which explicitly denounced the *sobor* as, "devoid of any canonical force

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<sup>30</sup> S. T. Kimbrough, "The Living Church Conflict in the Russian Orthodox Church and the Involvement of the Methodist Episcopal Church." *Methodist History* 40:2 (January 2002), 105-118); John L. Nuelsen, Theophil Mann, J.J. Sommer, "The Methodist Church in Northeastern Europe," S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., trans. in *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States: History and Renewal*, S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 31-34.

and value,” whose decisions “shall not be recognized, or put into execution within the North American Archdiocese.”<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps aware of Platon’s letter just as much as the readily-available facts concerning anti-religious violence in Russia, many American Methodists—including the Board of Bishops—were unsettled about what Blake had said and promised in Moscow. Meeting for their semi-annual conference in Wichita as the first details of Blake’s trip and excerpts of his address to the *sobor* reached American newswires, the Board of Bishops issued a formal response to separate themselves from reports that Blake had intimated that he spoke for his church in an official capacity. They were also concerned that Blake had inferred that the bishops, or perhaps the church’s foreign missions board had appropriated the tens of thousands of dollars Blake pledged to the Russians. In a carefully-worded statement, the bishops declared that, “...neither as individual Bishops nor as a Board of Bishops are we to be held responsible for any expression of personal opinion nor for any reports appearing in the public press not authorized by this board.”<sup>32</sup> At the same time, as one of the bishops later emphasized, “The resolutions imply no censure of any one, but simply disavow responsibility for individual opinions which may or may not have been expressed before the Russian assembly, but which press reports claim were expressed.”<sup>33</sup> The bishops were displeased, yet were willing to hear the full story when Blake and Hartman returned to the West.

Once Hartman published his passionate accounts of Soviet Russia in *Zion’s Herald*, voices elsewhere in the Methodist press responded with wariness of the delegation’s activities. The *Christian Advocate* printed the reactions of Protestant aid workers, journalists, and others who had been in Russia not for the mere days and weeks of Blake’s delegation, but rather years. One

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<sup>31</sup> “The Other Side of the Story,” *Christian Advocate*, June 7, 1923, 720-721.

<sup>32</sup> “Moscow and Wichita,” *Christian Advocate*, May 10, 1923, 580.

<sup>33</sup> “The Bishops in Conference,” *Christian Advocate*, May 17, 1923, 624.

observer, a London-based Russian nobleman engaged in relief work, recognized much of what Hartman published from what had appeared in official Bolshevik accounts circulating in the press. “I feel obliged to say that they show [Hartman’s] ignorance of Russia and the conditions of the Russian Church,” he stated. “Dr. Hartman’s statements prove that he believes implicitly all that was told him by the leaders of the so-called Living Church—a group of rebellious Russian priests.” When asked of the chances Blake’s group had to learn enough about religious conditions in Russia to discredit the numerous reports long circulating in the West, another Protestant aid worker responded with blunt candor: “None whatever.”<sup>34</sup>

Despite the mixed reactions within their own denomination, one of the ways Blake, Hartman, and other prominent and sympathetic Methodists would sustain their support for the renovationism was to aid its expansion into the United States. The renovationist Holy Synod, now purporting itself to be the ecclesiastical authority of the Russian Orthodox Church, saw a clear opportunity—and legitimacy—in appointing new, renovationist bishops to the church’s various dioceses. Since Evdokim could not return to America, having left his former diocese under a cloud of scandal, he advocated for the consecration of a trusted agent who knew how to use the American legal system: John Kedrovsky. In Kedrovsky the renovationists found a married clergyman who was only too willing to embrace renovationist reforms, beginning with the non-celibate episcopate. He had already proven his mettle as a tenacious legal foe against the Consistory, and ostensibly held the loyalties of a network of similarly-inclined clergy and their independent parishes. During a meeting on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1923, the renovationist synod voted to invite John Kedrovsky to Moscow to be consecrated as Archbishop of North America. At the same time, they excommunicated Platon, whom they declared “was never appointed to America and his pretensions are simply an usurpation

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<sup>34</sup> Rev. John B. Ascham, D.D., “The Truth About Russia,” *Christian Advocate*, September 27, 1923, 1182.

of power in the Russian Church... All his acts are illegal and for them he is liable to punishment before the Church and civil authorities”<sup>35</sup> Upon receiving the synod’s instructions, Kedrovsky applied for a passport, and set sail for the Soviet Union on September 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>36</sup>

Just as it explained away the religious situation in the Soviet Union during the spring and summer, *Zion’s Herald* too laid the groundwork for Methodist support behind a Kedrovsky episcopate. It began with in the ways Kedrovsky and the renovationists would connect to the pre-existing and reform-minded independent parish movement in America. After Timothy Peshkoff’s 1917 fallout with the Georgians, then his failed attempt to form an independent parish in Detroit the following year, the independent priest went back to school, enrolling at Boston University to study religious education. He did so as a Methodist. Now training to become a minister, Peshkoff accepted Hartman’s invitation to explain the extent to which American Orthodox Rus’ had already moved towards supporting the religious reformation described in *Zion’s Herald* in preceding months. After briefly explaining the historical trajectory of the Russian Church in relation to the tsarist regime, Peshkoff continued with a pessimistic picture of the Russian clerical caste, from poor rural pastors and the put-upon urban priest to corrupt, entitled bishops “paid more than the average American governor gets.” The empire’s stark economic stratification was such that “A peasant and a nobleman of Russia had just as much in common as an African Negro with a Southern gentleman.” He felt this divide had continued in America, where the Mission’s goal was “to keep the Russian peasants in ignorance.” He told the story of his work with the Georgians, a people he claimed resisted both socialism and Protestant proselytizing, and instead “wanted a reformed democratic church with Christ as the spiritual leader.” The American independent church

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<sup>35</sup> “Plaintiff’s Exhibit 11. Extracts from the Protocol of the meeting No. 13 of the [Renovationist] Holy Synod on August 23, 1923.” *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 557. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>36</sup> “Calls Platon Imposter,” *NYT*, August 31, 1923.

was a model for the kind of reform the renovationists demanded in Russia, and that which Blake and others called the Methodist Church to support. “Through my own experience I can say that the whole Russian Orthodox Church needs reformation,” Peshkoff contended. “It simply cannot continue with the same autocratic principles that it had in the czar’s time.”<sup>37</sup>

Peshkoff’s calls for Russian religious reform were echoed in *Zion’s Herald* by Methodist layman and attorney Ralph M. Frink. Frink had represented John Kedrovsky’s legal interests for nearly five years, and was instrumental in orchestrating Kedrovsky’s public relations campaign. Frink ghostwrote Kedrovsky’s public statements, and doggedly publicized each development in his client’s case in both the secular and religious presses—beginning with his own Methodist denomination. Writing in early September on the eve of his client’s departure for Moscow, Frink argued that Platon represented yet more of the same autocracy and mismanagement that doomed Alexander’s administration, and perpetuated the worst forms of tsarist corruption and monastic domination that had so minimized the laity for centuries. Platon’s faction was “relatively reactionary” while his opponents were “the more popular and progressive element of the church.” In Frink’s view, the widespread opposition to renovationism across American Orthodox Rus’ came out of an instinctive resistance to change. “The word ‘reform’ is generally unpopular, apparently because those who want to oppose any reform find it very effective to denounce it as ‘Bolshevism,’” Frink observed, though he surmised there may have been other elements at work. “But the realization that any one who opposes a bishop is denounced as a Bolshevik has resulted in making people very cautious about admitting that they advocate any reforms.” Frink felt that even slight growth in renovationist support in America could yield significant gains, especially since in his contacts with Orthodox Christians, he had sensed decided shifts in how they perceived their

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<sup>37</sup> Timothy W. Peshkoff, “The Russian Orthodox Church under the Czars,” *Zion’s Herald*, August 1, 1923, 978-9.



hierarchs. “In the old days a bishop was very nearly worshiped,” Frink recalled. “The rank and file of the Russian Church have undergone a tremendous democratic reform without realizing it.”<sup>38</sup>

Around the same time, Frink submitted a letter to *Zion's Herald* from the soon-to-be bishop—almost surely ghostwritten, if not heavily edited for effect—to outline Kedrovsky's reform agenda in unambiguous terms. “Upon my return I hope to put an end to the unhappy strife that has been almost ruining our church here,” Kedrovsky wrote, “and to upbuild the church, spiritually as well as materially, with a democratic elective administration conducted in the interest of the people, such as is now established for the whole Russian Church.” He envisioned an archdiocese in which each parish owned their own property and controlled their own finances. Each priest would be “freed as much as can be from the work of collecting money, so that he may have more time for the service of the people.” Services should be conducted in vernacular languages, so that the laity “may receive more fully its spiritual blessing.” The church would take on a full slate of social, educational, and athletic programs, provide for the sick and aged, and refrain from political activity, unless “to oppose any practise [sic] and institution not consistent with a real brotherhood of man, and to encourage every development which brings us nearer to a universal human brotherhood.” Aside from the calls for greater lay financial control and property ownership, there was little about Kedrovsky's agenda that could be considered controversial. Yet there was one exception. In Kedrovsky's church, married men could become bishops, who “should endeavor to adapt his office to the service of the people, imitating the example of the Holy Apostles, who were constantly traveling from place to place building up the church in each city.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ralph M. Frink, “The Russian Reform in America,” *Zion's Herald*, September 5, 1923, 1138-9.

<sup>39</sup> “A New Program for the Russian Church in America,” *Zion's Herald*, September 26, 1923, 1228-9.

Kedrovsky's ambitious agenda, and his relationship to Russia's religious reformation, resonated with Hartman. He penned an unsigned editorial declaring that Kedrovsky and Frink's articles in *Zion's Herald* "...reflects the tendencies of the new religious movement in Russia and shows that the reformation is spreading among the hundreds of thousands of Russians in the United States." Recent communiques had brought "the reassurance also that the reformation in Russia is very real and that it is also well under way, with all the factions of the old church now united for the work of the kingdom of God." In concert with Kedrovsky's rise in America, he felt *Zion's Herald* readers were left "...with a growing realization of the proportions of the opportunity for unselfish service which through a strange combination of circumstances has been brought to the Methodist Episcopal Church."<sup>40</sup>



Figure 6.3: John Kedrovsky's passport photograph for trip to Moscow, Fall 1923 (NARA/Ancestry.com)

John Kedrovsky spent fifteen days in Moscow. He worshipped in renovationist churches, spent time at the renovationist synod's headquarters and met with leading renovationist clergy, including Evdokim. Kedrovsky was consecrated to the episcopate by three renovationist bishops over two days in early October. The first service was held in the central Moscow *podvorye*

<sup>40</sup> "The Russian Reformation Grows in Power," *Zion's Herald*, September 26, 1923, 1233.

(representation church) of the famed Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, and the consecration liturgy in the Three Saints Church, near the Kremlin (which the Soviets would close and transform into a prison in 1927). Kedrovsky's consecrating bishops included two of the most notorious renovationist hierarchs, Benjamin (Muratovsky), who had agreed to cooperate with the Cheka and joined the renovationist movement in 1922 to escape a death sentence, and Peter (Blinov), an early renovationist leader who was among those who had pressured Tikhon into his resignation. Both were married bishops themselves.<sup>41</sup> Following his consecration, Kedrovsky dispatched cables both to his wife and to Frink, who contacted the press to announce that Kedrovsky would be returning to the United States as Archbishop of North America.<sup>42</sup>

On October 16<sup>th</sup>, a week after the consecration services, renovationist leader Alexander Vvedensky and other renovationist leaders accompanied Kedrovsky to an office of the People's Commissariat of Justice to sign a series of documents that would give Kedrovsky authority over the North American Archdiocese. The signing was witnessed by Julius Hecker, who before Kedrovsky's departure had been empowered by the New York Supreme Court to serve as a notary for any official documents Kedrovsky might carry back to the United States.<sup>43</sup> First was the *gramota* (certificate) identifying Kedrovsky as Archbishop of North America, which stated that Kedrovsky should "take possession of, occupy and/or administer any and all real property belonging to said diocese or archdiocese of said church in North America." This included the Cathedral and associated buildings, the now-dormant Immigrant Home, "all monasteries,

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<sup>41</sup> Protoierei Valerii Lavrinov, *Obnovlencheskii raskol v portretakh ego deiatelei*. Moscow: Obshchestvo liubitelei tserkovnoi istorii, 2016, 276-7 FINISH w/ Benjamin and Peter

<sup>42</sup> "Kedrovsky is Made Archbishop in Russia," *NYT*, October 14, 1923. Kedrovsky gives an account of his time in Russia in his testimony on October 23, 1924. See John S. Kedrovsky testimony, *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 63-86. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>43</sup> For the orders authorizing Hecker as commissioner over Kedrovsky's documents, see "Plaintiffs' Exhibit 8." and "Plaintiffs' Exhibit 9." The document granting authority to Kedrovsky is "Plaintiffs' Exhibit 10." *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 544-556. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

orphanages, seminaries, and any property appurtenant thereto,” and “all other real estate belonging to said church or diocese in North America, no matter in whose name the same may stand of record.”<sup>44</sup> These were paired with a document from Evdokim to resign his position as the President and Trustee of the North American Ecclesiastical Consistory, naming Kedrovsky as his replacement.<sup>45</sup> With these documents in hand, John Kedrovsky possessed a paper trail establishing his authority as a successor to Evdokim, sidestepping Alexander, Platon, and virtually everything that had happened in America since Evdokim left America in 1917.

Kedrovsky returned to New York on November 7<sup>th</sup>. The next day, he made his combative appearance at St. Nicholas Cathedral clutching the notarized documents and symbols of his episcopate, only to be swiftly deposited on the sidewalk of East 97<sup>th</sup> Street. Ralph Frink immediately went to the Sixth District Municipal Court to file a motion demanding Platon be removed and Kedrovsky’s authority be honored. From his law office in the downtown Woolworth Building, Frink issued a statement in Kedrovsky’s name claiming that he did not represent either the renovationists or the Soviet government. Frink claimed that in Moscow, “practically all the churches and clergy have united in the support of the present Holy Synod, which appointed Rev. Mr. Kedrovsky.” What was more, Kedrovsky now claimed (falsely) that he had never been suspended from the priesthood, and that the police had not forcibly removed from him from the cathedral. Rather, “Metropolitan Platon collected a crowd of about thirty people who by main force

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<sup>44</sup> “Plaintiffs’ Exhibit 10.” *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 544-556. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>45</sup> “Plaintiffs’ Exhibit 14.” *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 563. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

pushed the Rev. M. Kedrovsky out of the house.” Along with the statement, Frink confidently explained that a jury would resolve the case in a week’s time.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 6.4: John Kedrovsky after consecration as rennovationist archbishop, November 1923 (Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, EI-13 (1068))

Kedrovsky’s claims hinged on much of the same conclusions made by Blake’s delegation during their trip to Moscow the previous summer. In an unpublished letter sent to the editors of the Methodist journal *The Christian Advocate*, a publication that had sharply critiqued Blake’s efforts in Russia, Kedrovsky meticulously refuted the Platon faction’s assertions that Kedrovsky was little more than a Soviet agent. And he denied any groundswell of support for the Tikhonites. “I saw no sign of many churches siding with him,” Kedrovsky said of his visit to Moscow. “My observation was that practically all support the Holy Synod. If there were any serious split in the church in Moscow there would surely be open signs of it. Yet I saw none, though I was constantly among church people.” Nor, as was argued, was he sent as an emissary for the rennovationists’ accommodations to the Soviet state. He claimed that while in Moscow, “not once was so much as

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<sup>46</sup> “Court Acts in Row at Russian Church,” *NYT*, November 9, 1923.

a hint given to me by anybody, either on behalf of the church or government or anybody else, that I was to have any connection whatever with politics or the government or soviet propaganda or anything of that kind.” Just as Blake had done in his defense of the renovationists, Kedrovsky argued, “Is it possible that if the Holy Synod were connected with the Government, they would keep it secret from so important an official as the American Archbishop?”<sup>47</sup> Yet there were many who were prepared to prove otherwise.

Within days of Kedrovsky filing suit, Platon and his followers mobilized to publicly denounce the renovationists' incursion into America. A meeting convened at the cathedral produced a document signed by Platon, vicar bishops Stephan (Dzubay) and Aftimios (Ofiesh), as well as representatives of the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem. From their perspective, as a suspended priest who embraced renovationism to continue as a clergyman, “Kedrovsky apostatized from the Orthodox Faith and is not in communion with the Eastern Orthodox Church.” They decried the 1923 *sobor* as “...a gathering of a portion of Russian clergy and laity, who deserted the Church and were formerly known under the name of the ‘Living Church,’ who were not ashamed to betray their Mother Church persecuted by the bolsheviki [sic].” As such, they declared that “Kedrovsky is thus not a Russian Orthodox Bishop, but a representative in America of a foreign religious sect, which has no recognition or support among the citizens or residents of this country belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church.” It called upon Platon “to take all lawful measures in order to protect the Orthodox Church in America from all attacks by Kedrovsky,” and “to invite all the Orthodox in America to defend the Holy Orthodoxy from its enemies.”<sup>48</sup> A more direct editorial in the *Russian-American Orthodox Messenger* in late

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<sup>47</sup> Kedrovsky Letter to the Editor of the *Christian Advocate*, November 15, 1923. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>48</sup> “Acts of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church in America Held November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1923,” *APV*, December 31, 1923, 161-3.

November condemned Kedrovsky and his followers as Soviet agents. “The structure of **this Church** [Emphasis in original], clearly, is completely on the basis of the soviet experience of the political moment,” wrote Fr. Leonid Turkevich. As dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral and member of the Consistory, Turkevich’s stake in the controversy was personal. “And Kedrovsky, as a henchman of **that** Church, turns up here as an actual conductor of the political tendencies of the Soviet power.”<sup>49</sup>

From the onset of the renovationist incursion into American Orthodox Rus’, Platon and his backers consistently equated Kedrovsky and his followers as Bolsheviki, Orthodox Christians who allied themselves with a hostile and aggressive power that persecuted their church as a matter of basic policy. In an early 1924 interview with the European émigré newspaper *Novoe Vremya*, Platon explained that, “The Church in America is currently suffering in the same way as the Church in Russia.” He railed against what he called “Bolsheviks in cassocks [*bolsheviki v ryassakh*],” a group of clergy “with slave-like obedience” to ideologies that threatened to tear the church apart. “The onslaught of enemies of the church comes from within and without,” Platon described. Such “Bolsheviks in cassocks... drag through the courts, besmirch in the newspapers, arouse partisan passions... creating a very difficult and unbelievably grievous atmosphere of life.” To Platon, Kedrovsky represented a clear spiritual threat to American Orthodox Rus’. “I think that all the forces of hell have now thronged to America and fixed upon our Church. But thanks to the Lord, without any means at all, with a singular faith in Divine truth and our correctness, we are defending our position and not yielding to them.”<sup>50</sup>

Platon would not alone in his public attacks against Kedrovsky. Just as Kedrovsky and the renovationists relied on the backing of Hartman and other prominent American Methodists, Platon

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<sup>49</sup> “K Avantiurie Kedrovskago,” *APV*, November 30, 1923, 155.

<sup>50</sup> “Russkaia Tserkov v Amerikie,” *APV*, March 1924, 20-22.

would draw on a large and wide-reaching network of Episcopalian and Anglican supporters. These relationships hinged on decades of warm ecumenical relationships between the Russian and Anglican Churches, which had become notably closer in the United States during Platon's seven years as Archbishop of North America. Platon's Protestant surrogates operated at the highest levels of the Anglican communion, from powerful clergy across the United States to the halls of London's Lambeth Palace. These included Reverends William Chauncey Emhardt and Thomas Burgess, two prominent members of the Episcopal Church's Foreign Born Americans Division, William T. Manning, Bishop of New York, Canon John Douglas, a founder of the influential Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, and Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury. These important allies supplied Platon with critical financial support, legal advice, information, publicity, and most importantly, heightened respectability. In time, the situation with John Kedrovsky would even prompt them to supply Platon and his flock with a new spiritual home.

Platon's reliance on Episcopalian support was already well evident when John Kedrovsky stormed into the cathedral. The first call Consistory staff made upon discovering Kedrovsky in the rectory dining room was not to the police, but to Reverend Thomas Burgess. As the secretary of the Episcopal Church's Foreign-Born Americans Division, Burgess was keenly interested in supporting the Russian Archdiocese's work amongst its largely immigrant flock. "The question of the Church's duty to the foreign-born and their children is not one in which we as Christians have any choice," Burgess wrote in 1922. "We *must* treat them as neighbors and we *must* see to it that they are fed from on high, or else we are disloyal to our Master."<sup>51</sup> And while Episcopalians like Burgess were deeply interested in such missionary work amongst America's foreign-born, their

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Burgess, *Foreign-Born Americans and Their Children: Our Duty and Opportunity for God and Country from the Standpoint of the Episcopal Church* (New York: Department of Missions and Church Extension of the Episcopal Church, 1922), 78.



relationships with the Orthodox Church prompted them to steer clear of evangelism into traditionally Orthodox groups. Rather than proselytizing, they drew upon their prestige, their purse, and even their properties to support the establishment and growth of Orthodox parishes across the United States. On the local level, Episcopalian clerics enjoyed warm relationships with Orthodox priests and bishops, swapping pulpits and even joining Orthodox communities in prayer. Platon was particularly interested in fostering this relationship, on both academic and practical levels. In a 1913 article in the Episcopalian journal the *Constructive Quarterly*, Platon explicated on his firm belief in the importance of Christian unity, as well as the warm relationship between the Russian and Anglican Churches. “We need more intercourse with each other,” he wrote, “we need practical intimacy and scientific study; it is time for us to abandon our seclusion and overcome our inertia.”<sup>52</sup>

For Burgess and other Episcopalian leaders, this relationship necessitated a quick and stern condemnation of Kedrovsky in both the Episcopal and secular press. Even before Kedrovsky returned from Russia, Burgess had publicly anticipated many of the troubles Kedrovsky posed. In an editorial published in the Episcopal journal *The Spirit of Missions*, Burgess noted that the Episcopal Church had been monitoring conditions in Russia, using its sources on the ground to pass information into the West. While Tikhon was free from house arrest, many churches remained closed, and the renovationist Holy Synod had begun to issue politicized, anti-capitalist statements virtually imperceptible from state propaganda. Burgess wrote with alarm that, “The hope of the extension of Soviet principles through the ‘Living Church’ has now been shifted to America.” Kedrovsky had gone to Russia for consecration, and would surely return with documents that, “...may give the representative of the ‘Living Church’ sufficient legal pretence [sic] to cause disturbances in all Russian Churches in America.” On behalf of his church’s leadership, Burgess

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<sup>52</sup> Archbishop Bishop Platon (Rozhdestvensky), “Admitting All Impossibilities, Nevertheless Unity Is Possible,” *Constructive Quarterly*, September 1913, 431.

asked, "...the sympathetic cooperation [sic] of our clergy and people with the Russian Orthodox priests and parishes in the trying hours that seem to be before them."<sup>53</sup>

Burgess' editorial implied the extent to which he was working within the Anglican communion to raise awareness about the reality of religion in Russia. Burgess was in close contact with the offices of Archbishop of Canterbury Randall Davidson concerning the Russian situation in America. So was Rev. William Chauncey Emhardt, Burgess' colleague in the Foreign-Born Americans Division. London's Lambeth Palace had long been a conduit for information coming out of the Soviet Union concerning anti-religious persecution. Through a network of correspondents and informants across Europe and the United States, which included Burgess and Emhardt, Anglicans would considerably mold decades of international awareness about religion in Russia, providing information that made its way into sermons, church journals, polemical books, and the secular press. By the beginning of the summer, Lambeth Palace had obtained the complete minutes of the renovationist *sobor*, possessed lists of persecuted clergymen, and had lodged written protests with Soviet diplomats about specific incidents of anti-religious persecution, including the state's treatment of Tikhon.<sup>54</sup> Anglicans quickly encouraged their American counterparts to join Lambeth's efforts to denounce the rise of anti-religious violence, and in turn the renovated church. An April 1923 telegram from Davidson's chaplain, Bishop George Bell, informed Emhardt that, "British religious leaders issuing immediately united protest against religious persecution in Russia. Would you consider similar action?"<sup>55</sup> Burgess replied eight days later to inform Lambeth Palace

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<sup>53</sup> Rev. Thomas Burgess, "The Church of the Russians," *Spirit of Missions*, November 1923, 777.

<sup>54</sup> See "The Russian Church and Its Patriarch." *Broadside*, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1922. Lambeth Davidson 478 26 DSC\_0758; Letter, Krassin to Davidson and enclosures, 6 June 1922. *Ibid.*, 39-42 DSC\_0758-0762

<sup>55</sup> Bell to Emhardt, April 11, 1923 (copy of telegram). Lambeth Palace Library [LPL], Randall Thomas Davidson Papers [RTDP], Vol. 478, 121. [DSC\_0780.JPG]

that the Federal Council of Churches had lodged a suitable protest to the Soviet government via a cable to the Latvian embassy, “and further action will be taken shortly.”<sup>56</sup>

Burgess’ efforts showed that American Episcopalians were part of the significant and global network of activists with direct knowledge about religious persecution in Russia, and who intended to use that information to protect and support Russian Orthodox communities abroad. When John Kedrovsky emerged in New York in November 1923, Episcopalians were ready to spring into action. Within a day of Kedrovsky’s arrival at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Bishop Manning issued a statement to announce that “I feel it my duty to call on all Christian peoples for assistance and to state clearly that John Kedrovsky has no legal or canonical right to attempt to seize authority over the North American diocese.”<sup>57</sup> With the backing of his church’s National Council, William Chauncey Emhardt joined Manning in denouncing Kedrovsky. He also reached out to Canon John A. Douglas, editor of the Orthodox-Anglican ecumenical journal *Christian East*. In a letter to Douglas shortly after Kedrovsky stormed into the cathedral, Emhardt wrote that, “the self-termed ‘archbishop’ Kedrovsky is making no end of trouble... Tomorrow (Sunday) I preach in the Russian Cathedral to give official backing of the National Council the claims of Platon.”<sup>58</sup>

In the statement Emhardt read that Sunday to embolden the widespread opposition of Kedrovsky, National Council president Bishop Thomas F. Gailor asserted that “the Soviet Church, being unable in this country to inflict upon Platon the indignities and brutalities with which they treated the Patriarch Tikhon in Russia, will try to humiliate his representative, Platon, and destroy his church.” Gailor recalled that Platon had long been a friend to the Episcopal Church during his time both in New York and Russia. “I am sure that thoughtful Christians in America will continue

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<sup>56</sup> Burgess to the Archbishop of Canterbury, April 19, 1923. LPL RTDP, Vol. 478, 145. [DSC\_0781.JPG]

<sup>57</sup> “Court Acts in Row at Russian Church,” *NYT*, November 9, 1923.

<sup>58</sup> W.C. Emhardt to J.A. Douglas, November 17, 1923. LPL J.A. Douglas Papers [JADP], Vol. 19, 62. [0985.JPG]

to give Metropolitan Platon their confidence and support,” Gailor wrote, “and refuse to recognize or tolerate the emissary of the new Soviet Church.”<sup>59</sup> Thomas Burgess echoed fears of a Soviet takeover, warning in a statement to the *New York Times* that, “Kedrovsky is to be followed by two Red Bishops, four Red archpriests and forty Red priests, whom he will appoint in the place of the present Bishops and pastors, if he succeeds in getting control of the church.” To do so, Burgess charged, Kedrovsky was “well supplied with Soviet money.”<sup>60</sup> Something needed to be done.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1924, Fr. Leonid Turkevich and Bishop Theophilus (Pashkovsky) celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and a service of thanksgiving (*molieben*) at All Saints Russian Orthodox Church on Detroit’s east side as ceremonial inauguration of the 4<sup>th</sup> All-American *Sobor*, a council intended to reiterate the archdiocese’s unquestioned support for Platon. Now back in the archdiocese’s hands after protracted civil property litigation, All Saints was once again the headquarters of the Michigan deanery. Its relatively small sanctuary, however, was not appropriate for a meeting of the 147 clergy and lay delegates who had traveled to the Motor City. When the day’s services concluded, the delegates traveled west to the downtown parish house of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, on Woodward Avenue, Detroit’s main thoroughfare, to open the council’s first plenary session. Convening the council had been no small task. In the weeks preceding the council, Burgess had circulated a letter to every bishop of his church asking for funds to support the Russian *sobor*. “A real opportunity is before us in the name of our Church of giving a helping hand in an emergency which will vitally affect the spiritual and Americanizing welfare of over 3,000,000 members of the Eastern Orthodox Church in America,” Burgess wrote. “Unless

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<sup>59</sup> “Statement With Regard to the Holy Orthodox Church of Russia and Its Legitimate Representative in the United States,” *Living Church*, November 27, 1923, 84

<sup>60</sup> “Says Kedrovsky Heads Influx of Red Priests,” *NYT*, November 11, 1923.

this step be taken this great Church for 100 years existent in America will disintegrate and its really fine people degenerate into godlessness and possible anarchy.”<sup>61</sup>

Burgess’ enthusiastic support for the council, the financial support of those who answered his appeal, and the fact that the *sobor* was to meet in an Episcopal parish house fed rumors that Platon intended to merge his beleaguered archdiocese with his well-heeled Protestant allies. Platon had explained in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Novii Mir* that, “We are ready to unite with the Episcopalians, but not to merge with them.”<sup>62</sup> However, his clear esteem and close cooperation with the Episcopal Church caused some to misconstrue his meaning. The *New York Times* declared on the eve of the *sobor* that, “A call to Russian Orthodox priests throughout the United States to secede from the Russian Orthodox Church of Russia and form an independent organization under the auspices of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America is imminent.” The *Times* reported that Platon had collaborated with Burgess to organize the union, which had received Bishop Manning’s blessing.<sup>63</sup> Burgess responded to the *Times* to make clear that his church intended nothing of the sort. “Our Church is trying to play the part of a friendly brother in this difficult time for the Russian Church,” Burgess stated. Though the two churches had grown closer during “the attempted intrusion of Kedrovsky,” Burgess felt that “What the Russians need is confidence and friendship.”<sup>64</sup> This friendship in part translated into Episcopalians paying the bulk of the travel costs for most of the *sobor*’s delegates.

The Detroit *sobor*’s most significant task was to restore some semblance of administrative regularity to American Orthodox Rus’. Platon could no longer rely on regular communication with

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<sup>61</sup> “Russians to Set Up New Church Here,” *NYT*, March 30, 1924.

<sup>62</sup> “Authorities Differ on Russian Church,” *NYT*, April 2, 1924.

<sup>63</sup> “Russians to Set Up New Church Here,” *NYT*, March 30, 1924.

<sup>64</sup> “Authorities Differ on Russian Church,” *NYT*, April 2, 1924.

Tikhon, nor trust that what he received in return was not state-produced forgery. Kedrovsky's litigation loomed on the court docket, placing the future of the archdiocese in doubt. The delegates who gathered in Detroit were now open to new solutions. They turned to Tikhon's instructions to determine their path. In 1905, as Archbishop of North America, Tikhon had proposed a forward-thinking model of autonomy for the American Mission, outlining an ecclesiastical structure that both accounted for the ethnic diversity of his archdiocese and anticipated autocephaly from the European mother churches. Then, in November 1920, the patriarch issued an *ukaz* with instructions for bishops and dioceses that found themselves outside Russia's borders and out of contact with the church's hierarchy. In such cases, "...the bishop immediately enters into relations with the bishops of neighboring dioceses for the purpose of organizing a higher instance of ecclesiastical authority for several dioceses in similar conditions (in the form either of a temporary Supreme Church government or a Metropolitan district, or anything else)."<sup>65</sup> Given the ambiguous situation brought by war, revolution, and Bolshevism in Russia, and the immediate threat John Kedrovsky faced in America, the archdiocesan leadership now saw their future along this path, an unwanted, yet necessary separation from the Russian Orthodox Church. In the words of Platon's legal counsel, Valery Greaves, the archdiocese, "...must exist self-dependently (on our own) in the future. No one must either appoint or recall or dismiss Bishops without the approval of the North American Orthodox Church. We must establish the Church Authority ourselves."<sup>66</sup>

By the end of the first day of plenary sessions, the *sobor* had passed two resolutions. First, they reiterated their support for Metropolitan Platon, emphatically stating that he alone was the head of the North American Archdiocese and could not be absented from his post without the

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<sup>65</sup> [https://www.synod.com/synod/engdocuments/enuk\\_ukaz362.html](https://www.synod.com/synod/engdocuments/enuk_ukaz362.html) russian  
[https://www.synod.com/Istoria/ukaz\\_362.html](https://www.synod.com/Istoria/ukaz_362.html) [I'm working on this note]

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Afonsky (1994), 92.

consent and confirmation of his archdiocese. Then, and most importantly, the council voted to temporarily sever their ecclesiastical relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church. While they retained spiritual bonds and Eucharistic communion with their mother church, the North American Archdiocese now considered itself to be temporarily self-autonomous. A telegram would be sent to Tikhon informing him of the decision, stating that, “these actions were taken as a way of self-preservation.”<sup>67</sup> In a letter to Burgess, Platon expressed that the *sobor* “...certainly will mark a new epoch in the history of our Church in America. Our Church will never forget the unselfish assistance of the Episcopal Church, which made the Convention possible and successful.”<sup>68</sup> A message was dispatched in Platon’s name to President Calvin Coolidge at the White House informing him that the “Orthodox Church in America” had declared itself to be self-ruling (*samoupravliaiushchiisia*), “and henceforth will act as a national American religious self-sufficient structure.” Platon offered his blessings to Coolidge and all Americans, expressing “our church’s feeling of devotion and boundless loyalty to the United States, our second great nation.”<sup>69</sup>

The Detroit *sobor* occurred in the shadow of Platon’s legal battle against Kedrovsky, which had lingered on the court docket in New York since the previous November. *Kedrovsky vs. Rojdesvensky* would reach trial in October 1924, nearly a year after Kedrovsky returned from Moscow as a married renovationist bishop. The case was tried before Justice John Ford, a Tammany Hall progressive who had sat on the court for nearly two decades. The case would ask a non-Orthodox judge with little or no previous exposure to Orthodoxy to rapidly attain intricate understandings of the church’s ecclesiastical structures and Orthodox teachings, information that was not always readily available in English. In Ford’s courtroom, complex concepts of Orthodox

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<sup>67</sup> Afonsky (1994), 97.

<sup>68</sup> “Real Co-operation Between the Russian Orthodox Church and Ours,” *Spirit of Missions*, May 1924, 351.

<sup>69</sup> “Telegramma Sobora Prezidentu,” *Pravoe Dielo*, April 5, 1924.

theology and ecclesiology would be explained either by well-meaning outsiders hesitant to claim expertise, or by Orthodox voices who struggled to express internalized concepts deeply felt, but rarely explained—much less in legal jargon.

What was more, the proceedings showed that Orthodox clergy serving in the United States often did not possess the erudition and academic rigor that complex property litigation required. More established American denominations, with their seminaries and schools and networks of colleges and universities, could draw on professors and expert clergy who could comfortably express themselves in terms and depth legible and appropriate for the courtroom, and in clear English. The Russian Archdiocese had but a small seminary, which had closed prior to the 1923-24 academic year. While it certainly had clergy who could speak cogently and expertly as to the church's teachings and ecclesiology, men who had trained at the highest levels of Imperial Russia's tiered seminary system, these men consistently needed to rely on translators, and were often treated with far less respect and authority. In some cases, Russian witnesses who possessed little more than basic seminary educations of lesser quality—including Kedrovsky himself—were expected to speak on topics far beyond their expertise. Their frequent and significant errors were nonetheless taken as fact. The Kedrovsky cases did not litigate the fullness of the Orthodox Church's teachings, but rather a jumbled form approximated from evidence and on the witness stand.

From the outset of the first hearing, Ford showed that he would not be a passive observer in his court's proceedings. He described the case as “a strange controversy. I mean strange to me, of course. Litigation like this does not often come along, and I want to hear and know all that there is to know about it.”<sup>70</sup> Throughout the hearings, which lasted from late October until mid-November, Ford proved a curious listener, though more often a frequent and active participant as

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<sup>70</sup> Hearing transcript, October 23, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 49. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.



a parade of witnesses took the stand in his courtroom. The long days of testimony blurred into a tedious and often confusing attempt to form a cohesive narrative about what had happened both in Moscow and the United States between 1917 and 1923. Ordinary priests were asked to speak as near-academic experts in Orthodox ecclesiology, theology, and church history. Journalists, soldiers, and foreign missionaries who had spent time in Russia—not all of whom spoke Russian—were asked to speak on the tenets of Bolshevism, the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, the inner workings of both the imperial and Bolshevik governments, and the state of religious life in the Soviet Union. Ford proved equal parts curious and exasperated, taking moments to consult with counsels and witnesses alike as to what precisely he was being asked to adjudicate. (“Just to clear up the ground as we go along,” Ford interjected as Mahony questioned Kedrovsky. “Your case is dependent upon the authority of that Sobor in 1923, is it?”<sup>71</sup>) Taking a broad and permissive approach to accepting both testimony and evidence, Ford wanted to learn as much as he could about the “strange” case, even if it crossed the line into hearsay or mundanity.

Though ostensibly arguing a property case, counsels Mahony and Frink were in effect asking Ford to use the cathedral as a surrogate to wade through the confusion of Russian church life in the Soviet Union during 1923. Ford’s ruling would determine the highest ecclesiastical authority of the Russian Orthodox Church, and by extension, grant either Platon or Kedrovsky authority over North America. Mahony’s argument rested on four fundamental facts. First, he argued that the 1923 Sobor had been illegally convoked by a renegade, schismatic church body openly supported by the violently anti-religious Bolshevik government. As such, the renovationists’ appointment of John Kedrovsky as Archbishop of North America had been illicit, as it held no religious authority. Third, John Kedrovsky could never be considered a valid Orthodox bishop, as

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<sup>71</sup> Testimony, John S. Kedrovsky, October 23, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 64. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

he was a married man. And finally, the broad-based rejection of the renovationists' attempts to supplant Patriarch Tikhon showed that the patriarch was the accepted leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, and in turn held full authority to appoint Metropolitan Platon to North America. In contrast, Frink held close to the renovationist argument that Tikhon had willingly abdicated his position in 1923, meaning the Second All-Russian Sobor was a legal and representative body to determine a new course for the Russian Church. Kedrovsky held well-ordered documentation backing his claim, and was backed by the testimony of outside observers who could attest to purported religious freedom in Russia. To Frink, Platon's claims amounted to little more than sour grapes, an attempt to normalize irregularity and unseat the rightful leader of American Orthodox Rus', Archbishop John Kedrovsky.

Mahony's witnesses included several missionary priests who had returned to Russia before 1917, only to reappear in America once anti-religious violence took hold. Fr. John Chepeleff left Odessa in 1922 after the arrests and murders of priests and bishops became too hard to bear. He had watched as government officials stripped priests of their robes and put them to work extracting salt from the Black Sea, cleaning water pipes, and "...all kinds of hard menial work."<sup>72</sup> Fr. Jason Kappanadze, whose work in Cleveland had included establishing the first Orthodox parishes in Southeastern Michigan, spent the early Bolshevik years in Tbilisi. He returned to America in 1921, explaining to Ford that, "...I knew that I would have been shot, and all my associates are shot now. The bishop under whom I served, and all his clergymen and my relatives, two priests are shot now. That was the reason I left. I had a presentiment that I would be shot, and I had to leave that country." As the treasurer of a Tbilisi cathedral, Kappanadze claimed firsthand knowledge of how the Bolsheviks had seized church valuables during the famine. "Those confiscated properties never

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<sup>72</sup> Testimony, John Chepeleff, October 29, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 300. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

came to the famine stricken people,” he claimed. Instead, the money “...was squandered on propaganda.” In Frink’s cross-examination, the lawyer objected to Kappanadze using the word “persecution” to describe state religious policy, and even impugned the priest’s integrity for fleeing when others were being imprisoned or shot. “And you thought it was your duty as a priest to run away as soon as you saw you might get in trouble?” Frink asked. “Yes, sir, I ran away,” Kappanadze responded with disdain. “You are satisfied with that?”<sup>73</sup>

While witnesses like Kappanadze and Chepeleff could give firsthand testimony of how the Bolshevik persecution of religion impacted far-flung outposts of the church, Bishop Theophilus (Pashkovsky) could offer direct testimony as to the plight of Patriarch Tikhon, as well as to the veracity of his directives concerning Platon and the Archdiocese of North America. One of the most experienced American missionaries, Theodore (Fyodor) Pashkovsky was a *popovich*, a graduate of the Kiev Theological Seminary, and who then came to America in 1894 as a lay *psalomshchik*. He married the niece of the Serbian-American priest Sebastian Dabovich, then was ordained to the priesthood in 1897. Serving in San Francisco, Theophilus became a key assistant to Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin) in the diocesan administration, then returned to Russia alongside Tikhon in late 1906. In 1922, as a widower who accepted monastic tonsure, the now-Fr. Theophilus was serving as Tikhon’s personal assistant. In this capacity, he served as the translator for the meetings between Tikhon and YMCA workers Ethan Colton and John R. Mott during the patriarch’s house arrest.

Theophilus recalled that during the initial period of Tikhon’s imprisonment, he could visit the patriarch with state approval. In time, however, Theophilus was forced to shed his cassock and dress as an ordinary workman, “...in ragged clothing, too, so that no one would suspect me.” By

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<sup>73</sup> Testimony, Jason R. Kappanadze, October 29, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 278-291. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

this point, the Cheka widely suspected links between Tikhon and American agents, searching his apartment for letters, newspapers, and other documents originating in the West.<sup>74</sup> Through Mott and Colton, Tikhon had given a somewhat muddled oral approval for Platon's jurisdiction over North America, though it was agreed that it would be dangerous to place the directive in writing. "This proved correct," Colton wrote in a May 1922 letter describing the meeting, "for my papers were searched at the border."<sup>75</sup> Knowing Theophilus would too return to America in the coming days, Tikhon asked him to come to his residence for documentation of Platon's appointment, which Theophilus was then to take to émigré church authorities in Serbia and Berlin on his way to the United States. But when Theophilus went to the patriarchal residence on May 5<sup>th</sup>, the day before his departure, "...the soldiers were around his house, and I was told if I would go, I would be arrested by the Cheka, and I was on the eve of going to America." Theophilus left without critical documents that could have ended Kedrovsky's litigation before it began.<sup>76</sup>

Kedrovsky's paper trail proved far stronger. While Soviet police and border control kept Tikhon's intentions to oral instructions passed across continents, Kedrovsky could count on official seals, clear legal titles, and copious documentation. Frink entered as evidence a steady progression of legal documents, from minutes of the renovationist synod's deliberations on Kedrovsky's appointment to legal documents giving Julius Hecker power to witness the signing of documents in Moscow, alongside Kedrovsky's ordination certificate and associated documents giving him power of attorney over the North American Archdiocese's property holdings.

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<sup>74</sup> Testimony, Theophilus Pashkovsky, October 30, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 318-319. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>75</sup> Exhibit 23, letter, E.T. Colton to W.W. Bouimistrow, May 4, 1922. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 568-569. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>76</sup> Testimony, Theophilus Pashkovsky, October 30, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 322. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

More importantly, Kedrovsky had an eyewitness. Though Kedrovsky could speak to his own experiences during his time in Moscow, Frink placed just as much, if not more importance in Leo Hartman's account of the *sobor*. Hartman's testimony comprised of his written answers to questions submitted by both Frink and Mahony, and went into significant detail about his travels in Russia. Hartman reported that he and Blake were, "...invited to occupy seats on the platform of the Sobor, that is, we were accorded something in the nature of honorary membership and both attended its sessions frequently during our stay and were constantly in conference with its members." Hartman claimed that the council's sessions, "...were deliberate, dignified and devout and the deliberations appeared to be the free and untrammelled expression of its own mind and conscience and its decisions indicated a sincere attempt to promote spirituality, intelligence and a program of social service in the Russian Orthodox Church." He claimed that the church was, "...functioning in an orderly and regular manner." Despite widespread accounts to the contrary, including those of Orthodox priests who appeared in Ford's courtroom, Hartman maintained that throughout his travels in Russia, he had repeatedly encountered churches packed with believers and clergymen who comported themselves in a dignified and official manner. Unambiguously, he claimed that, "I saw no interference with church activities on the part of anyone nor any suspension of church activities."<sup>77</sup>

Across the days of testimony, Ford clearly began to see the proceedings as a theater of the absurd. Hartman freely admitted that could not understand a single word of what he had heard in Russia, and was basing his opinion purely on visual observation and what little was translated for him after the fact. Still, Hartman was completely confident that he had grasped the truth about Russia. Incensed by its almost fantastical qualities, Mahony continually objected to elements of

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<sup>77</sup> Testimony, Lewis O. Hartman. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 107-124. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

Hartman's testimony as it was read in court, yet Ford expressed interest in hearing Hartman's full statements before determining his testimony's admissibility. After another of Hartman's unequivocal assertions denying any state interference into the church's activities, Ford finally yielded to Mahony. "What can a stranger who does not speak the language," Ford exclaimed, "of what weight is his opinion as to how the Russian people will take a great event of this kind?"<sup>78</sup> Ford's skepticism would not be limited to Hartman. In an earlier and equally telling moment, when Mahony objected to line of questioning in which Frink queried Kedrovsky whether he had "see[n] any evidence of a schism" within the Russian Church while in Moscow, Ford sustained the objection, musing that "Perhaps he went blindfolded." Mahony interjected with a rare moment of inquisitive levity: "How can he see a schism?"<sup>79</sup>

Ford issued his opinion on December 24<sup>th</sup>, deciding in Platon's favor. He based his ruling on the theory that since Platon held possession of the cathedral, Kedrovsky would be required to prove his credentials to dispossess Platon of the property. In Ford's view, Kedrovsky had not met the burden. "It is settled that the Courts must keep as far away as possible from theological questions and purely ecclesiastical disputes," Ford wrote, "but when the adjudication of property rights requires such examination, they will not hesitate to push their inquiries just as far into doctrinal fields as the necessities of the case require."<sup>80</sup> In this case, Ford placed the onus on Kedrovsky to prove that the 1923 *sobor* had been legitimate. Ford determined the council had been held, "...in a foreign country which has not yet emerged from the chaos of external war and internal

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<sup>78</sup> Testimony, Lewis O. Hartman. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 122. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>79</sup> Testimony, John S. Kedrovsky, October 23, 1924. *Court of Appeals of the State of NY-Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky and Turkevich* (1924), 77. RBWP UW Box 7, Folder 5.

<sup>80</sup> "Judge's Decision," *APV*, July-December 1924, 55. Also see Rev. R.F. Lau, D.D., "The Decision in John Kedrovsky vs. Metropolitan Platon by Justice Ford," *Living Church*, January 31, 1925, 449.

strife and whose government is not even recognized by our own.” Accepting Mahony’s argument that Tikhon remained the recognized head of the Russian Church, Ford determined that as Tikhon had not convened, nor presided over the Sobor, “That shifts the burden of proof of proving its regularity and hence its authority on the [sic] to plaintiffs.”<sup>81</sup> This is not to say that Ford was prepared to make a doctrinal statement on the renovationists’ legitimacy. “This civil tribunal is not going to say that the sobor of 1923 was schismatic,” Ford noted.

That is the function of the higher church authorities. It surely is not mine. But I do say that the defendants and their adherents have reasonable ground for holding the sobor schismatic and hence for adhering to the church of Tikhon, the old church which has the undoubted right to the use of the trust properties.<sup>82</sup>

In Ford’s view, Kedrovsky’s ecclesiastical credentials were “valid on their face,” yet would need to be legally verified. Such a case had not been made. Ford emphasized that Hartman’s statements verifying Kedrovsky’s claim to authority proved least persuasive. “Dr. Hartman’s deposition as little probative value upon this point,” Ford wrote.

Indeed, very little of his testimony is other than hearsay. This is not the slightest reflection upon his veracity or good faith. He is a Methodist clergyman who does not speak Russian. He attended the sobor as an invited guest or honorary guest. He doubtless testified truthfully to what occurred in the sobor as he understood the proceedings and expressed his honest views upon its regularity and good intention. But those views in the nature of things must have been founded upon what was told him. His opportunities to learn the real inwardness of this Russian convocation were obviously limited in no slight degree.<sup>83</sup>

Ford pored over a translation of the 1923 council’s minutes, finding nothing to convince him it had been legally convoked by the imprisoned patriarch, nor that it had any connection to the guidelines set out for subsequent *sobors* in 1917. “Indeed the Sobor’s fulsome praise of the Soviet Government and all that it had done and proposer to do and its unserved pledge of loyalty to the

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<sup>81</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 53.

<sup>82</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 59.

<sup>83</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 53.

dictatorship,” Ford argued, “remind one of a rabid partisan, political convention rather than of a supreme ecclesiastic body having the spiritual care of eighty million souls.”<sup>84</sup> Ford believed there was nothing in the council’s decisions that could be used to argue for the unity of the church in America. To Ford, “...the acts of the sobor of 1923 point to schism from the ancient church for whose benefit the trust [binding the use of the properties in question] was created.” Ford looked for proof of that trust in a catechism printed by the Consistory in 1901 for use in the parochial schools of American Orthodox Rus’. Elucidating a sense of Orthodox ecclesiology from a small pamphlet meant for children, Ford deduced that to a Russian Orthodox Christian, “...his church is the reservoir of all spiritual gifts and authority from God to men. It is placed in the keeping of the hierarchy. They alone can dispense the divine favors it contains.”<sup>85</sup> While he would not explicitly denounce Kedrovsky and his church as schismatic, Ford ultimately concluded that Platon had every right to believe as much and in turn reject Kedrovsky’s claim to his position.

Ford too expressed his opinion that Kedrovsky represented a clear and grave Bolshevik threat to a religious institution based in America. As such, Ford suspected that Kedrovsky’s success in America, drawing on the support of a church Ford deemed “a product of the Russian dictatorship,” would have grave implications for a nation only four years removed from its first Red Scare. “The property used by the Russian Church totals in value an immense sum,” Ford wrote. “If the Soviet authorities can gain control of all these, what a base for their revolutionary propaganda they will have secured.”<sup>86</sup> The Bolsheviks’ aspirations to carry their red banner across the globe were well known, and to Ford’s mind, their teachings were “all the more dangerous when insidiously carried on in the guise of religious doctrine by agents garbed in the reverential

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<sup>84</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 55.

<sup>85</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 58.

<sup>86</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 59.



vestments of a great church.”<sup>87</sup> In sum, not only did Platon have a right to the property, but the American judiciary had every responsibility to ensure those rights to prevent global revolution. Platon would keep his cathedral; Kedrovsky’s case was summarily dismissed.

Kedrovsky was predictably outraged by the outcome, privately fuming against both Platon and Ford. “I see that Platon Rozhdestvensky got very nice Christmas present,” he wrote in a January letter to Frink, apparently in a playful mood. “[The] Russian Menshevik [minority] company both [sic—bought] for him a ford. Not on four wheel [sic] but on two feet, running not with gasoline but with moonshine. We must destroy that funny car.”<sup>88</sup> For the time being, Kedrovsky could do little but file an appeal, then wait for the case to once again meander to the top of the civil court docket. He too awaited decisions in other cases, namely one concerning his own parish in Hartford. “My case in Hartford will be on April 1, 1925, that means that this Easter Sunday I will be without the Church, and my family without the support.”<sup>89</sup> Such was the lot of an independent bishop.

The summer of 1925 saw further strife at the cathedral, including the unexpected incursion, and subsequent jailing of Bishop Adam (Philippovsky) after he and his followers barricaded themselves in the complex. With Adam had been ejected and the cathedral re-consecrated that autumn, Platon awaited yet another date in court with John Kedrovsky.<sup>90</sup> The appeal reached the New York Supreme Court in November. Just as Frink had done the year before, he argued the case around the convoluted religious situation in Russia in 1923. Leaning heavily on Hartman’s testimony, Frink maintained that with Tikhon’s abdication and imprisonment, the renovationist

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<sup>87</sup> “Judge’s Decision,” *APV*, July-December 1924, 62.

<sup>88</sup> Kedrovsky to Frink, January 23, 1925 John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>89</sup> Kedrovsky to Frink, March 16, 1925 John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>90</sup> [NOTE: This is the opening of the introduction to the dissertation—see other document]

*sobor* had been legally convoked, and had impaneled its Holy Synod as the valid ecclesiastical leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church. Frink argued that this synod alone had sole authority to appoint John Kedrovsky to North America. In contrast, Frink maintained Platon's credentials had been little more than an oral authorization—dispatched through Ethan Colton of the YMCA in a game of transatlantic ecclesiastical telephone—and held no legal validity. Arguing for Platon, attorney Thomas Mahoney outlined that the renovationists had been resoundingly rejected by the Russian faithful, and had been almost entirely supplanted following Tikhon's release from Lubyanka Prison. From that moment, most believers had accepted Tikhon's abdication as politically coerced, and like the patriarch, moved on as if it had never happened. The steady stream of formerly renovationist clergy who quickly repented back into the Tikhonite fold too showed that much had been swiftly forgotten. Mahoney argued that such consensus showed Tikhon was, and remained the head of the Russian Church until his death, and as his chosen representative in North America, Platon held valid and unquestionable authority over the archdiocese.

In their November 27<sup>th</sup> decision in the case, the New York Supreme Court overturned Ford's 1924 ruling by a 4-1 margin. The justices found that Ford had ruled out of anti-communist emotion, and not the bare facts of the case. Acceding to legal precedent that the court was solely competent to defer to the highest ascertainable ecclesiastical authority, the appeals court referred to the potent combination of Kedrovsky's documents and Hartman's eyewitness testimony to determine that the renovationists had indeed supplanted Tikhon. Thus, the renovationist synod, and not the patriarch had the authority to appoint a ruling bishop for North America. "It is not disputed that the Supreme Church Administration [the renovationist Holy Synod] was the *de facto* administration of the Russian Church," the court found. "Dr. Hartman stated this was so and he could state it from actual observation." This was enough for the court to deny Platon's claims.

To set aside the actions of the second Sobor under these conditions in favor of the shadowy claim of the defendant Rojdesvensky, on the theory that the doctrinal necessities of the Russian Church require it, would put a civil tribunal of New York in ascendancy over the ecclesiastical authority in the decision of a purely ecclesiastical question with which it can have no concern.<sup>91</sup>

The court's sole dissent came from Justice Francis Martin. "[Kedrovsky] is the servant of a group who have reached a position of power in their church organization through the revolution in Russia and what appear to be questionable means," Martin wrote. "It is extraordinary that they should have the aid of a court of equity to displace those who are administering the trust strictly as it was intended to be administered."<sup>92</sup> Yet in the eyes of the State of New York, St. Nicholas Cathedral now belonged to John Kedrovsky.

Platon delivered a farewell sermon at the cathedral on November 29, though he would retain possession of the complex until his appeal was heard.<sup>93</sup> In the meantime, his lawyers and surrogates like Episcopalian William Chauncey Emhardt dispatched messages across the Orthodox world to garner support for Platon's cause. Through Emhardt, Platon obtained statements from the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem the Archbishop of Athens, and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR). In a January 1926 letter to the Court of Appeals, ROCOR's First Hierarch, Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky), wrote from his church's headquarters in Sremsky-Karovtsy, Serbia that, "John Kedrovsky is an agent of the bolsheviks [sic] and comes by appointment of the dissenting Synod of the Living Church, which usurped the Title of the Holy Synod at the time of the empire." Reiterating that Tikhon remained the head of the church, he informed the court that "...Metropolitan Platon is acknowledged as [the Head of the Orthodox Eastern Church in America] by the Council of 37 Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church outside

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<sup>91</sup> Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky 214 A.D. 483, November 27, 1925

<sup>92</sup> Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky 214 A.D. 483, November 27, 1925

<sup>93</sup> "Platon to Retain Rectory," *NYEP*, November 30, 1925.

of Russia.” Antony warned that, “The deposition of the Metropolitan Platon by the Court would be an act of a real unjustness having neither canonical nor lawful reason.”<sup>94</sup>

The letters supporting Platon arrived to coincide with the reopening of Kedrovsky’s appeal, which was heard beginning on January 20, 1926. Argued much along the lines of the previous iterations of the case, the six justices of the New York Court of Appeals filed a unanimous decision in Kedrovsky’s favor on March 30.<sup>95</sup> Achieving what portended to be a final victory after nearly a decade of litigation, Kedrovsky issued a statement through Frink expressing satisfaction that the decision “ended the long controversy over the succession of the legal authority in the Russian church since the Russian revolution,” and prepared to enter St. Nicholas as Metropolitan of North America.<sup>96</sup> Flanked by a police sergeant at the cathedral steps on Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Frink succeeded in evicting the remnants of Platon’s Consistory. Determined not to repeat the spectacle of Adam’s fortification the year before, Platon was satisfied to leave the premises quietly and let the court process once again take its course. “I will say this,” Platon told the *New York Times*, “I am absolutely confident that eventually in America truth must triumph. Strong in that faith, I am willing to allow future events to speak for themselves.”<sup>97</sup>

For the moment, however, Kedrovsky had at long last earned the legal legitimacy he so craved. “He can now clamp his mitre firmly on his head,” the *New York Evening Post* noted, “grasp his crook and walk with true ecclesiastical dignity from the residence adjoining the cathedral to the high altar.”<sup>98</sup> Yet Kedrovsky soon discovered it would not be so easy, nor would there be a mitre for his head. While Platon had gone quietly, he had not left empty-handed. When Kedrovsky

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<sup>94</sup> Antony letter January 10, 1926/December 28, 1925. RBWP Box 1, Folder 54. Antony too was in contact with Lambeth Palace concerning the renovationists [FINISH—SEE VOLUME 5, ANTONY PAPERS]

<sup>95</sup> Kedrovsky v. Rojdesvensky, 242 N.Y. 547

<sup>96</sup> “Kedrovsky Wins Post as Russian Prelate,” *NYT*, April 1, 1926.

<sup>97</sup> “Kedrovsky Takes Russian Cathedral,” *NYT*, April 3, 1926.

<sup>98</sup> “Soviet Bishop Wins Russian Church Here,” *NYEP*, April 3, 1926.

began preparations for the following morning's Sunday services, he discovered Platon had taken the vestments, liturgical vessels, and other items necessary for worship.<sup>99</sup> Though Kedrovsky had won the cathedral, Platon intended to give him precisely, and only that.

Platon's backers quickly began preparations against a possible onslaught of new Kedrovsky litigation, worried that the legal precedents set in New York could be used to secure other properties across American Orthodox Rus'. In May, Platon set off for Serbia to meet with the ROCOR synod. Shortly before his departure, he issued an open letter, published and disseminated as a broadside. He instructed parishes to return the deeds of their properties into the names of their local trustees, reversing years of work to enforce the 1909 archdiocesan statute. Platon hoped to cripple Kedrovsky's legal strategy by forcing him to file property suits for each individual parish, necessitating hundreds of cases in several dozen states and territories. Platon wrote that, "...whatever the final decision of the court may be [in New York], parishes cannot fear for the ultimate fate of their unalienable properties... I hope that all parishes, not wasting time, transfer their parishes into their own name. They can do this through their own local lawyers."<sup>100</sup>

Mounting a defense against Kedrovsky meant organizing and strategizing outside New York. In Chicago, Bishop Theophilus (Pashkovsky) was instrumental in coordinating resources and information for parishes feared vulnerable to Kedrovsky's challenges. Theophilus worried it would include his own, Louis Sullivan-designed Holy Trinity Cathedral, which like St. Nicholas in New York was one of the showpiece temples of American Orthodox Rus'. Yet there were already cases underway across the continent. In the Pacific Northwest, Kedrovsky filed suit for eleven properties in Alaska, as well as others in Washington, Oregon, and California. And during

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<sup>99</sup> "Loss of Vestments Deters Archbishop," *NYT*, April 4, 1926.

<sup>100</sup> Broadside, "Arhipastyrskoe obrashchenie v-preosviashchennieishago mitropolia platona vsem pastyrym i pasomym sever-amerikanskoi tserkvi," May 18, 1926. RBWP UW Box 1, Folder 69.

the summer of 1924, he attempted to install his own Bishop of Alaska, tapping now-independent priest Vladimir Alexandrof as “bishop-elect” over parishes Kedrovsky did not yet control.

Reaction against Alexandrof and Kedrovsky was swift and negative. These communities banded together to raise \$500 (about \$7000 today) to retain a Seattle lawyer to manage the cases. A parish meeting held in Seattle the day after Alexandrof served legal notice on the pastor of the St. Spiridon parish drew 158 parishioners, who unanimously passed a series of resolutions denouncing Alexandrof and expressing allegiance to Platon, and moved to protect their parish property by re-deeding it in the name of Platon and the parish trustees. In late December, Alexandrof managed to briefly take control of the parish in Portland and hold Christmas services according to the Gregorian (new) calendar, requiring swift intervention from nearby clergy to convene a parish meeting and sway the church back into Platon’s fold.<sup>101</sup> And far to the northwest, Alaskan clergy and laity held similarly strong opinions about challenges to their properties. An open letter to Alexandrof sent in early September of 1924 informed their purported bishop-elect that “The Alaskan priests and churches are in receipt of your circular letter couched in questionable language and innuendo.” They explained to Alexandrof that, “We profess the true Grecco-Russian [sic] Orthodox Catholic Church and wish for no other.” They expressed their allegiance to both Platon and Patriarch Tikhon, the latter they claimed had been deposed “by the hands of Bolshevik Church [sic].” In no uncertain words, they informed Alexandrof that “We shall remain true to this Hierarchy. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?”<sup>102</sup>

As the New York case awaited trial and Kedrovsky ran low on funds, he allowed the Pacific Northwest cases to wither on the vine. Platon’s lawyer had gotten much of the suit quickly dismissed on filing technicalities. Kedrovsky then allowed the rest to go inactive as he awaited

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<sup>101</sup> Robert B. Walkinshaw to Bishop Theophilus (Pashkovsky), January 6, 1925. RBWP UW, Box 1, Folder 63.

<sup>102</sup> Letter to Mr. Vladimir Alexandroff, unsigned. September 3, 1924. RBWP UW, Box 1, Folder 55.

rulings in New York that could provide crucial legal precedent for his cause. With Kedrovsky's legal victories there during 1925 and 1926, Theophilus and Platon both feared Kedrovsky would revive these dormant cases. Theophilus redoubled his efforts to gather support for Platon, returning once more to their Anglican allies. Theophilus particularly felt that a letter from Archbishop of Canterbury Randall Davidson clarifying the ecclesiastical situation in Russia could prove a useful and eminently respectable foil. In a letter to Davidson, Theophilus wrote that "our enemies, the newly organized 'Living Church' in Russia," had finally succeeded in seizing the New York cathedral. He expressed to the archbishop that "...it would be of a great value in such cases your pronouncement that the late Patriarch Tikhon was holding his office of Patriarch till his death and left successor, the Keeper of Patriarch's Throne, and Patriarchate in Russia is not abolished by the any lawful Sobor of the Church." Theophilus appealed to the Anglican Church's clear interest in the Russian Church, as well as his knowledge that Lambeth Palace had long been a crucial conduit for reliable information about Soviet religious persecution. "So I must earnestly ask Your Grace to send to me your official certificate in regard to this, which will greatly help me, when trial in Chicago comes for the possession of our Cathedral here," Theophilus wrote. "Such certificate will, I believe, help our Church in Canada also."<sup>103</sup>

The response Theophilus received indicated the Anglican Church was reluctant to take direct intervention in the Russian situation in America, even as Lambeth Palace possessed the very information and social capital Theophilus required. Just as Davidson had approached similar situations of intra-Orthodox ecclesiastical disputes, he preferred to remain above the fray, clearly favoring continued indirect public advocacy and friendly ecumenical dialogue over direct

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<sup>103</sup> Theophilus N. Pashkovsky, Bishop of Chicago to Randall Thomas Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, April 8, 1926. LPL RTDP, Vol. 477, 257-8.

participation.<sup>104</sup> Expressing his sympathetic regrets, Davidson wrote Theophilus that he was greatly troubled by developments in Russia, “and although my personal opinion based on such information as I possess would lead me to believe that the position you take and the narrative you give are correct, I have no actual authority for saying so.” Unlike his Episcopalian counterparts in America, Davidson declined to involve himself in litigation. “You will be the first to realize how inappropriate it would be that I should attempt to intervene in a matter which has been before the Courts in America,” Davidson wrote, even as he expressed keen interest in the case. “You will let me at the same time express to you my very deep sympathy in difficulties or loss which may ensue from what has now taken place. I shall be deeply interested to know anything further that happens with regard to a matter so important.”<sup>105</sup>

While Lambeth Palace declined to directly participate in Kedrovsky-related litigation in America, Platon’s representatives found other Anglican figures who were quite willing to personally provide their support by sharing documents and relevant information useful for the case. Shortly before Kedrovsky’s victory in March, Wall Street litigator George Zabriskie was brought on to manage both the Russian Church Relief Fund and Platon’s appeal.<sup>106</sup> Acting on Emhardt’s counsel, Zabriskie’s first course of action was to write Canon John Douglas, a major figure in the influential Anglican and Eastern Churches Association. Douglas had long been in contact with Emhardt on Russian affairs, and Emhardt advised Zabriskie that Douglas could prove useful. In his letter of introduction Douglas, Zabriskie explained that, “I have suspected that more or less

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<sup>104</sup> Bryn Geffert, *Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans: Diplomacy, Theology, and the Politics of Interwar Ecumenism* (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press, 2010), PAGES. Also see Nicholas Zernov, *Orthodox Encounter: The Christian East and the Ecumenical Movement* (London: J. Clarke, 1961), PAGES.

<sup>105</sup> Copy, Randall Thomas Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury to The Right Reverend Theophilus N. Pashkovsky, D.D., April 26, 1926. LPL RTDP, Vol. 477, 259-60.

<sup>106</sup> “Orthodox Russian Drive,” *NYT*, March 21, 1926; “Orthodox Russian Drive,” *APV*, March-May 1926, 29. The relief fund administration included aviator Igor Sikorsky, composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Haley Fiske, president of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Corporation.



evidence, or at least the way to find it, might be discovered in England.” Outlining the case as he understood it, Zabriskie imparted on Douglas that Platon desperately needed Anglican support to boost his credibility in court. “On the part of the Metropolitan it is practically impossible to get



Figure 6.6: Metropolitan Platon (*Rozhdestvensky*),  
c. 1925 (LOC Bain News Service)

from Russia such testimony as is requisite to support his cause,” Zabriskie wrote, while “Kedrovsky can get any testimony he wants through the cognizance of the present Soviet Government.” To this end, Zabriskie felt—as Theophilus had—that it was necessary to find new and more convincing voices that could discredit Hartman and Kedrovsky’s account of the true authority of the Russian Orthodox Church at the time of the 1923 *sobor*. Zabriskie felt that, “...the only hope of getting any different result is to supply other and convincing proof that Platon’s title is good and Kedrovsky’s is bad.” Zabriskie needed information, but more importantly, he asked “...for any witnesses whose testimony would be competent, that is to say not based merely upon hearsay, and who might be accessible.” Put simply, Platon needed his own Hartman.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>107</sup> George Zabriskie to Canon J.A. Douglas, April 30, 1926. LPL JADP, Vol. 42, 126-8

Responding to Zabriskie, Douglas offered his complete support. “We all owe you a debt for taking up Platon’s cause,” Douglas wrote. “It beats us as to how your Court of Appeals reached its verdict.” Douglas clearly saw the issue as Zabriskie did, though he was unsure how he could help. “I should submit, therefore,” Douglas wrote, “that at worst in the present obscurity, Platon should not have been disturbed but should have been allowed to hold the property until competent ecclesiastical authorities had decided whether he or K[edrovsky] represent the Russian Orthodox Church.”<sup>108</sup> Douglas advised Zabriskie that it was paramount to use the case to argue precisely who was the “competent ecclesiastical authority” in Russia, and that Zabriskie would need to emphasize the extent to which the renovationists were both unpopular and non-canonical. Douglas argued that as an autocephalous church, the Russian Orthodox Church was bound by the canons accepted by all others through the seven accepted Ecumenical Councils, and could not unilaterally change its canons without the acceptance of all others. As such, the entirety of the Orthodox Church—including the Church of Russia—was bound by the universally accepted precept, established in 692 CE by the Sixth Ecumenical Council, that a married man could not be consecrated to the episcopate.<sup>109</sup> Douglas suggested it would be relatively easy to obtain a statement from the Ecumenical Patriarchate to this effect.<sup>110</sup> In a subsequent letter, Douglas allowed himself a stronger editorial stance: “In the chaos in Russia there is no evidence to warrant Kedrovsky being regarded as having any authority.” The majority of the Russian hierarchy, after all, had fallen behind the Tikhonites. “The point which I labour is that in 1926, practically no Russian Bishop would support Kedrovsky, since he is married,” Douglas opined. “In other words,

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<sup>108</sup> Canon J.A. Douglas to George Zabriskie, May 18, 1926. LPL JADP, Vol. 42, 129-33.

<sup>109</sup> See Canon XII of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. Hieromonk Agapios, the Hagiorite Nicodemus, and Denver Cummings. *The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Orthodox Christians* (Chicago: Orthodox Christian Education Society, 1957), 303-5.

<sup>110</sup> Canon J.A. Douglas to George Zabriskie, May 18, 1926. LPL JADP, Vol. 42, 129-33.

Kedrovsky is bluffing (and he ought to be called) in his claim that he has any authority from anyone in the Russia of 1926. He is a Living Churchman and the Living Church is generally repudiated.”<sup>111</sup>

Zabriskie accepted Douglas’ general premise, but was unsure of whether it could be convincingly argued in court. In a floundering American Orthodox Rus’ now lacking a seminary, and which still lagged in the growing pains of a beleaguered immigrant church, Russian voices who could cogently make the case at the bar simply did not exist. It was a lesson the initial trial before Justice Ford had reinforced. Zabriskie admitted to Douglas that, “I have not yet discovered in this country any Orthodox theologians, either Russian or Greek, whose position is so well assured that any court would have to listen to them, and who are able to speak so intelligently that what they say will carry conviction.” And while Douglas’ narrative was clear, Zabriskie felt it did little to rectify the court’s skepticism of Tikhon’s oral approval of Platon’s position to his YMCA guests in 1923. “I do not see how an intelligent Court could have been so imposed upon as to hold that where in circumstances of vis major made it impossible to communicate in writing an oral communication is void,” Zabriskie mused. “It really seems foolish.”<sup>112</sup> In response Douglas could not help but agree that “...without prejudice, I admit that an oral communication is irregular.”<sup>113</sup>

As Platon’s legal representatives scoured the globe for learned theologians and expert witnesses, Kedrovsky’s periodic success in the courtroom prompted him to shift from a life of litigation to that of the head of a local church. Kedrovsky’s strategy thus far had been to seize control of St. Nicholas Cathedral, in turn hoping an affirmation of his status as Metropolitan of North America would bring him authority over all archdiocesan properties, parishes, and believers. In effect, the appellate court’s decision left him only with the cathedral and several associated

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<sup>111</sup> Canon J.A. Douglas to George Zabriskie, June 22, 1926. LPL JADP, Vol. 42, 137-9.

<sup>112</sup> George Zabriskie to Canon J.A. Douglas, June 2, 1926. LPL JADP, Vol. 42, 134-6.

<sup>113</sup> Canon J.A. Douglas to George Zabriskie, June 22, 1926. LPL JADP, Vol. 42, 137-8.

properties. He held the support of no more than a handful of loyal, albeit somewhat unstable independent parishes. Nevertheless, he set about comorting his operation as a legitimate archdiocese, putting together a board of directors and hawking after straggling parishes that might be amenable to joining his cause.<sup>114</sup>

While Frink and Kedrovsky strategized over the scope and management of their anticipated archdiocese, they also looked to how their nascent ecclesiastical hierarchy could fit into the larger, increasingly confusing picture of Orthodoxy in America. With the fracture of the Russian Archdiocese and growing nationalist sentiments amongst various immigrant groups in America, former remnants of the Russian Mission and quasi-independent ethnic parishes alike were forming new “jurisdictions” under the administration of their Mother Churches abroad. With the newfound presence of separate ecclesiastical structures for Greeks, Albanians, Romanians, and others, new questions about the nature of administrative unity in the New World began to dominate pan-Orthodox discourse in North America. By early 1926, both Frink and Kedrovsky were engaged in negotiations with Archbishop Aftimios (Ofiesh), Vicar Bishop of the North American Archdiocese and the head of its Syro-Arab Mission. In 1924, the Arab-speaking Orthodox community had split into two factions. The “Russky” faction, under Aftimios, retained its longstanding allegiance to the Russian Archdiocese. The “Antacky” faction, under Bishop Victor (Abu-Assaly), had entered the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch.<sup>115</sup> With strains within the Russian Metropolia after its 1924 declaration of autonomy, Aftimios was apparently exploring a new solution for his parishes. This seems to have included courting John Kedrovsky’s proto-archdiocese. Writing of these negotiations in January 1926, Frink wrote to Kedrovsky that “I wrote the attorney for

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<sup>114</sup> For example, see Frink’s suggestions regarding a parish schism in Astoria, Queens, in which he proposes Kedrovsky offer a series of enticements to sway the church under his control. Frink to Kedrovsky, February 12, 1926, John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>115</sup> Arab Orthodoxy bibliography: Joel Brady? 100 years book, Damick, etc. [FINISH]

Eftimios [sic] explaining to him that Eftimios will have to make himself regular, or get out, and saying I will be ready to talk it over with him.” Frink and Kedrovsky agreed that the solution for the Syrian parishes was not to lead them to Antioch, but to include them in a united Orthodox archdiocese in North America—under the renovationist synod in Moscow. “I should think it would be unwise to split up the church any more,” Frink wrote.

The better policy would seem to me to bring all the Orthodox churches in North America under unified control. It seems to me with wise leadership, the orthodox catholic church [sic] in America can become very strong, since it offers the catholic faith without the objectionable features of the Roman Catholic church; and it might even become in time a leading branch of the whole orthodox church [sic].<sup>116</sup>

Even as Kedrovsky experienced brief legal victories and put on a brave face with the lofty credentials, by-laws, and ecclesiastical titles he presented both in court and the press, he struggled to demonstrate that there was anything of substance beneath the façade. Negotiations with Aftimios and the Syro-Arab Mission did not progress. As he tried to build a diocese from scratch, he found that plucking up parishes one by one bore little fruit. Kedrovsky’s irascible personality caused some of the few priests attracted to his cause to fall away. Managing litigation and unpredictable communities and clergy in multiple states—his own parish in Connecticut, another in Queens, court battles in Colorado and Washington—tugged at Kedrovsky’s attention, limited resources, and volatile emotions. Kedrovsky was overwhelmed.

Frink too was at his limits. Several months after their victory in the court of appeals, Frink wrote Kedrovsky that after the cathedral was won, he had hoped his client would “re-establish the diocesan administration with the help of the clergymen who were then working with you, adding to their numbers and gradually getting the support of all.” Frink was disappointed to see that this had not occurred. “Apparently this is impossible, because for one reason or another you are unable

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<sup>116</sup> Ralph Frink to John Kedrovsky January 30, 1926. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

to work with any of these clergymen,” he lamented. Frink advised Kedrovsky hold elections from his general church membership, seeing that Kedrovsky had so haplessly failed at any other method of diocesan administration. “I think you will find that it is impossible to govern the diocese in accordance with the rules of the church which seem to me to call for an elected council.”<sup>117</sup> Several months earlier, Frink had suggested drafting national by-laws would help in showing Kedrovsky’s legitimacy before the court as, “. . .it is necessary to be able to show the court just what is the form of administration of the diocese.” Kedrovsky submitted his provisional by-laws to the renovationist Holy Synod, who sent back their approval in June.<sup>118</sup> Kedrovsky’s parishes duly elected a Diocesan Council and “Archbishop and Consistory Corporation” in early August. Even so, it was not enough to ease Frink’s misgivings, and seemed to only widen a growing gap between attorney and client. By mid-September, Frink had been pushed to the point of exasperation. “I am very sorry that things have turned out as they have,” Frink wrote to Kedrovsky, “because I had expected that you would be able to enlist the support of the clergy and people and gradually reestablish a unified diocesan administration.” Frink saw Kedrovsky’s efforts to elect a diocesan administration as too little, much too late, and now threatened to quit. “The course you have taken, from all that I can learn about it from you and others, seems to be me one that cannot possibly succeed.”<sup>119</sup>

#### FIGURE 6.7: HOLY VIRGIN PROTECTION CATHEDRAL

While John Kedrovsky struggled to build a church out of his newly-won cathedral, Platon and his consistory found themselves wandering in the wilderness. His was an archdiocesan administration—and a cathedral congregation—without a home. In November 1926, Rev. Caleb Stetson of the Trinity Episcopal Church offered Platon new quarters at the St. Augustine Chapel,

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<sup>117</sup> Ralph Frink to John Kedrovsky, July 28, 1926. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>118</sup> Ralph Frink to John Kedrovsky, June 22, 1926; John Kedrovsky to Ralph Frink, July 3, 1926. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>119</sup> Ralph Frink to John Kedrovsky, September 18, 1926. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

located at 105 E. Houston Street. Built in 1877 as an auxiliary to Trinity Church, the chapel stood, in the words of one period observer, "...stiffly and uncompromisingly amid the shifting garishness of the Bowery."<sup>120</sup> Yet it had fallen into underuse as it approached its fiftieth year. Stetson and the Trinity Corporation offered Platon's congregation space in the chapel for a token rent of a dollar per year, and erected a thick, soundproof wall to divide the space into two. The Russians were permitted to renovate their half into a new cathedral large enough for upwards of a thousand.

In a statement to the *Times*, the Episcopal Bishop of New York William T. Manning called the Trinity Corporation's act of generosity "an important public service," expressing pride in its willingness to stand up for another Christian community in need. Long a friend and ally to the Russian Consistory, Manning made clear that he considered Kedrovsky a significant threat, and expressed no little displeasure in civil court decisions that legitimized the renovationists' position. "From the standpoint of citizenship, as well as of religion," Manning said, "it would be a disaster for the Russian congregations throughout our land to be brought under the direction of the present Soviet Government, and thus centres [sic] for the spread of communistic and atheistic propaganda." In a joint statement, Burgess and Emhardt praised a development they considered "epoch-making." By moving the Russian cathedral from the tony Upper West Side to the working-class Bowery, the Consistory was now "in the heart of a district where thousands of Russians have lived, until now, out of touch with their Church and other uplifting influences."<sup>121</sup> The first services in the improvised cathedral were celebrated on November 21, 1926 by Fr. Peter Popoff, as Platon was on a pastoral visit to Detroit. John Gardner Murray, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, visited the Trinity parish that morning to praise the community's outreach to Platon's congregation. "I cannot help but feel that your action is divinely inspired; therefore it will be divinely blessed,"

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<sup>120</sup> "New Home of the Russian Church," *APV*, November-December, 1927, 132.

<sup>121</sup> "Trinity Turns Over Church to Russians," *NYT*, November 21, 1926.

Murray said that morning. “What you have done for our Russian brethren is worth a great deal not only to the American Church but to the Church of God throughout the world.”<sup>122</sup>

Platon’s Consistory brought into the new space everything that had gone with them when they had vacated St. Nicholas, from the vestments the priests and bishops wore to icons and other liturgical fixtures. They also brought their community. Emhardt and Burgess told the Associated Press that Kedrovsky’s cathedral was “practically deserted and the church services unattended.”<sup>123</sup> When believers followed Platon downtown to Houston Street, they showed Kedrovsky that their faith and Orthodox community lay in their church’s teachings, tradition, and ecclesiastical hierarchy, and not in bricks and mortar. Speaking at St. Nicholas after the sparsely-attended services there that day, Kedrovsky feigned indifference. “This action of Trinity Parish and its approval by Bishop Manning does not affect me in the least. As far as I am concerned the dispute with Archbishop Platon is ended,” he told the *Times*. “While I know that Archbishop Platon will take many of the former members of this church with him I also know that they are adherents of the old regime, who still thinks that Church and State should be united.”<sup>124</sup>

Kedrovsky’s success in the courtroom shows that American Orthodox Rus’ was defined far differently by Orthodox believers themselves and the impartial eyes of American courts. John Kedrovsky saw American Orthodox Rus’ as a collection of properties, while Platon and the overwhelming majority of the clergy and laity of his archdiocese saw a network of communities, a people of faith united in identity just as much as belief, practice, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Kedrovsky discovered that property is static, yet such communities are not. And while legal documents and court litigation may have ceded him buildings and land, they did not grant him the

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<sup>122</sup> “Lauds Trinity Aid to Russian Church,” *NYT*, November 22, 1926.

<sup>123</sup> “Trinity, New York, Divides Big Chapel For Orthodox See,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1926.

<sup>124</sup> “Criticizes Platon Faction,” *NYT*, November 22, 1926.



perception of grace, legitimacy, or respectability in the eyes of the faithful. Resistance to Kedrovsky hinged on questions of legitimacy as defined not just by the canons of the Orthodox Church, but the church as a Eucharistic community of believers. Seeing Kedrovsky as an uncanonical usurper, a married man comporting himself as a bishop further tinged by the perceived sanction of the Bolshevik government, the immigrant faithful of American Orthodox Rus' used their bodies, their words, their prayers, and their money to reject his incursion. Yet Kedrovsky persisted, lobbying volley after volley in the courts and the press, breathlessly maintaining he represented a new and legitimate order of the Russian Orthodox Church born into a new age of progress and possibility.

For all his legal posturing and affected episcopal demeanor, Kedrovsky appears not to have seen until it was too late that his collaboration with the renovationists had been the path of least resistance to a job for which he was supremely unprepared, if not unqualified. His episcopal consecration had been a matter of mutual convenience, and his legal battle a war of technicalities and half-truths, all bolstered by open cooperation with a collaborationist church administration wholly infiltrated by the Soviet state. He was never supported at any point by more than a small few isolated parishes and clergy, and in time would preside over a church that was not appreciably larger than his own family. Even so, John Kedrovsky did not appear to hold any allegiance to the Soviets; on the contrary, he often spoke in unapologetically patriotic tones reflective of Progressive Era American nativism and wartime jingoism. The documentary evidence suggests he did not fully understand, or chose not to acknowledge the actual nature of the Living Church, preferring to emphasize the elements of the fracturing renovationist cause that continued to provide him with documents, ecclesiastical support, and the appearance of legitimacy. In American civil courts, when judges ruled by the bare facts of law and not the emotionalism of the Red Scare and the

instinctive nature of American anti-communism, this was usually enough for John Kedrovsky to emerge victorious. Just as the members of Detroit's All Saints parish learned in 1923, in the eyes of American jurisprudence, even purported Bolsheviks had a right to property.

In this way, John Kedrovsky was astoundingly successful as a litigant at the highest levels of American civil jurisprudence. It seems the importance of his success, then, lays in the space between legal and religious truths, and the difference between how the law and the laity saw the Orthodox Church. These sites and moments of contestation illustrate the importance of three external influences on the long battle for control over the North American Archdiocese: Instabilities within American Orthodox Rus' because of anti-religious measures in the Soviet Union, and the intervention and interjection of Protestant denominations into Russian Church affairs; and how Russian church cases engaged American jurisprudence concerning property held by hierarchical religious institutions. In response, clergy and laity alike forged a path for their church's future that would repeatedly and inevitably lead through the nation's courtrooms. Their cases informed and transformed American civil jurisprudence in regards to hierarchical religious institutions, serving as legal precedents that remain relevant nearly a century later. They also set the scene for the fragmentation of American Orthodox Rus' into a patchwork of jurisdictions, dividing families, neighborhoods, and communities along politicized and polemical lines. In this way, American Orthodox Rus' became defined not by its transnational links to Russia, but the ways property litigation could be used to govern sacred spaces, and also the extent to which American courts could be utilized to determine ecclesiastical legitimacy.

At the close of nearly a decade of court battles, the final symbol of Kedrovsky's victory proved one of the defining institutions of American Orthodox Rus'. An often-overlooked sidebar of Kedrovsky's litigation over the cathedral was his pursuit of other church holdings around New

York City, including several apartment buildings rented out for much-needed revenue. Among these properties was the former Russian Immigrant Home at 347 East Fourteenth Street. When Kedrovsky prepared to receive the deed for the property following his definitive triumph in appellate court, it was clear that the building was crumbling. In need of serious repair as early as 1916, and likely earlier than that, little work had been done in the interim. Property taxes had gone unpaid, and the building's mortgage payments were long behind. The parish that met in the building had dwindled to a handful of people, who were expected to scatter if Kedrovsky were to install one of his own priests. The building's significance, it seems, was not measured in bricks and mortar. "The building needs a lot of money spent on it to put it in good condition," Frink wrote Kedrovsky in July 1927. "I do not see how it could even be made to pay expenses next winter."<sup>125</sup>

When the cash-strapped Kedrovsky finally took possession of the Immigrant Home in 1928, he quickly turned to stripping the building for its liquid assets. That September, one of Kedrovsky's lawyers reported that he had hired an assessor to determine the value of the building's printing press, which had produced ream after ream of newspapers, books, and other printed materials during the building's heyday. Writing to Kedrovsky about the liquidation, Frink suggested "...if this is done too publicly, the people on the other side will hear of it and no doubt try to stop it or start some other trouble or agitation." Frink astutely sensed that the sale of the Immigrant Home's equipment touched a symbolic nerve that would not likely be ignored. "I think it is inadvisable for this reason to let any more Russian people know about it than already know," he advised. "It would be far safer to deal with some machinery man."<sup>126</sup> By November, the printing press had been put up for sale. In the end, Frink's interest in the property would prove fortuitous. At the end of a long

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<sup>125</sup> Ralph Frink to John Kedrovsky, July 20, 1927. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

<sup>126</sup> Quinto J. Porcella to John Kedrovsky, September 26, 1928; Ralph Frink to John Kedrovsky, November 24, 1928. John Kedrovsky Papers, AOCA.

legal struggle, John Kedrovsky would settle years of unpaid legal bills with a property deed. For services rendered in the fight for American Orthodox Rus', John Kedrovsky quietly and unceremoniously signed over the Russian Immigrant Home, the site which had so changed the lives of thousands of Russian workers at the height of the Orthodox migration, to Ralph Frink.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Fr. Peter Kohanik, "Russkoe Emigrantskoe Dielo v S. Amerikie." Sbornik vol I 226.