

A Short Biography of Archbishop Antony (Bartoshevich) of Geneva and Western Europe (+ 1993)

by Bernard le Caro



I first met Vladyka Antony in 1986 and my debt to him is great indeed. Twenty years ago, in 1988, he saved me from an impossible situation in Paris and in 1991 he ordained me to the priesthood.

Travelling with him in Austria and France, I recognised in him an authentic hierarch, a spiritual heir of Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky), after whom he had been named in monasticism. He alone encouraged me in missionary work in Portugal and I also realised how lucidly he saw through extremes, both new calendarist ecumenism and old calendarist sectarianism alike. Like St John, he too recognised what would happen in Russia and I know that he would have rejoiced at the unity of today's Russian Church, for which he long thirsted.

Fifteen years ago, together with many others, I was privileged to take part in his funeral. I can confirm everything that Bernard has written below. Vladyko, Vechnaya Pamyat!

Archpriest Andrew Phillips

Archbishop Antony was born Andrei Georgievich Bartoshevich in St Petersburg in 1910. His parents, Yuri (George) Vladimirovich Bartoshevich, a military engineer and colonel in the Imperial Army, and Ksenia (nee Tumkovskaya), were both pious people. At the beginning of the Revolution, Andrei left with his mother for Kiev to his grandmother's home, while his father joined the Volunteer Army. During Lenin's New Economic Policy period, they managed to flee to Germany and then to Belgrade to rejoin his father, who worked there as an engineer. Andrei finished the Russian-Serbian Gymnasium and in 1931 began a three-year course of studies at the Technical School of Belgrade University.

He decided to devote his life to serving the Church and before completing his technical studies, he enrolled in the Theological Department. Among his professors was the great theologian and ascetic of the Serbian Church, Fr Justin (Popovich, + 1979), who impressed the future Archbishop, and also Sergei Troitsky (+ 1972), whose strictness with regard to canon law also

left a mark on the future shepherd (1). Andrei corresponded with Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky, + 1934), and the monks of Milkovo Monastery, which had been made over to Russian monks in 1926 and was led by Archimandrite Ambrose (Kurganov, + 1933), a very spiritual man. ‘The new abbot’, we read in the monastery chronicles, ‘drew people to Milkovo like a magnet, the best monks of the Russian emigration’. (2)

At the time Andrei became interested in icon-painting and studied under the great iconographer Pimen Sofronov. He painted several icons, including ‘All the Saints of Russia’ for Holy Trinity Church in Belgrade and ‘The Descent Into Hell’ for the Iveron Chapel crypt in Belgrade, where Metropolitan Antony was buried. In 1941 Andrei was tonsured into the small schema at Tuman Monastery, where the Milkovo monks had moved, and given the name Antony (in honour of St Antony of the Kiev Caves). Fr Antony was then ordained hierodeacon and hieromonk by Metropolitan Anastasius (Gribanovsky, + 1965) in Holy Trinity Church in Belgrade, where he served. In February 1942 Fr Antony became teacher of canon law at the Russian Cadet Corps in Bela Tsrkva, not far from Belgrade, where he taught the cadets icon-painting. Fr Antony had a special approach towards dealing with young people. In his pastoral and later archpastoral service, he would draw them closer to regular church life.

In the words of a former cadet, ‘Still very young, Hieromonk Antony Bartoshevich knew us cadets well, both senior and junior, and was an encouragement for us and sometimes helped us with our written Latin’. (3)

In 1945, after World War II, the Russian community in Belgrade joined the Moscow Patriarchate. According to the rector of the Belgrade church, being ‘a good monk and a gifted individual’, (4), by decree of Patriarch Alexis I, Fr Antony was made archimandrite. Like many emigres, Fr Antony thought that the hour of freedom for the Church in Russia had come. Therefore he wished with his whole heart to serve the Church in Russia, but Divine Providence deemed otherwise. The rector of the Belgrade church wrote to Patriarch Alexis: ‘Being alone, without any means of support, Fr Antony has patiently waited for an appointment somewhere for four years now. Having received no answer to his requests, he is falling into despair and thinks that his hopes of going home will never be fulfilled...’ (5). It is very likely that the return of the young archimandrite to the USSR did not suit the Soviet minister Karpov, and an answer never came.

Not wishing to fulfil his own desires, Fr Antony did not persist and left Yugoslavia. It was difficult for him to leave the country that had become his second home, yet in the face of everything, he considered himself fortunate: ‘I am like a babe in his mother’s arms’, that is, he always obeyed God’s will. In his words, ‘one must accept the will of God without murmur, believing that the Father, loving us, gives us what we need and what is beneficial to us and that He is preparing for us such joyful communion with Him that we on earth cannot even imagine’ (6). Thus, in 1949, he moved to Switzerland, where there lived his brother, Bishop Leontius of Geneva of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, who was known for his holiness.

From 1949 on Fr Antony served in different churches of the Western European Diocese of ROCOR, including Lyons, where he painted the iconostasis and an icon of the ancient St Irineus of Lyons for the local church. From 1952 until 1957 he lived in Brussels. A great many emigres from the Soviet Union arrived in Belgium - their material and emotional condition was poor. Fr Antony travelled all over Belgium, visiting the suffering. As always, Fr Antony paid special care to young people and played an active role in establishing the first Russian Orthodox school in Brussels. He organised summer camps for over a hundred young people. Since many parents

could not afford to send their children, Fr Antony himself collected funds for them. Thanks to his efforts, a local branch of the Vityaz scouts was opened.

In 1957, after the unexpected death of Bishop Leontius the previous year, Fr Antony was consecrated Bishop of Geneva by a group of bishops headed by the Archbishop of Western Europe of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, St John (Maximovich, + 1966).

As a bishop, Vladyka travelled widely throughout his diocese, often visiting his beloved Lesna Convent, piously celebrating divine services, serving the faithful and offering spiritual support. When Vladyka visited his parishes, he read the Six Psalms and the canons at matins at the vigil, at the end of which he blessed every single worshipper and then stayed for a discussion with the people. The following morning, Vladyka celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Vladyka's services were deeply prayerful, simple and yet grandiose. The words of Archimandrite Kyprian (Kern) about Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky) can be applied to his student, Vladyka Antony of Geneva: 'Complete confidence in the Church typicon and rites. He possessed wonderful rhythm and a dispassionate bearing in the way he conducted divine service, and in his reading, in his liturgical exclamations, he added nothing of his own. He read intelligently, clearly, dispassionately'. (7) During the evening, Vladyka gathered young people for discussions, during which he talked about the Holy Gospel. The young really loved Vladyka, and, as they say, followed him in droves. Vladyka wrote a wonderful article on working with young people called 'Our Successors'.

Despite the many responsibilities he had in his diocese, Vladyka lived a monastic life as before. In Geneva, he gradually began to return divine services to a stricter adherence to the typicon. Even when there were no services, he would read the entire cycles of services at home. When people asked him how it was that he was always happy, he answered that this could be achieved through intense morning prayer. Vladyka observed the fasts strictly, following the typicon closely. When travelling on a fasting day, even if he ate at a restaurant, he had only fasting food, saying that the typicon simply does not make dispensations for travellers. Yet even though strict with himself, he was understanding to others.

For years, Vladyka led pilgrimages to the Holy Land, which for him, according to Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky, + 1985), was 'the fifth Gospel'. At each holy site, Vladyka Antony read the corresponding Gospel passage to the pilgrims. One such pilgrim wrote that after the rite of blessing the waters on the River Jordan, everyone immersed themselves as Vladyka spoke these powerful words: 'Let no-one be troubled that the water appears unclean. For the Holy Spirit descended upon these waters, which has defeated all matter. This water has acquired the power to heal, a source of life and health. Draw from it, drink it to the salvation of your souls and your bodies!' (8). Vladyka also organised pilgrimages to the holy sites of the West, for instance, to the city of Lyons, the place of the martyrdom of Sts Blandine, Alexander and Epipodius (+ 177), for, like his predecessor, St John (Maximovich), he revered the ancient Orthodox Christian saints of the West. That is why he instructed Fr Peter Cantacuzene (the future Bishop Ambrose of Vevey), to compose a service 'To All the Saints of the Swiss Lands'.

Vladyka Antony himself edited and published *The Herald of the Western European Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia*, for which he wrote theological articles, including 'On the Life of the Soul Beyond the Grave' (9), which was later published as a brochure. In 1969, he drafted a remarkable talk in which he stressed the unity of the Church of Christ: 'If there is One Head, there is one Body! We are all one in Christ and His Church (Corinthians 3, 11). Therefore, there could not be two, three or many Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Churches... for did Christ divide Himself? (1 Corinthians 1, 13), asked the Apostle Paul sorrowfully of his contemporary Christians. Has His Church then been divided, we ask today?' (11). Despite the

fact that he was a strict Orthodox Christian, Vladyka never took an extreme position. At the All-Diaspora Council of 1974, Vladyka spoke forcefully in favour of Church unity and against the self-isolation of ROCOR and in his report outlined 'the duty of ROCOR before the Church and the Homeland' in this way (12):

- 1) 'To preserve the purity of Orthodoxy, rejecting any temptations of atheism and modernism. In other words, courageously follow the path inscribed on the tablets of the law of our Church.
- 2) To be the bold and free voice of the Church of Christ, speak the truth without compromise, which our First Hierarchs have done so far.
- 3) Using our freedom, to be understanding of those enslaved, taking care not to condemn anyone imprudently, but to understand, support and show brotherly love.
- 4) To cherish and preserve Church unity, sensing that we are part of the living universal Church of Christ and worthy of bearing the standard of the Russian Church within Her.
- 5) To avoid self-isolation, for the spirit of the Church is unifying, not divisive. Let us not seek heretics where they may not be any and let us fear exaggeration in this area.
- 6) To call all Russian Orthodox Christians and their pastors who have left us to unity. Let us call them not through sanctions, but with brotherly love in the name of the suffering Russian Church and our much-suffering homeland.
- 7) Let us turn to face resurgent Russia, extending a helping hand to the best of our abilities!

He ended his talk with the following words: 'What is more important for us, the Church Herself and the living forces within Her, or Her temporary, maybe unworthy representatives? Shall we on their account tear ourselves away from Universal Orthodoxy, in which most think like we do, in which, despite our unworthiness, the Holy Spirit breathes? Whom then would we be punishing? Only ourselves!' (13). Learning of Vladyka Antony's words, the great Athonite Elder Paisios (Eznepidis, + 1994), once told a pilgrim from Paris: 'Your Antony is a hero! He is not with them (the ecumenists) and not with the others (the unreasonable zealots)!' In fact, Vladyka acted humbly, doing nothing without seeking advice and on Church matters often consulted Archbishop Nathaniel (Lvov, + 1985), Archpriest Igor Trojanov (+ 1987), Abbess Theodora (+ 1976) and Abbess Magdalena (+ 1987) of the Lesna Convent. He always asked one pilgrim who paid frequent visits to Mt Athos what the Fathers of the Holy Mountain thought about a particular Church matter.

Vladyka was a fervent proponent of Church reconciliation in the diaspora. In the 1960s there was hope that the Paris Exarchate would soon unite with ROCOR. Alien to any form of careerism, Vladyka dared not accept the rank of Archbishop offered by the Synod of Bishops, since the Paris Exarchate was already headed by an Archbishop. Only when any chance of unification had faded, did Vladyka accept the position, but he continued to show love for the clergymen and laity of the Exarchate. As far as the Moscow Patriarchate was concerned, Vladyka avoided extreme positions, witnessed by his letter to Fr Dimitri Dudko: 'The late Archbishop John, whom we all respected and loved, would say 'the official Church in Russia, of course, possesses grace, though one bishop or another might behave badly.' (14). In 1985, he visited Belgrade and prayed at the Liturgy in the Russian church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

One of the great events in the life of Vladyka Anthony was the glorification of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia by the ROCOR Council of Bishops in New York in 1981. Vladyka wrote an article devoted to the event, in which he wrote: 'We must praise the Martyrs with one mouth and one heart... Their prayers are the foundation of our rebirth, their struggle, an example for us, their blood, the justification of the history of the Church in our day'. (15). Another great moment in Vladyka's life was the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus. He stressed the importance of this event to Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov, + 2006) in his letter to him after the First Hierarch's consecration: 'Facing you is the task of heading the festive jubilee of the 1000th anniversary of the Baptism of our Homeland. For a thousand years, we have lived as Christians, which we must show not in word but in deed. We must celebrate this anniversary in such a way that it is a celebration there, in the Homeland... Our enslaved brethren will hear the voice of the Russian Church from here, they will hear your voice, Vladyko, a hierarch of God'. (16) He organised celebrations in Paris in 1988, about which one participant wrote: 'We saw the spiritual, inner depth... the great host of clergymen and the many worshippers from all corners of the diocese, the great multitude of people, not only Russians, but Orthodox Christians of other nationalities'. (17)

Vladyka headed the 'Orthodox Cause' organisation, which distributed spiritual literature throughout Russia and spread information on the persecution of believers in the Soviet Union throughout the West. He also supported the initiative to publish the journal 'Hope: Christian Reading'. Having a profound love for Russia, Vladyka felt that 'Now [in 1974!] we behold a Russia being reborn. Gradually, what we have awaited for so many years, for which we have worked, for which we have lived, is coming. Russia is awakening. The better people in the Homeland are speaking out. The Soviet government is at a loss, it dares not deal with its own people, they are expelling them from the country' (18), including Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whom Vladyka Anthony met in Geneva and always esteemed.

Vladyka was at the same time 'universal', sharing a bond with all Orthodox peoples and all the Europeans who came to Holy Orthodoxy. He loved to serve in the Serbian and Romanian churches in Paris. Once, a bishop of the Greek Church from Athens was praying at the Liturgy in the Geneva Cathedral and Vladyka not only commemorated him during the Great Entrance according to the custom, but instructed his deacon to serve in Greek. Vladyka was also open to French and Dutch converts to Orthodoxy and often served in French for their benefit.

Amidst the general difficulties and complications of emigre life, Vladyka was able to preserve peace and love within the diocese Divinely entrusted to him. In the words of his successor, Archbishop Seraphim (Dulgov, + 2003), 'His clergy lived confidently, peacefully, wisely and solidly, and were so closely-knit!' (19) Vladyka was not only the ruling bishop of the Western European Diocese, but he was also a regular member of the Synod of Bishops and from 1987 served as First Deputy to the President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

In the last year of his productive life, Vladyka fell seriously ill. Two weeks before his blessed repose, despite his grave health, he attended the consecration to the episcopate of Bishop Seraphim, and a few days later, of Bishop Ambrose, and laid hands on both during the celebrations. Sensing that in this way he had fulfilled his archpastoral duty, Archbishop Antony of Geneva and Western Europe ceased to struggle against his illness and peacefully reposed in the Lord on 19 September/ 2 October 1993, after Archpriest Pavel Tsvetkov had read the Paschal canon in its entirety to him at his request. The funeral was held at the Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Cross in Geneva on 7 October 1993. Archbishop Anthony was buried in the Cathedral itself, at the right-hand wall, where his late brother, Bishop Leontius, is also buried.

Bernard le Caro

- (1) After the war, this renowned expert in canon law wrote books and articles directed against the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. Archbishop Antony considered that these texts were written out of fear of persecution by the Communist regime and did not reflect the actual opinion of the author.
- (2) Milosevic, D. *Milkov manastir* [‘Milkovo Monastery’]. Smederevo, 1974, p. 50.
- (3) NE Novitsky. *Otryvki iz moikh vospominanii* [‘Excerpts from My Memoirs’].
- (4) VI Kosik. *Russkaja Tserkov v Jugoslavii*. M., 2000, p. 158.
- (5) *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- (6) “*O poslushanii Tserkvi*” [‘On Obedience to the Church’]. *Vestnik Khrama-Pamjatnika*. Brussels, April 1995.
- (7) *Metropolit Antonii (Khrapovitskij). Izbrannije trudy, pis'ma, materijaly* [Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky). Selected Works, Letters, Materials]. M, 2007, p. 805.
- (8) *Vestnik Zapadno-Evropskoj Eparkhii Russkoj Tserkvi za Rubezhom* [Herald of the Western European Diocese of the Russian Church Outside Russia], No. 39, 1996, p. 20.
- (9) *Russkoje Vozrozhdenije* [Russian Rebirth], № 24, 1983 (*Vestnik Germanskoj Eparkhii* [Herald of the German Diocese], No. 5, 1993.)
- (10) Lesna Convent publication.
- (11) Message of the Ninth Diocesan Conference of the Western European Diocese, 1969.
- (12) *Nasha Tserkov' v sovremennom mire* [‘Our Church in the Modern World’]. Talk at the All-Diaspora Council, 1974 (unpublished).
- (13) *Ibid.*
- (14) *Posev*, No. 12, 1979.
- (15) *Proslavlenije so svjatymi Novomuchenikov i Novykh Ispovednikov Rossijskikh. Doklad na 13-om Eparkhijal'nom Sjezde Zapadno-Evropskoj Eparkhii* [‘The Glorification with the Saints of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. Talk at the 13th Diocesan Conference of the Western European Diocese’], 1981.
- (16) *Pravoslavnaja Rus'* [Orthodox Russia], No. 2, 1986.
- (17) *Vestnik Zapadno-Evropskoj Eparkhii Russkoj Tserkvi za Rubezhom* [Herald of the Western European Diocese of the Russian Church Outside Russia], No. 32, 1989, p. 8.
- (18) *Nasha Tserkov' v sovremennom mire* [‘Our Church in the Modern World’]. Talk at the All-Diaspora Council, 1974 (unpublished).

(19) '*Kakoje schastje byt' svjashchennikom!*' ['What a Joy to Be a Priest'], *Russkiy Pastyr'*, No. 36, 2000.