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A Bovkalo
St. Petersburg Theological Academy

A Galkin
St. Peterburg Theological Academy

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CHURCH LIFE IN THE NOVGOROD DIOCESE

By A. Bovkalo and A. Galkin

A. Bovkalo and A. Galkin (Russian Orthodox) are on the staff of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

For a long period the Novgorod diocese, one of the oldest in the Russian Orthodox Church, had no bishop of its own and was governed by the Metropolitan of Leningrad. Only five years ago it hardly numbered 25 parishes; most of them were situated in remote villages. Recent years have brought many changes. Since July 1990 the diocese is governed by Bishop Lev (Tserpitsky) of Novgorod and Staraya Russia. The famous St. Sophia cathedral, closed in 1929, is again opened for believers; dozens churches are being restored or built. There are four cloisters, numerous Sunday schools and children's choir in the St. Sophia cathedral.

In 1992 a diocesan quarterly newspaper, *Sophia*, began to be published by a group of enthusiasts. Among its authors there are research workers of Novgorod State Archive and local art and architecture museums, art critics and librarians. The newspaper regularly publishes the messages of Bishop Lev, materials on the history of the diocese, its churches and saints. Articles devoted to St. Anthony the Roman, St. Varlaam of Khutyn, to the first bishops of Novgorod and to the St. Martyr Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd (1992) who visited Novgorod several times, should be mentioned. Many articles concern the 1930s, the tragic years of "collectivization" of peasantry, bloody repressions and mass closing of churches. One can find memoirs of Metropolitan Arseny (Stadnitsky) of Novgorod and Bishop Joseph (Nevsky, 1930) of Valday. The granddaughter of the last dean of the St. Sophia cathedral, archpriest Peter Belyaev (executed 1938), published her reminiscences. In the theological part of there are popular materials about the principles of the Orthodoxy - they are of good value both for the believers and for those who are just coming to the Church. This edition has united all the lay people of Novgorod and its century old culture and thus led them to organize the first conference on the Church history.

It took place in the Novgorod Kremlin on February 3-5, 1993, and was dedicated to the memory of Metropolitan Arseny (Stadnitsky, 1862-1936), one of the most famous Russian hierarchs of the twentieth century. After the Divine Liturgy in the St. Sophia cathedral,

Bishop Lev opened the "Arseny readings" and read out the greeting of Patriarch Alexy II. The Archpriest V. Tsypin (Moscow Theological Academy) presented the biography of Metropolitan Arseny. Born in a little village in Bessarabia, Avksenty Stadnitsky graduated in 1885 from the Kiev Theological Academy and was a tutor in the Kishinev seminary during next ten years. In 1895 he was tonsured a monk with name of Arseny and was appointed inspector and a year later a rector of he Novgorod seminary. In 1897 father Arseny became a professor of the Moscow Theological Academy, in 1898 its rector, and in 1899 he was consecrated a Bishop of Volokolamsk. His trip to the Holy Land (1900) was reported in detail by Archimandrite Augustin Nikitin (St. Petersburg Theological Academy). Between 1903 and 1910 Bishop Arseny (since 1907 archbishop) headed the Pskov diocese; N. Patyakina (Velikiye Luki State Archive) told about his activities there. Many speakers concentrated on the Novgorod period of his life. There he lived between 1910 and 1917 was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan. I. Savinova (Novgorod State Archive) gave a lecture "Metropolitan Arseny in Novgorod," G. Markina (Novgorod State Museum) on "Documents Concerning Metropolitan Arseny in the Novgorod State Museum", N. Gervais (St. Petersburg University) spoke about the history of the Novgorod Church Archeological Society founded by Archbishop Arseny in 1913. A. Bovkalo (St. Petersburg Theological Academy) told about the fate of the Novgorod diocese in 1917-1920. These years were mournful; a lot of clergy were repressed and some of them executed; seminaries were closed; all the Church property was confiscated. A. Galkin (St. Petersburg) continued this theme and elucidated numerous trials against clergymen, including Metropolitan Arseny himself, which took place in Novgorod in 1920-1922. As a result Metropolitan Arseny had to leave Novgorod. In 1922-1923 he and some other Church leaders were under judicial examination together with St. Patriarch Tikhon. Metropolitan Arseny was exiled to Middle Asia. Nevertheless he kept his Novgorod title till 1933 when he was appointed Metropolitan of Tashkent. In this city he died and was buried. Hegumen Innocent Pavlov (Department of External Church Relations) reviewed the activity of Metropolitan Arseny in the State Council, the Holy Synod and the Local Church Council 1917-1918. Bishop Lev summarized and concluded the conference. Organized by the Novgorod diocese and various state and public institutions, the conference gave an inspiring example of the fruitful collaboration between the Church, scholarly, and cultural establishments.