

THE HARVEST IS GREAT AND THE LABOURERS ARE FEW (Father John Nedzelnitsky's Report on the New York Deanery of the Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese in 1898)¹

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Abstract. The document published here is a report on the New York Deanery of the Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese in 1898 submitted by the Dean John Nedzelnitsky to Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin). It is deposited in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division as a part of Alaskan Russian Church Archives (Cont. D 452–453, New York, N.Y. Nedzelnitsky John, 1896–1899). Father Nedzelnitsky (1866–1946) is not widely known, and this paper thus serves as a short biography. The Dean John Nedzelnitsky was a dedicated Russian Orthodox missionary whose observations are a valuable source for the study of history of the Russian Church in America. The document provides a vivid picture of the Russian Church activities in the continental United States during the period of its rapid development due to the influx of many new converts from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The report has a traditional structure and follows the instructions issued by Bishop Tikhon. It touches upon all the major aspects of managing the Diocese and talks about its activities and troubles in a frank and realistic manner. We can see from the report that the issues facing the Diocese at that time could be solved by reorganizing its management and implementing a long-term recruitment and allocation policy, with an honest and laborious person in charge of its further implementation being key. Moreover, the document gives a picture of the period as seen by two distinguished Orthodox missionaries, since it also contains interesting recommendations on church activities that were later adopted by Bishop Tikhon. Tikhon's own commentary and notes accompanying the report are of special interest, revealing his colourful and engaging personality (in the text of the publication they are given in square brackets). The publication is unabridged and is provided with an introduction and reference information, including an estimate of the report's significance for further research in the field.

Keywords: Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese, Russian Orthodox Church in America, Father John Nedzelnitsky, Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin), Alaskan Consistory, Uniates movement

¹ English translation from the Russian text: Pechatnov V. V. 2023. «Zhatva velika, da delatelej malo...» (Donesenie o . Io-anna Nedzel'nickogo o sostoyanii N'yu-Jorkskogo okruga Aleutskoj i Alyaskinskoj eparhii za 1898 god) [The Harvest is Great and the Labourers are Few]. *Koncept: filosofiya, religiya, kul'tura* [Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture]. 7(1). P. 47–61. (In Russian). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2023-1-25-47-61>

The document presented in this paper is quite unusual for the layperson – a report on the New York Deanery of the Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese in 1898 submitted by the Dean John Nedzelnitsky to Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin) back in 1898. By some miracle, the report has been preserved in the Alaskan Russian Church Archives in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division. This seemingly purely official document is interesting primarily because it immerses us in the world of the Russian clergy in America – the difficulties they faced, their hopes and aspirations – during the so-called “Gilded Age” of the development of the Russian Church in the United States, and allows us to see these problems through the eyes of two distinguished Orthodox missionaries, since the report also contains comments by Tikhon himself, the future Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. He is a monumental figure who needs no introduction. The same, however, cannot be said of the author of the report, the Dean John Nedzelnitsky, who is known only to a narrow circle of historians of the Russian Orthodox Church. For those who do know, Nedzelnitsky was a gifted pastor and preacher who made a significant contribution to the development of Orthodoxy in America.

Father Nedzelnitsky’s report supplements our understanding of the daily life and activities of Russian Orthodox missionaries in America and the grassroots level of parishes and their pastors. Russian historiography contains many first-hand accounts of the history of the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States at the turn of the 20th century – reports on the state of the Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese of St. Tikhon, correspondence among Tikhon’s wards in America, and letters from St. Tikhon himself during his time in the United States (Efimov, Lasaev 2012; *The American Period of the Life... 2014*).² However, these publications do not contain any first-hand evidence. Father Nedzelnitsky’s report is one such as example, never intended for external use, but rather as a working document on the real state of affairs on the ground.

Ivan (John) Yakovlevich Nadzelnitsky was born on April 14, 1866, to the family of a priest in Kherson Governorate. In 1886, he graduated from the Odessa Theological Seminary and was accepted into the Kiev Theological Academy, although he was forced to drop out the following year “due to poor health,” as his service record states.³ The fact that he did not complete his higher spiritual education tormented him throughout his life. That same year, 1887, Nedzelnitsky got married and was ordained first as a deacon and then as a priest. He served in parishes in the southwest of Russia, including the districts of Tiraspol and Yelysavethrad, and then as a missionary in the fight against the Shtundists – an evangelical Protestant movement that had a large

² Tikhon (Vasily Ivanovich Bellavin). 2000. Report on the State of the Aleutian Diocese for 1905. In Efimov E. (introduction and commentary), Grunberg P. (commentary). *Collection of Theological Works. V. 6: On the 75th Anniversary of the Death of Saint Patriarch Tikhon*. P. 176–205. Saint Tikhon’s Orthodox University. URL: <https://pstgu.ru/download/1230403170.10.pdf>; Tikhon (Patriarch; 1865–1925). 2010. *Letters of Saint Tikhon: The American Period of the Life and Work of Saint Tikhon of Moscow*. Compiled by A. V. Popov. Saint Petersburg: SATIS; *The American period of the life and work of St. Tikhon of Moscow, 1898–1907*. 2013. Compiled by A.V. Popov. Saint Petersburg: SATIS.

³ Clergy List of the Aleutian Diocese for 1896. Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA). Fond 796. Series 178. Case 3549.

following in the south of Ukraine. He worked as a teacher in zemstvo schools, and in 1894 was ordained as the priest and spiritual father of the Saint Elizabeth community of Red Cross Sisters.⁴ Nedzelnitsky caught the attention of Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov) of the Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese during the latter's trip to the south of Russia and accepted his invitation to serve in the overseas diocese. At the suggestion of Bishop Nicholas, the Holy Synod appointed Father Nedzelnitsky Rector of the Saint Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Pittsburgh in 1895, and soon after he was appointed Dean of the New York District, which covered the eastern United States (the diocese had a presence in two more districts – Sitka and Unalaska, uniting the western United States and Alaska with the coastal islands).⁵ By that time, the Deanery found itself without a leader, since Father John's predecessor, the seasoned priest Eugene Balabin, who had been appointed shortly before on the recommendation of the Chief Procurator of the Most Holy Synod Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev himself, had failed to fulfil his duties. "Unfortunately, despite the fact that he has reasonable administrative skills and knowledge of office work, Priest Balabin did not prove himself to be at the height of his calling in Novy Svet, Bishop Nicholas wrote in his 1895 report. "Having entered into the trifles and petty quarrels of parish life, he immediately started to waste his energy on these trifles, and then, having become entangled in these petty quarrels, he was forced to leave his service in the Aleutian Diocese for good."⁶

The young dean, who was not yet thirty years at the time, diligently took up the management of the large church property. "He has thus far demonstrated obedience, zeal, and skill in managing the affairs of the parish and the deanery," Bishop Nicholas commented on Father Nedzelnitsky's initial work in the same report.⁷ The rector continued to justify the confidence his superiors had placed in him, remaining in good standing with the bishop. "The dean of the New York district worked especially hard to organize parish life in the newly established parishes, most notably to establish parish brotherhoods," the bishop noted two years later, lauding him as one of "those who stand out in the diocese for their zeal and efforts."⁸ But the following year, in 1898, Bishop Nicholas was replaced by St. Tikhon, who placed his own demands on his subordinates. Most notable in this respect was a set of written instructions on the rules for the inspection of deaneries by their pastors, which continue to be used to this day. These instructions also reveal a lot about Tikhon's personality – his prudence and tolerance, combined with an insistence on high standards and concern for his neighbours. "In Russia, deans usually inspect their districts twice a year. Here, however, with the long distances and high transportation costs, it will suffice to visit the parishes once

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For more on the New York Deanery, see: (Efimov, Lasaeva 2012: 86–94).

⁶ Bishop Nicholas. Report on the Aleutian Diocese for 1895. RGIA. Fond 796. Series 177. Case 3290, Sheet 5. For more detail, see: (Pechatnov 2021: 55).

⁷ Bishop Nicholas. Report on the Aleutian Diocese for 1895. RGIA. Fond 796. Series 177. Case 3290, Sheet 5.

⁸ At the Instance of the His Grace of the Aleutians, with a Report on the Diocese for 1987. RGIA. Fond 796. Series 179. Case 4034, Sheet 6, 11.

per year (and the most remote ones can be inspected once every two years, if there is no special need to do so more frequently,” he wrote in response to Nedzelnitsky’s report. “Emergency visits to parishes are performed by special order of the Diocesan Authority.

“When inspecting churches, the Dean must pay attention to the state of the Holy Gifts, Antimins, and Chrism; the availability of church supplies (vestments, icons, books) and what is missing; the state of the church itself (whether urgent repairs are needed); the correctness of the registers of births, marriages, and deaths, accounts books, clergy records, and liturgical journals (and if they are kept at all); the presence of a school at the church; the children’s knowledge of Orthodox prayers and the truths of the faith, and whether or they take part in reading and singing in the church. Misunderstandings between the clergy and the parishioners are to be clarified and resolved in a just manner, without diminishing the authority of the pastors in the eyes of the flock. The misdeeds of ignorance and some cases of neglect – especially from among the former Uniate clergy – may be treated with a certain leniency; but the misdeeds of impropriety and especially temptation, must be reported to me without concealing anything. Parishioners should be prompted to listen to and obey their pastors and they should receive what they are due. The Dean is also to ensure the proper decor of God’s temples, and take care of their debts (if they have any).

“Inspections of parishes shall be carried out at a time that is convenient for the Dean. Following the inspection, the Dean must send his report, stating which parishes he visited and when, as well as the orders and corrections that need to be implemented immediately... It is my hope that the Deans show initiative and command the necessary authority.”⁹

Father John’s report was written with these requirements in mind. It is quite traditional in its structure, covering all aspects of the life of the deanery, from its management to the characteristics of the clergy and the flock. The main thing that sets this report apart from other similar documents is the frankness and directness with which the Dean writes about the problems of the mission, with no attempt to embellish the picture and exaggerate his successes. His insightful analysis of the situation and the measures he proposes to correct it are also interesting. He focuses on the question of the accession to Orthodoxy of the Uniates – immigrants from Austria–Hungary and the western provinces of the Russian Empire (Rusyns, Serbs, people from Halych, and Little Russians), who would become the main source of growth of the Orthodox flock in America (Akimov 2020: 206–208). At the same time, the massive influx of immigrants came with serious costs associated with the cultural and religious differences between traditional Orthodoxy and its Uniate counterpart. Father John writes in detail about these problems, which continue to be relevant today. As a Little Russian himself,

⁹ September 23, 1899. Alaskan Russian Church Archives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (ARCA). Cont. D 452–453 (New York, N.Y. Nedzelnitsky, John, 1896–1899).

as well as a truly Orthodox missionary, he has a deep understanding of the features of both cultural and religious traditions. He understands the need for intercultural dialogue while at the same time preserving the foundations of the Orthodox faith. It is no coincidence that Father John carried out extensive missionary work and published the *Catechism of the Orthodox Christian Faith* in the Little Russian dialect, the closest to Russian possible. Putting forward his argument to St. Tikhon for the book to be published in the United States and the western provinces of Russia, Father John wrote with zest to the Right Reverend: “And if the Little Russian Catechism were distributed among the Little Russians and Belarussians in the Western region and the people could read, in their native dialect, an exposition of the Orthodox faith indicated the errors of the Catholics, then how many Russian souls would remain in Orthodoxy and not stray to Roman Catholicism!” He also worked on a historical essay in the Little Russian dialect about the origins of the union. The book, he wrote to Tikhon, “must, using historical facts, convey in vivid, colourful language, the political untruth of Poland, which attempted to Polonize the Russian people through the union, and thus appeal to the patriotism of Russians, to their Russian pride...”¹⁰ In 1904, he prepared another work entitled “The Science of the Orthodox Faith” in the Little Russian dialect, which St. Tikhon duly recommended for publication. Father John’s intolerant attitude towards the lack of restraint demonstrated by some of his fellow priests towards alcohol and other excesses is also worthy of note. Even before arriving in America, he wrote a lecture entitled “The Evil Enemy of Man, or You Reap What You Sow (Some Words against Drunkenness),” which was published in several editions in St. Petersburg.¹¹

In his report, Father John also makes several valuable proposals, many of which would later be put into action under Bishop Tikhon: the need to build new churches in Chicago and New York; the idea to move the diocese from San Francisco to New York; the project to create his own monastery to train monastic missionary priests, etc. There was a reason that Tikhon tended to agree with these proposals, making relevant notes in the margins. These notes are themselves extremely interesting, as they allow us to trace Tikhon’s initial reactions and the subsequent course of his thinking. The thoughtfulness, balanced attitude, and breadth of knowledge that distinguished the future Patriarch’s approach to solving the problems of church life can be felt in his every word. It is no coincidence that it was under him that the overseas diocese would reach the highest level of its development. The Bishop sent Father John’s report to all the members of the Alaskan Spiritual Board for review, a fact that in itself highlighted its importance. His report on the state of the diocese for 1898 included a few references to Father John’s report.¹²

¹⁰ To His Grace, Bishop Tikhon (received on July 23, 1905). ARCA, Cont. H 2-3. Correspondence from John Nedzelitsky. 1905.

¹¹ Nedzelitsky I. Y. 1898. The Evil Enemy of Man, or You Reap What You Sow (Some Words against Drunkenness). *Missionary Evangelist*, 3rd ed.

¹² Bishop Tikhon. Report on the State of the Aleutian Diocese for 1898. RGIA. Fond 796. Series 442. Case 1707, Sheet 2–3.

The growing New York Deanery would soon be reorganized, and Father John himself would finish his service in America in the spring of 1906 as rector of the Archangel Michael Church in Pittsburgh. At the request of St. Tikhon, he was awarded the Order of St. Anna. By that time, Father John had been granted a small pension from the Holy Synod for his years of service and started to prepare for his return to Russia, where his sick wife and son, as well as other relatives, were living in poverty and entirely dependent on him. “Domestic circumstances call me to Russia, and I am obliged to fulfil my duty as a father and head of the household,” he wrote Tikhon in March 1906. “My travel allowance will probably come through before my pension... And then it’s off to our dear, beloved Russia.”¹³ The priest had no idea that he would have to return to America.

Upon returning to Russia, Father John was engaged in missionary and teaching activities, primarily in Kyiv. At the recommendation of Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna (the future Holy Martyr), he would be awarded a *pálitsa* (a lozenge-shaped vestment awarded to priests for service) for his outstanding services in this field, and soon after the Order of St. Vladimir. During the initial years of the godless Bolshevik rule, Father John managed to avoid the tragic fate of his successor as New York Dean, Father John Kochurov, who would become the first new martyr of the Russian Orthodox Church. Fleeing persecution by the Soviet authorities, Father John was able to escape to America with his family, where he was offered a position as a priest in the newly formed Metropolia – one of the successors to the former diocese. He served in Massachusetts and Minnesota, and was rector of the parish of St. Mary’ Church (or the Protection of the Holy Mother of God) in Minneapolis. He was elevated to the rank of archpriest, and died in Elmhurst, Massachusetts, in 1946.

The report of Priest John Nedzelnitsky is published here in full. St. Tikhon’s comments are marked with square brackets, in bold, and placed immediately after the places in the text to which they refer. The underlined fragments (except where noted) are also the work of the archpriest. The text also includes brief comments of a reference or explanatory nature. As far as we are aware, this document has thus far escaped the attention of researchers and is being introduced into scholarly discourse for the first time.

¹³ Father John Nedzelnitsky. 2011. *Orthodox Ascetic in America*. (Advisor to His Grace Archbishop Tikhon, future Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia). In G. M. Soldatov (ed.). *Collection of Letters, Articles, and Documents*. P. 145. URL: <https://metanthonymemorial.org/nedzelnitskipt2.pdf>

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To His Grace, the Right Reverend Tikhon, Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaskan Diocese

From Dean Priest John Nedzelnitsky

Report on the State of the New York Deanery of the Aleutian Diocese for 1898¹⁴

I. Order and State of the Stewardship.

I have the honour to most respectfully inform your grace that:

A) I cannot praise the results of the inspection of the Deanery performed in 1898 for the following reasons. It is extremely difficult for a dean to supervise the pastoral and missionary activities of his priests and the life of the flock here in America, because the territory of the district entrusted to me is so large, and the churches are located at such a huge distance from each other, that it is impossible for the dean to visit all the places he should visit in the designated timeframes. The Minneapolis Church, for example, is located 1000 miles northwest of Allegheny, where the dean resides, and the Anzonina Church is 600 miles southeast of Allegheny. The other churches are just as far away from Allegheny, or almost as far. Despite this, I visited Minneapolis in May of last year, where I conducted an examination for the students at the Missionary School, audited the church affairs, and even served there and led some sermons. I visited other churches in the New York area, but not all of them. Further, it is difficult for the dean to gain a deep insight into the parish life of the churches because some priests are too distrustful of the dean, seeing him as a spy, an undercover operative. One of the priests who had returned to Orthodoxy from the Union called me a Jesuit to my face because I merely expressed the desire to be present when he served the liturgy in his church. **[The Uniate clergy in America are not used to discipline.]** Another priest is now going around telling everyone right and left that the dean is stupid and argues “like a child,” that the people are rebelling against the clergy and have two faces like the pagan god Janus, and so on. **[And others, upon conversion to Orthodoxy, are not averse to doing their former will, and for this reason do not like people who demand what is lawful from them; but God willing, this will cease to exist in time.]** Furthermore,

¹⁴ The top of the page contains a resolution: “Apr 8, 1899. To the Sp.[iritual] Board for reading by the members of Fr. Tikhon’s Dio.[ocese].” This is a reference to the Alaskan Spiritual Board, which opened in Novo-Archangelsk (now Sitka, Alaska) in 1841 and relocated to San Francisco before the end of the century. The Board was essentially no different from the spiritual consistory, and was an advisory and executive body for the management of the diocese under the jurisdiction of the ruling bishop. Its purpose was to provide comprehensive assistance to the bishop in the management of the diocese, dealing, in particular, with the church court in the diocese and the diocese’s finances. It would also manage the entire diocese in the event that the bishop’s see became vacant.

the Dean of the New York District does not enjoy sufficient authority among the clergy under his jurisdiction, because some of the priests a better educated than the dean, as they are candidates of the Academy, while the Dean was only a student there, and not for long; and that some clergymen hold a higher office than the dean, being archpriests or archimandrites, while the Dean is a simple priest. **[There is only one archpriest in the district, and he has already been dismissed from his post as dean, and the archimandrite (also the only one) is in no way subordinate to the Dean.]** In my extreme opinion, the dean here abroad, in N[orth] America should have the right to act according to the “Instructions for Deans” approved by the Holy Synod **[No one has taken this right away from him]**, and for the word of the dean to have the proper authority, he needs to stand above his fellow priests both in rank and in education. **[There is nothing like this in the New York District as of right now, and the present dean is in his rightful place.]** The clergy here in North America, especially the Uniate priests who have converted to Orthodoxy, need the authoritative supervision of the dean, because many clergy live secular lives, do not observe fasts; some of them go to theatres, circuses, drink alcohol immoderately, play pool, and so on.¹⁵ In writing about the denunciations and accusations against me and the often naïve, sometimes impudent and unfair criticisms made by some priests regarding certain orders of mine to steer parish life in some cities along the proper path, I have repeatedly asked His Grace Bishop Nicholas to relieve me of the post of dean.

B) In 1898, the Buffalo–Cleveland parish began its existence, when Priest Viktor Stepanov, who served as psalm reader for the Dean, moved from Allegheny to Cleveland. The Buffalo–Cleveland parish was separated from the Allegheny parish, whose rector served alternately in the Allegheny Church in Pennsylvania, in Buffalo, New York, and in Cleveland, Ohio.

– In 1898, the parishes were not formally closed, but some of them, one might say, because no priests have been there for a whole year, barely survived the plundering of our flock by the Uniate priests, who was still weakly established in Orthodoxy. The city of Shepton, for example, was without a priest for almost an entire year; the same is true of Ansonia, where Father Mikhail Balog,¹⁶ who had been entrusted with overseeing the parish, abandoned it to its fate. Father Grushka did not make an appearance

¹⁵ Not for nothing did St. Tikhon underline these unflattering words. He refers to them in his report on the state of the diocese for 1898, adding: “I will have the opportunity to speak about the eradication of the above-mentioned shortcomings, as well as about the activities of the clergy in general, their character and the direction they are heading, this spring, both with each priest individually during my visits to their parishes, and with all the priests of the New York Deanery at their proposed congress in the city of Allegheny in May (Bishop Tikhon. Report on the State of the Aleutian Diocese for 1898. RGIA. Fond 796. Series 442. Case 1707, Sheet 2 verso –3).

¹⁶ Mikhail Balog, who was Hungarian by origin, received a Uniate theological education. He had come to the United States in 1894 to organize Uniate parishes there, but would reunite with the Orthodox Church, where he was appointed Priest at the Orthodox Church in Bridgeport by Bishop Nicholas. He initially stood out for his zeal, but over time, he started to neglect his parish affairs, which caused discontent among parishioners. By 1900, he had left the service in the diocese.

in the Scranton Church for nigh on a year.¹⁷ The people of Scranton were so incensed by this that the Diocese Administration had to instruct Archpriest Toth to oversee the Scranton parish.¹⁸ But this poor Scranton will probably still pass into the hands of the Uniates if we, with the small number of priests we now have in America, continue to leave the people of this city to their fate.

II. Review of the Diocese.

In 1898, His Grace Bishop Nicholas visited Minneapolis, Chicago, Allegheny, and the New York parishes – Russian and Arabic – on his way to Europe. This was in December. In New York, Bishop Nicholas served the liturgy in the Arab church, and in the Russian church greeted His Imperial Highness Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich Romanov.¹⁹ Then, that very same December, His Grace, the Right Reverend Tikhon, Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaskan Diocese, served in the New York churches, and His Grace deigned to ordain the psalm reader Vladimir Kalnev as a deacon in the Russian church, and the teacher at the Shepton school, Miron Volkai, as a deacon in the Arab church. On December 6, His Grace Bishop Tikhon served the liturgy in the Allegheny Church and ordained Miron Volkai as a priest for the Shepton Church. In Chicago, the Bishop personally inspected the church, as he had inspected the churches in New York and the Allegheny Church.

III. The Churches.

There are 16 Orthodox churches in total in the New York Deanery District. In addition to these churches, which are under the jurisdiction of the dean living in the city of Allegheny, there are also churches in the New York District that are under the direct supervision of the Alaskan Spiritual Board, such as the Syro-Arab Church in New York and the Greek–Serbian Church in the city of Galveston. The Greek churches in Chicago and New York are under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Athens.

A) Before this, by 1898, all 16 churches had either been built or purchased by parishioners from non-Orthodox Christians or were located in rented buildings. B) In 1898, the churches were not consecrated again, and some have not been consecrated at all – both churches in Bridgeport, and the ones in Ansonia, Cleveland, Old Forge, Scranton, and Shepton, since no orders had been given to this effect by the Alaskan Spiritual Board. **[If the Magyars have a church in Bridgeport with no outstanding debts, and if it is registered in the name of the bishop, then it can be consecrated.]**

¹⁷ Grigory Grushka was a Uniate priest who converted to Orthodoxy, along with his parish. He served as rector of the church in Old Forge (Pennsylvania) and was the editor of the newspaper Svet ("Light"), published in the Little Russian language. In his report to the Holy Synod, St. Tikhon mentioned him as one of the former Uniates "who give reason to reproach them for negligence, inactivity, drunkenness, tactlessness, and occasional self-interest." (Bishop Tikhon. Report on the State of the Aleutian Diocese for 1900 (The American Period of the Life... 2014: 115)).

¹⁸ Father John is referring to Archpriest Alexis Toth (1853–1909), canonized as a saint by the Orthodox Church in America. A Uniate priest from Austria–Hungary, Father Alexis converted to Orthodoxy in the United States and became a tireless preacher of the Orthodox faith among Uniates. In his 17 years of service in the Orthodox Church (1892), Toth successfully converted more than 20,000 Uniates to Orthodoxy. See: (Smakouz (Iov) 2013: 111; Stokoe, Kishkovsky 1995: 15–16). At the time Father Nedzelitsky submitted his report, he was the rector of the Assumption Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

¹⁹ Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich Romanov, cousin of Tsar Nicholas II, who was visiting the United States at the time.

1) Not a single church in the New York Deanery has ever been built using funds from the Russian coffers, although it is true that the churches in New York and Chicago are in buildings that are rented using money from the Russian treasury. However, all the churches built before 1898, with the exception of the one in Scranton, did receive a one-time cash grant from the Alaskan Spiritual Board, and almost all of them received church items and vessels from the Board. The vestments, church ware, icons, and books have not yet been sent to the Scranton Church or the Hungarian Church in Bridgeport. [**Send vestments and liturgical books to Scranton.**] Old Forge and Ansonia do not have enough church ware, and Cleveland has not received any church books [**Send.**], meaning that Lenten services, for example, cannot be celebrated because they do not have enough of the necessary books. I believe that all churches should receive assistance, at the very least church ware, icons, books, and vestments, from the Alaskan Spiritual Board. This way, poor, working people who are building churches with their own hard-earned money and who have received a modicum of help in the form of items and books from the Orthodox mission would get some moral satisfaction and material proof that, by converting to Orthodoxy, a Uniate is welcomed into the bosom of the Church – not as a stepson, but as a lost son. [**I also believe this and will make sure that it will happen.**]

2) I inspected the churches in 1898, but not all of them, because I would have had to spend a great deal of money on “tickets” to travel the massive distances between them, and because the Allegheny parish cannot be left without a priest for a long time. There should be a second priest in Allegheny, even if he only receives the salary of a psalm reader, as was the case in 1897 – if the Allegheny priest is the dean, of course. [**Priests are not particularly happy when they receive the salary of a psalm reader. And there is no way that we could pay another priest a priest’s salary, given that we are already in a situation where two or even three churches have to be entrusted to one priest.**] In this case, the dean could inspect all the churches in his district annually.

3) The district is not overflowing with churches; in fact, there is a distinct shortage of churches there. With this being the case, there should certainly be a church in the Russian or Byzantine style as a separate building in New York – this global trading city, where, sooner or later, the Bishop of the Aleutian (or, more accurately, the American) Diocese will have a seat due to the circumstances that arise [**Even without this “fortune-telling,” New York does need its own church.**], and Chicago, the beating heart of North America, should get its own Church too. The prestige of our dear Russia, the guardian and representative of Orthodoxy across the globe and the most powerful state in the world, demands it. Views on this issue were expressed in detail in the American *Orthodox Herald*.²⁰ Now, at a time when churches in New York and Chicago are huddled in private rented houses, with the clergy occupying regular (family)

²⁰ The first Orthodox periodical, published in America in 1896 in Russian, with some articles translated into English. It was published by the Aleutian and Alaskan Diocese at the St. Nicholas Church in New York, whose rector, Father A. Khotovitsky, edited the *Herald* from 1896 to 1914.

apartments upstairs, and the kitchens are downstairs... Such squalor is downright offensive to Russian sensibilities... On how to begin building churches in Chicago and New York, Your Grace will be pleased to listen to the ideas and considerations of the clergy and parishioners of these cities during Your Grace's next visit to these parishes. **[Work has already been started in this direction.]**

4) What can I say about the state of clerical writing as a whole? It is in a sad state, as it has been in previous years! Why is this? Because the clergy who joined Orthodoxy from the Union do not accept written reports and records, considering this to be unnecessary, especially in America, the "land of the free." **[I have first-hand experience of this from my service in Chelm Land.]** The only happy exception to this is Father Archpriest Toth [This pleases me greatly, and I am thankful to him.] Then I had to teach the young priests – granted, those with a higher education – how to keep all kinds of records (vital records, income and expenditure records, etc.) **[They were not taught this there.]** Most of the priests consider the Dean's requests to send reports or similar documents to be unworthy of their attention. This is why the Dean in North America is constantly on edge and is likely considered lazy and slow in the eyes of the diocesan authorities. **[On the contrary – he is considered to be diligent in his duties.]** But the Dean does not want to make up all kinds of facts and figures and mislead the diocesan authorities **[Nor should he]** about the state of affairs in the District, and it is frustrating to have to wait for this information from the clergy.

5) There were no hospitals or alms-houses attached to the churches in the New York District, although the Allegheny parish hopes, with God's help, to someday open an alms-house for the decrepit and parishioners maimed in factory accidents. **[God willing!]**

IV. The clergy.

[1)] The clergymen who were in service in 1898 are generally extremely well-educated – one was a Doctor of Theology, one was a valid and another [a former – Author] students of the Academy; many had received a full seminary education – some in Russia, others in Austria;²¹ the only exception was Father Stepanov, who completed just four classes at the Theological Seminary.

2) Not all clergy were correct in their attitude towards performing the divine services. For example, the priest of the Magyar church in Bridgeport, Father Balog, who was supposed to oversee the Ansonia parish, did not perform the liturgy there for at least three consecutive months. All other clergy were faithful to their teaching activities, preaching at every holiday and Sunday liturgy. Sermons were given regularly in the cities of Allegheny, New York, and Chicago.

²¹ Here, and throughout the text, "Austria" refers to Cisleithania, a part of Austria–Hungary that included regions that are in modern Croatia, Poland, and Ukraine. See (Zhdanovskaya 2018).

3) The clergy mostly carried themselves in a moral manner last year, although there were some lamentable exceptions. Fathers Grushka and Balog had occasion to drink excessively and frequent taverns. It pains me to have to say such words about my fellow priests, but I do not dare hide this from Your Grace. Almost all²² the priests smoke tobacco, and a great many of those who have converted to Orthodoxy from the Union do so in public, claiming that both Uniate and Orthodox bishops smoke in Austria. I did not encounter any cases of extortion for services. [**Praise the Lord!**] It has been noted that some priests wear jackets, colourful and dandified pants, and ties. [**This must be stopped immediately: it is enough that they are allowed to wear secular clothes.**]²³ Some of them play cards too. The only way to steer these people back towards the proper path, Your Grace, is through your simple, heartfelt personal conversations with all the priests gathered together [**I will bring this up at the Congress**],²⁴ and the only way to eradicate the reprehensible habits of the clergy once and for all is through the rigorous (and no doubt personal) selection by Your Grace of people to occupy clerical positions in America. [**Unfortunately, the pool of qualified candidates is not particularly large.**] Even if these people are not highly educated, they must necessarily be of impeccable moral character, be highly religious, and, moreover, understand the language and customs of the people who speak different dialects here in America, especially Little Russian. The problem is that the Halychynans, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Croats do not understand the Great Russian priests, such as Father Konstantin Popov.²⁵ What benefits can we expect from the sermons of these missionaries?

4) The number of priests at present is insufficient to continue the work of the Orthodox mission among the Uniates. Meanwhile, it is incredibly expensive to bring in priests from Russia, and there is no money to support them here. [**Unfortunately, this is the case!**] It is thus necessary to discuss how to better attract Uniate priests who are already living here in America to convert to Orthodoxy [**But they won't serve without a salary!?**], and how to get more hieromonachs from Russia who would be able to travel around the United States, Canada, and Brazil, to those cities and villages where an Orthodox clergyman is needed, with the Alaskan Spiritual Board covering as little of the expenses as possible. I personally believe that it would be very useful to establish a monastery in America with a sufficient number of hieromonachs. This way, in a year or two, one or two dozen Uniate priests – ardent papists – could be ousted from the service, and several thousand Uniates who would happily agree to support the hieromonachs out of their own pockets in the newly opened parishes would come over to Orthodoxy. But how can we establish a monastery in America? I dare say that

²² The text here was underlined by Nedzelnitsky.

²³ Until 1917, the clergy in Russia was prohibited from appearing in public places in secular clothing.

²⁴ The Congress of Priests of the New York Deanery was held in May 1899 under the chairmanship of St. Tikhon. One of the main decisions made at the Congress, in view of the problems with the Uniate parishes, was to “refrain for the time being from joining the Uniates in whole masses and parishes” (Report to the Holy Synod, October 20 / November 3, 1899) (The American Period of the Life... 2014: 102).

²⁵ Father John is referring to the Rusyns and Croats here.

it would not be too difficult to do. The Holy Synod could simply instruct the extremely wealthy Kyiv Lavra to establish a hermitage or monastery here at the Lavra's expense – specifically, to send several hieromonachs, an abbot, and hierodeacons, as well as an annual allowance from the Lavra funds for the maintenance of the monastery until the hieromonachs take up positions at the Orthodox parishes. **[It would be desirable in some respects to replace priests with hieromonachs, and the Right Reverend Nicholas has already thought about establishing a monastery in America, but the most well-known monasteries in Russia did not respond to his call, and no monks were willing to go to America.]** However, the monastery itself, with constant daily service, would receive some income from the Rusyns, who are incredibly fond of monasteries but do not have a single one in America. I dare think that the Kyiv Metropolitan Ioanniky, a pre-eminent priest in the Holy Synod and a well-known zealot in the matter of bringing reason to the Shtundists who had fallen away from Orthodoxy, could, with a simple “yes,” as the sacred archimandrite of the Kyiv Lavra, also establish a missionary anti-Uniate monastery of Little Russian monks in America. Any parish church can easily be converted into a monastery church – all that would need to be done is to erect a building for the brethren and house for visiting pilgrims. It matters not if the hieromonachs are poorly educated – they can read, and even deliver simple sermons in the Little Russian dialect, and by performing divine services in accordance with the charter, they would make the Uniates love Orthodox worship. It would be advisable to have a monastery where all the psalm readers of current and future parishes could be sent to learn ritual singing and reading.²⁶ Our current psalm readers, who have converted to Orthodoxy from the Union, each sing in their own manner, and sometimes do not even sing, but howl. The only decent psalm readers in the entire New York District are the ones in Allegheny, New York, and Minneapolis. The rest of them will have to learn how to sing sooner or later, or else be replaced by those who have completed a course at the Minneapolis Missionary School, for I believe that allowing Uniate singing would, for various reasons, do nothing for the cause. **[Absolutely]**

5) The relations between clergy and flock in 1898 were generally satisfactory, except for those cases where, for example, the failure of Father Balog to conduct services caused an outcry and led to complaints from the Ansonians and Bridgeport Rusyns. **[Balog is planning to leave the diocese of his own volition.]**

6) Father Hotovitzky,²⁷ who went to serve in the city of Philadelphia and served as Chairman of the Board of the Mutual Aid Society with no remuneration and obviously helping the cause; Father Stepanov, who “collected”²⁸ for the Buffalo and Cleveland

²⁶ The text here was underlined by Nedzelnitsky.

²⁷ Archpriest Alexander Hotovitzky (1872–1937), canonized by the Russian Church as a holy martyr, was ordained as a priest in the United States in 1896. He became a leading Church figure, as well as companion of St. Tikhon both in America and, later, in Russia. For more on the American period of his activity, see (Pechatnov, Pechatnov 2022).

²⁸ Nedzelnitsky Russifies the English verb “to collect” here to make *коллектовать* (*kollektovat'*), which does not exist in Russian. The correct Russian word is *собиравший* (*sobiravshy*), from the verb *собирать* (*sobirat'*).

churches; the Allegheny priest,²⁹ who collected for his church and gathered a parish of 1000 people of various nationalities through his preaching and the gentle treatment of the people and founded several brotherhoods in different cities; and Father Archpriest Toth, who with great zeal entered into heated debates with the enemies of Orthodoxy on the pages of Rusyn, Slovak, and English newspapers and built up a parish of 1000 people, all worked extremely hard. Father Konstantin Popov and Deacon Vladimir Kalnev should also be mentioned for their outstanding work in parish schools. **[Some of the people mentioned here have been recommended for an award]**

V. The flock.

1) In 1898, the flock in the District expanded by 192 people (men and women) through the accession to Orthodoxy from the Union, Roman Catholicism, the schism, the Maronites, and Judaism. The highest number of converts was witnessed in Allegheny. Defections from Orthodoxy to the Union occurred in the Bridgeport Russian, Ansonian, and Shepton parishes, because there were no Orthodox priests in these parishes for almost an entire year, as the Shepton priest, Father Viktor Toth,³⁰ had once again returned to the Union, and the Ansonia Priest, Father Vasiliev, was sent to Russia. Father Balog, who was supposed to be in charge of the Bridgeport Russian parish, allowed 80 Russians to summon a Uniate priest from Brooklyn to hear the confessions of Bridgeport residents. **[And now he's asking for a raise!]** If we want to stop people falling away from Orthodoxy to the Union, our mission needs more priests **[And more resources!]** and we cannot abandon new converts to Orthodoxy to their fate, as the people of Scranton have been left to theirs. A total of 422 Orthodox children were born in the District in 1898, while 79 Orthodox adults and children died.

2) Uniates who have converted to Orthodoxy are very religious. They like to visit holy churches, frequently confess and receive Holy Communion **[This is reassuring]**, and ask us to perform health liturgies and the Mass of the Resurrection.³¹

3) Orthodox Rusyns generally know the basic truths of faith, the commandments and prayers much better than, for example, our peasants in Little Russia. This is because, in Austria, Uniate churches are required to have parish schools, while Orthodox churches in Russia have only recently started to establish such schools.

4) The following priests are loved by their parishioners: a) The priest in Allegheny³² for his simply, fatherly treatment of parishioners of various nations, his diligent preaching of sermons in Russian and Little Russian, his reading of sermons for the

²⁹ Father John was too modest to name himself here.

³⁰ A Uniate priest from Hungarian Rus who converted to Orthodoxy in 1893 alongside his parish in Osceola Mills, Pennsylvania, and was appointed Second Priest in the Wilkes-Barre parish (where his brother, Father Alexis Toth, was the rector) by Father Nicholas, and assigned to the St. John the Baptist Church in Shepton. He returned to the Union in 1898.

³¹ Requesting a liturgy for the health or repose of individuals is a Uniate tradition brought to Orthodoxy by Uniates who had converted to Orthodox Christianity. The tradition is alien to Orthodoxy, according to which the Divine Liturgy is not something than can be requested, as it is not a private "service," but a common service of the entire Church that requires the presence and active participation of all members of the church community. The tradition was criticized in America, in particular by Father Alexander Schmemmann (see, for example, (Schmemmann 1974: 41–42).

³² That is, he is talking about himself, Father John.

Serbs in their language, and his conducting of divine services for the Greeks in the Greek language; b) Priest Hotovitzky for his cordial attitude to his pastoral duties, his sociability, and his lively and masterful sermons; c) Archpriest Alexis Toth for zealously protecting Orthodoxy through the press and for preaching in response to criticisms by Uniates and Catholics; d) Father Stepanov for his concern about increasing the number of parishioners by welcoming converts from the Union to Orthodoxy; and e) Deacon Vladimir Kalnev for his diligence in school – teaching the children of parishioners church singing and reading in the *kliros*.

5) Orthodox Rusyns like to donate to their church, either in the form of an *ofira*,³³ or in the form of a *kollekt rochny*,³⁴ and so on. In this respect, the Rusyns differ from the Austrian Serbs, who make no donations whatsoever to Russian churches, as they want their own Serbian churches. The Greeks and Arabs are somewhat “lukewarm” – they want to get something from the church without actually giving anything to it. [**We do not do anything to stop people of other faiths from having their own churches and their own clergy – we have enough of our own**]. I believe that national considerations and the interests of Orthodox Greeks, Arabs, and Croats play a major role here.

VI. Catechetical teachings

Catechetical teachings have long been conducted in the Allegheny Church only, usually after Vespers with an Akathist, either by a psalm reader if he has studied it in a theological school, or by a priest. The people love all kinds of church sermons and teachings, and all priests should thus be encouraged to expound the Orthodox catechism to parishioners. [**Indeed, they should! I will propose this at the Congress**]

VII. Church schools.

There were no schools at the following churches in 1898: the New York Russian church, the Ansonian church, the Bridgeport Russian church, the Scranton church, the Buffalo church, and the Chicago church, although on paper there was a school at the latter. It is unfortunate that the school at the Bridgeport Russian church was closed due to the lack of a decent psalm reader, especially since it was ranked second best school in the entire district behind the Minneapolis school two years ago both in terms of the number of students and in terms of their performance, particularly in church singing. But I have prepared a special statement and report on the state of schools for 1898.

Looking at the overall state of the New York district in 1898, I can conclude that the harvest is great and the labourers are few: there are no good psalm readers and teachers, and very few priests. [**It should be added that resources are low too.**] This is why it is impossible to bring more Uniate parishes to Orthodoxy, as the small number of Orthodox priests in America begs the question: Who will pastor the new parishes that would presumably be opened?

³³ Ukrainian *ofipa* – “offer”/“donation.”

³⁴ “Annual collection” from the Ukrainian *roku* – “year”).

Reporting on the state of the district for 1898, I would most respectfully add that I have submitted the statistical data on the deanery for 1898 for the discretion of Your Grace: No. 297 – account books A, B, and C on income and expenditure, dated February 15; No. 298 – account books on church debts, births, deaths, marriages, and information on those who joined the Orthodoxy, dated February 15; and No. 299 – statistical data attendance at confession and on parishioners by tribe, dated February 16.

1899, March 2
Allegheny
No. 236

Begging for the Archpastoral blessing for myself, I remain, Your Grace, the Most Merciful Archpastor, Father, most humble novice, the Dean Priest John Nedzelnitsky.

* * *

The publication of this relatively small document gives us an insight into what was going on in the diocese, far from the Russian capital. The objective and subjective difficulties that the responsible and realistic church leader encountered here in the latter half of the 1890s demonstrate without a doubt that the problems facing the church leadership were not limited to material or organizational “injections,” although they were closely connected with them. At the same time, the problems in this period were clearly not the result of any confessional or national exclusivity – the sober and reasonable approach of the honest priest and the attentive position of his superiors presented an opportunity for at least some of them to be solved by combining (1) the reorganization of management efforts and (2) a competent staffing policy. Perhaps the most reasonable conclusion that can be drawn from our analysis of the document is that the individual who was prepared to put these efforts into action played a central role in the development of the Orthodox Church in America.

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