

Bitter Foe Of Church Recanted On Deathbed

Voltaire, 'Apostle Of Freethinkers', Died A Catholic, Documents Reveal

Paris—(NC)—Voltaire, one of the most famous figures in history, the 18th-century apostle of free thinkers, the hero of skeptics and the god of anticlericals, died a Catholic, contrary to all that has been thought up to the present.

During his last illness he retracted all his errors in writing and returned to the Church.

THESE FACTS were revealed here by Jacques Danvez, in an article in the review, Le Monde Littéraire. The author based his article on documents discovered in the archives of a Paris notary.

One of these was a document signed by Voltaire himself and two witnesses which had been given to the notary by Voltaire's confessor, Father Gaultier, a former Jesuit who was stationed at the parish of St. Sulpice in Paris at the time of Voltaire's death in 1778.

THE DOCUMENT states: "I, the undersigned, having been vomiting blood for four days at the age of 84 years and not having been able to get to church and the pastor of St. Sulpice having been willing to add to his good works that of sending to me Father Gaultier, priest, declare that I have confessed to him that I die in the holy Catholic religion in which I was born, hoping that Divine Mercy will desire to forgive all my errors, and that if I have ever scandalized the Church, I ask for God's and his pardon."

Voltaire, the outstanding figure of the 18th century intellectual movement known as the "Enlightenment" was a prolific author whose works had great success. He was a bitter enemy of the Church and carried on a constant campaign against it in his writings, sending many letters with the words "Ecrasez l'Infamie." This phrase, which means "Down with the Infamous Thing," is usually considered to have referred to the Church.

UNTIL NOW historians have generally agreed that Voltaire died without repenting. They have cited as proof the statements of his physician, Thomas Chénier, a Protestant who was scandalized by Voltaire's impley of his secretary, Wagnere, and of his friend d'Alembert, another noted author and intellectual leader who wrote a letter to King

the documents on which M. Danvez's article is based. They include a written report signed by Father Gaultier and notarized in 1782 after the priest had learned about the Swiss pamphlet. In his statement Father Gaultier denied having anything to do with the publication of the pamphlet and denounced the harm that could be done by its untrue facts. To establish the truth of this matter, he deposited five documents with the notary.

These included a letter of February 20, 1778, in which Voltaire agreed to receive him; a letter of February 26, in which Voltaire asked him to come soon; and a letter from Voltaire's niece of February 27 also urging him to come quickly.

During this time Father Gaultier had notified Archbishop de Beaumont of Paris about the matter and the Archbishop, in a letter of February 27, authorized him to try to convert Voltaire but urging the utmost discretion. The final document was the retraction or to administer the Last Sacraments.

THESE FACTS are denied by

Red Newspapers Rebuke Comrades On Foul Talk

London—(NC)—All users of profane and vulgar language, take note. Even the communists don't like it. Especially not when the offenders are young people.

But apparently too many citizens still have a tendency to interlard their conversation with vulgar and offensive words. KOMSOMOL PRAVDA seems to think that a verbal reprimand couched in dignified and restrained language, of course, is needed especially by a great many offenders in the U.S.S.R. It devoted over two columns of space to a comrade of that city, complaining of the vulgarities that have shocked his ears there.

FOR SEVERAL months, the papers have been assailing doublets and hoodlums and what they call the persistence of "small private ownership, morality and psychology" in the Soviet homeland.

The current emphasis, however, is on cleaning out "evil words from our rich expressive language. Taking the name of God in vain is presumably no longer a common vice in Russia, since, according to the Kremlin, nobody, except a few "superstitious" folks, even thinks of God much less mention His name, reverent or otherwise.

Reds Release Three American Priests



Hong Kong—Three American priests are shown on their arrival here from Hunan Province, China, after being released by the Chinese Communist government as a result of the recent Geneva Conference. All members of the Passionist Order, they are left to right: Fathers Lawrence Muller, C.P., 35, of Jersey City, N.J.; Linus Lombard, C.P., 55, of Ipswich, Mass.; and Ernest Hotz, C.P., 35, of Brooklyn, N.Y. The priests said that while in Red China they were not under arrest or mistreated, although they had frequently been insulted and mocked because of their faith. (RNS Photo.)

Communist Radio Dodges Big Question: 'Why Do Some People Believe In God?'

London—(NC)—A highlight of the Soviet Union's new anti-religious propaganda campaign was provided when the Moscow Radio broadcast an "answer" to the question: "Why do some people believe in God?"

ACCORDING TO the Moscow Radio, the question was addressed to the youth newspaper, Pionerskaya Pravda, by several school children, and was "answered" by an associate member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He identified himself only as Konstantinov.

Konstantinov failed to give a direct, straight answer to the youngsters' question. He lashed out, instead, at what he called the capitalist exploitation of religion.

But apparently too many citizens still have a tendency to interlard their conversation with vulgar and offensive words.

Declaring that "religion is a harmful remnant of capitalism against which Soviet society is struggling," Konstantinov said that in Russia "the overwhelming majority of the people do not believe in God, but even we have some who still do so."

THE MOSCOW RADIO announced meanwhile that two more sections will be opened this year in the department of the Academy of Sciences at Leningrad devoted to the history of

religion and atheism. The Kremlin's current drive against religion was marked also by a protest against children taking part in religious services made by the newspaper Stravropol'skaya. Said this paper: "Religion prejudices are a remnant of the cursed capitalist past and hinder the progress of communist construction in the Soviet Union. . . . It is necessary with boldness and determination to expose the reactionary essence of religious prejudices as well as the harm they can do to communist reconstruction."

Records Classified in Archdiocese

New Orleans—(NC)—Documents and letters—dating back to 1778—that have bearing on the area of the Archdiocese of New Orleans have been cataloged and assembled in new steel filing cabinets through year-long work now nearing completion.

In addition, the Chancery office now has 247 rolls of microfilm, copies of every record of baptism, confirmation and marriage in all the parishes in the archdiocese. If a parish loses its original records, the Chancery now can supply duplicates. There are between one and two million of these entries.

Queen Elizabeth's Gift To Catholic Cathedral Irks Scottish Sect

Edinburgh, Scotland—(NC)—Queen Elizabeth II was sharply criticized here by the Free Church of Scotland for having made a donation recently to the fund for the restoration of St. George's Cathedral at Southwark, London, which was destroyed in World War II.

The Free Church of Scotland is Presbyterian but distinct from the Church of Scotland, which comprises the largest single group of Scottish Presbyterians.

THE SCOTTISH minority church expressed "deep concern" especially at the Queen's action in "permitting" publicity for her contribution to the rebuilding of the Catholic Cathedral. The amount of the Queen's gift has not been disclosed.

In a resolution adopted here, the Commission of Assembly, the Free Church's executive body, declared that the Queen's gift "raises a constitutional issue of vital importance to our Protestant nation. In the coronation, the Queen solemnly undertook to pledge herself to uphold the Protestant faith of the nation."

"IT IS, IN our opinion," the resolution said, "quite inconsistent with these vows that she should uphold a faith that is antagonistic to the Protestant religion, and that in these days putting forth all its might to undermine and overthrow our national Protestantism."

"As the act of Her Majesty is without precedent in this realm since the Reformation," the resolution added, "the studied publicity it has received is calculated to do untold harm to our Protestant Faith to lead to confusion and bewilderment and to offend the conviction of Her Majesty's most loyal Protestant subjects."

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S gift to the Southwark Cathedral fund was believed to mark the first time that a British monarch has

subscribed toward a Catholic church since the Reformation. The Duke of Edinburgh, the Queen's husband, also has subscribed toward the appeal. Meanwhile the British government's War Damage Commission is subscribing a sum of \$1,115,000 toward the rebuilding.

Restoration work on the cathedral, which is one of the most beautiful modern churches in Britain, began in the summer of 1953 and is expected to take five years.

Anglican Bishop Sees Catholics Winning Canada

Minneapolis, Minn.—(RNS)—An Anglican bishop told the World Anglican Congress here that Anglicans in Canada are "losing the battle of the cradle and immigration" to Roman Catholics. He said it is being predicted that Canada will be a Catholic country by 1970.

The Rt. Rev. George Luxton, London, Ont., Bishop of the Huron diocese, proposed that the congress ask Anglican families to resist "planned parenthood" and other practices which limit the size of families, such as job-seeking by mothers and housing restrictions against children.

Dean James Pike of the Protestant Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, asked the congress to speak out against mixed marriages. He said Anglican clergymen would thus have a stronger policy, for example, when Roman Catholics seek to marry Anglicans.

Right To Leave Red Zone Unknown In Vietnam Areas

Hanoi—(NC)—People in areas occupied by communist-controlled Vietnam at the time of the cease-fire don't even know that the Geneva Agreement gives them the right to depart to another zone.

According to the fourteenth article of the Geneva agreement, authorities of a region controlled by one party must "authorize and assist" civilians who so desire to move to the zone of the other party.

ACCORDING TO individual refugees escaping from their areas, the Vietnam have not even made this clause known and have done nothing to carry it out.

The clause is mere mockery unless it applies to civilians in the Vietnam zone.

defending the Geneva agreement before the French parliament. He asserted that if he had not gotten this guarantee, the negotiations might have been halted. It was the first time, he declared, that such a clause had been accepted by a communist-controlled state.

IF THIS CLAUSE now remains an empty gesture regarding 75 per cent of the Vietnamese concerned, it will be a bitter injustice. It will further weaken the prestige of France and of other western governments among the peoples of Southeast Asia.

It is estimated that about 750,000 Catholics lived in the areas under Vietnam control at the time of the cease-fire.

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