

The Slavonic Orthodox Church?

Peter Levenda is a well-known historian of the occult and the author of many books on the subject. He was raised as a Catholic in New York City. From information he has revealed on several podcasts (such as the *Why Files*, among others), it seems Levenda was raised in a “mixed Catholic household”—one parent was Roman Catholic and the other Byzantine Catholic. He probably attended one of the two Byzantine Catholic parishes located in Manhattan, where the current pastor is a friend of mine.

To avoid the Vietnam era draft, Levenda and a friend created the “Slavonic Orthodox Church.” This was a fictitious Orthodox Church that did not and does not exist, but it could certainly sound official to someone not familiar with Eastern Christianity. Slavonic is the root language used in Slavic Christianity, much in the way that Latin is used in the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, it is a dead liturgical language used in Eastern Orthodoxy and Eastern Catholicism. At the time Levenda was attending Sunday services, Slavonic was used in worship, with many parishes transitioning to English services. Levenda and his friend thought that they could “beat the draft” if they were classified as clergy. Later on, the two teenagers were able to attend the funeral of Robert F. Kennedy as “clergy” and were seated in positions of honor. Levenda recounts that at one time he and his friend were actually alone in St. Patrick’s Cathedral with the remains of Robert Kennedy and the Kennedy family. The Slavonic Orthodox Church began as a teenage prank or improvised scheme that accidentally pulled him into real Orthodox splinter-church politics.

What essentially began as a joke escalated. After presenting themselves as clergy, they encountered a bishop from the American Orthodox Catholic Church in the Bronx, who asked what denomination they belonged to. Levenda answered, “Slavonic Orthodox Church.” Rather than dismissing them, the bishop invited them to visit his church. From there, Levenda became entangled with various independent Orthodox groups, including Ukrainian, Russian, Syrian, and other jurisdictions. In other words, what began as an

adolescent act of religious theater became part of the messy world of noncanonical or semi-independent Orthodox ecclesiastical lineages.

The larger point Levenda seems to draw from the story is that fringe religious, occult, political, and intelligence-adjacent networks can overlap in bizarre ways. A fake church name, invented on the spot, became an entry point into real institutional rivalries, episcopal claims, and splinter Orthodox politics. These interactions are beyond the scope of this article, but are certainly interesting readings.

⚖️ Note: The comments concerning Levenda's religious upbringing are the result of original research. I believe this information to be correct, and I attempted to contact the author to confirm the details. He has not responded.