

FROM THE FATHERS

“FORASMUCH as all sins arise through a love of pleasure or avarice or vainglory, we can say that lying has its roots in these three vices: a man has to avoid blame and humiliation, to fulfil his own desires, or to gain something; and he never stops turning this way and that, using every trick of speech until he accomplishes his purpose.”

VENERABLE DOROTHEOS OF GAZA, SIXTH CENTURY

“LET NO ONE who thinks rightly suppose that the sin of lying is a small matter, for the All-Holy Spirit pronounced the most awful sentence of all against it, above all sins. If Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie (Ps. 5:4), as David says to God, what will they suffer who stitch an oath to a lie?”

VENERABLE JOHN OF THE LADDER, SEVENTH CENTURY

“WHENEVER the evil one speaks falsehood, he speaks from what is his own; when men use falsehood, they use what belongs to another. The devil is the originator of falsehood, and himself the chief liar.”

BLESSED THEOPHYLACT OF OCHRID, + C. 1105 A.D.

“NEVER LIE, but always tell the truth, for all falsehood and deceit are the most harmful of all vices, the customary work only of the devil.”

SAINT TIKHON OF ZADONSK, + 1783 A.D.

“HE WHO DESIRES to acquire a good conscience and honesty must not permit himself even the slightest false or crafty word, neither in important matters, nor in unimportant.”

VENERABLE NIKON OF OPTINA, + 1931 A.D.



THE HUMILITY OF THE GIVER OF THE LAW BEFORE THE LAW GIVEN BY HIM

COME NOW, lovers of Christ, let us behold the manifestation of wondrous mysteries. *He Who Is*, Who is borne upon the Cherubim and hymned by the Seraphim, is now brought into the Temple by the Virgin. He, Who purifies all things, and is the Fountain of all holiness, is brought into the holy place by the unwedded Mother. He Who abides in light unapproachable, and Who clothed the heavens with clouds, now, wrapped in swaddling bands, is brought into the Temple and held in aged arms. The One, for Whom the heavens are His throne and the earth His footstool, is now embraced by a frail old man, rejoicing him. When the Lord conversed with Moses on Sinai, and through him gave the Law, then the mountain quaked and thick cloud was upon it, and thunder and lightning proceeded from Him (Ex. 19:16). And now, as a forty-day old baby, He is carried into the Temple, in accordance with the Law of Moses; He comes with His mother to receive the blessing from the priest, though He is Himself the highest of High Priests, Who has come forth from Heaven. The Son of the Most Blessed and Unoriginate Father, is ransomed as a sacrifice, as the first-born Child of Israel; for Himself He gives two doves, Who has redeemed the whole race of man from the curse of the Law, and given His most holy Blood for him.

O, dread mystery! O, terrible and wondrous sight! From before the ages it has not be heard, neither in heaven nor on earth has it been seen: the Creator of heaven of earth, the King and Master of the Angels, submits to that law given His creatures. He has changed the laws of na-

ture by His incorrupt birth: for He was born before the ages of the bosom of the Father without mother, before the beginning of time, an effulgence proceeding forth as Light from Light, true God from true God; thus too He was born of the Immaculate Virgin without the seed of man, a birth beyond comprehension, more exalted than all reason, of the Holy Spirit, according to the Angel's annunciation. And the Law which was given to weak women, he does not change, but submits Himself to it and His unwedded Mother. Moses wrote that, among the Israelite people, every firstborn child of the male sex should be dedicated to God, because once in Egypt God had preserved the firstborn of the Israelites and smitten the Egyptians with death. From that time forth, the Jews began to offer their firstborn sons to the Lord and offered sacrifices and redemption for them. To this law, the Giver of the Law Himself, the Son of God, submitted, that He might free us from that law. He, the Lamb without price, pure and sinless, for the purification and salvation of the whole race of man, offered Himself as a gift to God and His Father; He delivered us from the law of wretched and lowly sacrifice; and being the Treasury of incorruptible riches, He gives just two doves.

But such sacrifices pertained only to usual women, who had given birth according to the laws of nature. At this time, for forty days they were unclean, and were separated from the company of people, and did not enter the holy place, until they had kept the days of their purification. A similar discipline is kept with regard to Christian women. For forty days after the birth of an infant, they do not enter the church, as has been appointed by the Holy Fathers by the canon and by oath. The Holy Eastern Church has decreed that a Christian woman, on the fortieth day after her delivery, should come with her infant to the church, receive a blessing from the priest and the prayer of purification. If the infant is of the male sex, he is taken within the holy altar, around the very Throne (Holy Table) on which the dread Mysteries are celebrated, - the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, as a gift to God the Father, if offered under the appearance of bread and wine, He is pierced, He is broken, and given as nourishment to the faithful, sanctifying and illuming them, purifying and strengthening them. If the infant is of the female sex, then she is carried up to the doors of the holy altar. From this time the child becomes a member of the Holy Church and the woman is purified of any natural

defilement by the prayers of the priest and the power of the Holy Spirit. For in the prayer the priest only moves his lips, and it is the Holy Spirit which accomplishes and sanctifies everything.

The most pure, faultless, incorrupt Virgin, the unwedded Mother, who had given birth to God the Word according to the flesh, had no need of the forty-day purification. She is purer than any purity and more radiant than the sun or any radiance. She bore for us the most radiant Light, Who gives the sun its radiance, the moon and the stars their beauty, who illumines heaven and earth, and all the heavenly orders. So, in very truth, the Birthgiving of the Ever-Virgin is more exalted than every natural birthgiving. She conceived her Son being a pure virgin, and brought Him forth while remaining a virgin, and even after birthgiving she remains a virgin. For the Son of God entered her womb, without injuring the virginal hymen, and He came forth from her, having taken on the flesh, preserving her intact, just as the word of a person might enter the hearing of another person, and does not damage the organ of hearing, or it might be heard through the walls of a house but does not break that partition; or like a ray of sunlight passes through glass into a dwelling, and comes through it without breaking the glass. So it was that the Son of God entered into the womb of the Holy Virgin and came forth, leaving her a pure virgin, just as she formerly was. Many prophets had foretold concerning her. So Ezekiel says: *This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it, because the Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut* (44:2). Esaias calls her a book of understanding, living, sealed with eternal purity. For this reason there was no need of any purification for the Maiden, who had been chosen from all generations, and brought up in the Holy of Holies. By her purity she excels all the orders of the Angels, and is more exalted than every type in creation, the one good among women, the most pure dove, beautiful as the dawning ray, resplendent even as the moon is in its fulness. Oh, what a dread miracle! Oh, most wondrous wonder! This one now stands in the Temple among the women of Israel, just like the sun among the stars of heaven, like a fragrant flower among the tares, like an apple tree among the trees of the wood. She stands in the Temple, waiting her turn to present her gift in sacrifice to the Lord and receive a blessing from the priest.

Then the Elder Simeon appeared, a righteous man awaiting the Consolation of Israel. It was promised him that he would not be released from the bonds of the flesh, until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And behold, when the Virgin Mother brought the Infant Jesus into the Temple of the Lord, then the Holy Spirit moved Simeon and spoke within his heart: "Arise, Elder, and go to the Temple, put aside your frailty, forget the weakness of old age; there you will see the Salvation of Israel and the Expectation of all peoples, and you will receive your release [from life]." The Elder's heart was set on fire by this announcement. He leapt like a young deer. The Holy Spirit strengthened his ancient legs, and renewed his youth, like an eagle's [see Ps. 102:5]. And he came to the Temple, beheld with his perceptive eyes the Virgin, standing amid the women of the Israelites, like a lighted lantern shining in the night, and he fell down before her most pure feet, with compunction of heart and humility of soul, and addressed her thus: "O, most radiant splendour, who have brought into the world the Great Sun, the Lord God Emmanuel! Why do you stand here, desiring to receive purification according to the law, and you yourself are holding the Creator of the Law? O, humble Virgin and Mother unwedded! I pray you, do not disregard my tearful petition; take pity on my old age; do not deprive me of my hope; give into my hands your only-begotten Son, the God of wonders, the King of Israel, the Fountain of everlasting joy, the Strength of my life that I might embrace with my arms the blameless Lamb. Grant me to receive the most pure Lamb, Who desires to offer Himself in sacrifice on the altar of the Cross, when He has reached his thirty-third year. Give Him to me, O man-befriending Mother! You, who bare the Purification of every defilement, have not come into the Temple for purification, but so that He might sanctify my hands and release me from the bonds of my flesh." Then the All-pure Virgin gave into the hands of the Elder the Pre-eternal Infant, - and Simeon took Him. Oh, what joy and rejoicing was then in that old man's heart, when with his hands he touched the Unapproachable God, upon Whom even the Angels dare not gaze, and Whom heaven itself cannot contain. Then in very truth, he rejoiced with all his heart, such that he no longer was aware of his earthly body and considered that he already stood in the heavenly bridal chambers. And how could he not be gladdened? He, Whom the Patriarchs and the Prophets had desired

to see, for Whom he himself had waited for many years, he now beheld lying in his arms.

Thus, at this time Simeon both rejoiced and wept. He rejoiced because he beheld the Salvation of Israel. He wept, because he foresaw what the Jews would do. With a light and joyous voice he sang of his joy. Some say that the swan, as it approaches death, sings the most lovely and sweet song. So it is that the Elder Simeon now chanted this song: “*Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master of the universe, Creator of Heaven and of earth, - deliver Thy servant from the prison of the earthly flesh. For mine eyes have seen the Lord God of Israel, the God of wonders, Emmanuel, Whom Daniel saw coming on the clouds of heaven as the Ancient of Days. And now I behold Him as a young Infant, bound with swaddling clothes. I believe, my Creator, that it is Thou, Whom Esaias saw on the high throne, surrounded by a multitude of the heavenly powers. And now, Thou, O dread God, King invisible, hast willed to be brought into the Temple by Thine All-pure Mother and laid in my arms. But, O Master, dismiss me from temporal life so full of many troubles. I have now been vouchsafed greater gifts than Abraham and all the Patriarchs. I now hold Him Who holds all creation in His palm, and Who strengthens my old age. Let me depart in peace; for I have seen the salvation of all peoples, the light of the nations, and the enlightenment of those in darkness, and the glory of the Israelites. Let me depart, O Saviour and Life of all, in the hope of joy. Let me go to my fathers, and with them I will await Thee in Hades. I will speak of Thee to Moses, David and all the prophets. For, by the revelation of the Spirit, they foretold that Thou wouldest bow the heavens and come down to earth, and appear in the lowliness of our poverty, and that thereafter Thou wouldst descend to the land below, and taking captivity captive wouldst take them up to the heights of Thy free, radiant Kingdom. And now I behold Thee, my God, in the flesh as an infant, and will proclaim this to those who for many ages past have awaited Thee. Let me depart, O King of glory; for I have been satisfied with the sight of Thee, O Joyous Light! Let me leave this world with joy, so that I shall not see the bad faith and brutality of Thy people, so that I do not hear their abominable voice, when they cry out: Crucify, crucify Him! Let me not see Thee, O Life of all, crucified on the Cross, and Thine immaculate hands, by which*

Thou madest the first-created and me also, pierced with nails, and Thy side run through with a spear. Let me depart, O Lover of man, so that I not see Thy Most Pure Mother, consumed with affliction and sorrow, and her heart, cruelly pierced with the sword. For now blessed are my eyes, which have been vouchsafed to behold Thee, of Whom Moses only saw the back parts, Whom Elias perceived in the sound of a gentle breeze, Whom Jacob beheld only in a dream at the top of a ladder.”

So Simeon rejoiced and blessed God, and then he said: “O Virgin, blessed one, Mary chosen of God, Immaculate Maiden, Unwed Mother of God the Giver of Light! Now you rejoice in your Only-Begotten Son, Whom you conceived without man by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and Whom you brought forth without pain in joy. Many are gladdened by His birth. And mark, I, an ancient elder, who hoped for the Promised Messiah, Whom I now behold in my arms, leave this world with rejoicing. But later, Immaculate Virgin, a sword will enter into your soul, - sorrow and affliction, such as was not heard of from ages past, will visit you. For, behold, He is set for the rising and fall of many and for a sign which shall be spoken against [see Luke 2:24]. For the rising of the nations, for the fall of the Jews, to be spoken against by the unbelieving. Many will say of Him that He is good; yet others will say He deceives, confusing the people. For it was for this that your Son was born, O Virgin, that He might bear the passion and save the world. Then the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed. Many will declare His glory and proclaim the greatness of His Divinity. On the day of His resurrection all will be gladdened; heaven and earth will be glad. Then, O Virgin, you too will receive an all-perfect joy as a consolation for your sorrows.” Thus Simeon thanked God and foretold the future.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, Joseph and the Virgin Mary and the Pre-Eternal Infant, returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth, and they settled therein. And we, the Christian people, celebrating this present day and hearing of the humility of Christ, must humble ourselves under His strong hand. He humbled Himself to raise us up. Humility is the most precious and God-pleasing offering, as says David of it: A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise (Ps.

50:17). And God Himself says: *To whom shall I look, even to him that is humble and meek* (Es. 66:2). God abides in the heart of the humble. O man, if you humble yourself before God, then behold what glory you will receive: you will be the throne of God, you will be exalted higher than the heavens, and will be blessed of God Himself. For *blessed* - it is said, - *are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*, that is the promised earth, the Heavenly Kingdom, which the Lord Himself has promised us through His immaculate lips. *Learn of Me*, He says, *for I am meek and lowly of heart* (Matt. 11:29). By His humility He opened Heaven and gave entry therein to all of us. By His humility He did not decrease His glory, but glorified it the more; He ascended into Heaven and sat down on the right hand of the Father. And He will raise up us who are humble, and deem us worthy of the glory of His Kingdom, through Grace and the compassions of His love for man. Amen.

*Translated from a text published in Russian
by the Synodal Press in Moscow in 1902*



ABBA JOHN THE EUNUCH, WHEN HE WAS YOUNG, ASKED A CERTAIN ELDER: "HOW IS IT THAT YOU CAN DO THE WORK OF GOD WITH EASE, WHILE WE, SINCE WE ARE OVERCOME BY FATIGUE, CANNOT DO SO?" THE ELDER REPLIED: "WE CAN DO THIS, SINCE WE PLACE THE WORK OF GOD FIRST IN ORDER AND CONSIDER THE SATISFACTION OF BODILY NEEDS TOTALLY SECONDARY; WHILE YOU, ON THE CONTRARY, GIVE PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE TO THE SATISFACTION OF YOUR BODILY NEEDS AND RECKON THE WORK OF GOD INSIGNIFICANT; AND THUS YOU GET TIRED. FOR YOU DO NOT REFLECT ON THE WORDS THAT THE SAVIOUR ADDRESSED TO HIS DISCIPLES: "SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD..., AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU" (MATT. 6:33).

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ON MONASTICISM

By the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky
of Jordanville

Continuation

Against love of pleasure they [*the monastics*] arm themselves by taking upon themselves the struggle of perfect purity and chastity; love of money they strive to conquer with complete non-possessiveness, a renunciation of all ownership, of every possession, with voluntary poverty for the sake of Christ; and love of glory they try to overcome by denial of their own will, the cutting off of their own personal desires, and submission to the will of the superior. **Virginity, non-possessiveness and obedience are thus the three fundamental, paramount vows of monasticism, without which any kind of true monasticism is unthinkable.**

... [*A short paragraph here is omitted, which referred to the communist opposition to monasticism*] ...

However, one must bear in mind that these vows must be fulfilled not only outwardly, and not only in form, but according to the spirit, for the whole Christian life is spirit and not mere form. **“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”** (Jn 6:63), says the Lord.

The vow of virginity [*actually chastity - some aspirants come to monasticism when they have already been married - ed.*] has its foundation in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself found in the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. Once the Pharisees, tempting the Lord Jesus Christ, posed Him this question: “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” Jesus Christ recognized divorce as something contrary to the very essence of marriage, for those who have been joined in marriage are, according to the word of Scripture (Gen. 2:24), **“no longer two, but one flesh”** (Matt. 19:6) “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6). “Why then,” if such is the case, the Pharisees asked, “did Moses command to give a

writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” (Deut. 24:1). The Lord explained, that Moses permitted the Jews only to divorce on account of the hardness of their hearts, and that from the beginning it was not so, for **ideally every marriage should be indissoluble**. For this reason the Lord says: **“Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”** So indissoluble are the bonds of marriage, such is the tie with a spouse, who might have an intolerable character, that the Apostles were so struck by this and dispirited by it that they involuntarily cried out: “If the case of a man be so with his wife, it is better not to marry!” To this the Lord replied with those very words which serve as the basis for the vow of virginity. He endorsed the Apostles’ conclusion that it was “better not to marry,” but at the same time He emphasized that not every person finds within themselves the means of living life without marrying. He who finds in himself the capability to live a virgin life, let him remain a virgin.

“All men cannot receive this saying,” so says the Lord Jesus Christ, **“save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it”** (Matt. 19:11-12). By those “eunuchs” who have made themselves such “for the kingdom of heaven’s sake,” the Holy Fathers understand those who lead a virgin life, who have dedicated themselves to a life without marriage, who have given a vow of virginity. Thus, according to the witness of the Lord Himself, not everyone is obliged to be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake, that is to lead a virgin life, but only those who find this in themselves, and comprehend that they have the capability of doing so. The Holy Apostle Paul teaches about virginity in a similar strain in chapter 7 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which we have already referenced. “I suppose therefore,” he says, “that it is good for a man to be so,” - that is, unmarried. “Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin be given in marriage, she hath not sinned” (see 1 Cor. 7:26-28).

Why is virginity higher than the married state?

Because the purpose for man, his Divine calling, in which he finds the eternal blessedness prepared for him by God and becomes a citizen of the Heavenly Kingdom, consists in that man's striving for God; **love of God** is therefore placed as the first and great commandment of the law of God. He who desires to fulfil to the fullest extent his purpose, one appointed for him by God's Providence itself even before man was created, he must put striving for God in the first place in his life - **love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind** (Matt. 22:37). But such complete and undivided dedication and love for God can, and indeed does, disturb dedication and love given exclusively to another, to that earthly existence which forms the basis of married life, as well as to those various worldly concerns and cares which are tied up with that love. This earthly, fleshly love can at times so captivate the soul of a man, all his being, that he has no place left for love of God; love of God is confined to a secondary position, and maybe so constricted that it is extinguished by this earthly love. Love of the earthly existence occupies the place of God in a man's soul, and becomes his idol, his totem. This is why, with all fairness, the holy Apostle Paul says: **"He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord; how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin: the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world; how she may please her husband"** (1 Cor. 7:32-34). People in families have many all-compelling concerns and cares, which force them to be in a continual state of distracted thought and disturb their concentration on thoughts of God, or the spiritual life. And the fleshly love, which lies at the root of family life prevents the man, who is bound by the bonds of matrimony, from completely giving himself to the love of God, it forces him to lead a double life, it tears apart the wholeness and undividedness of his spiritual nature and of the striving of his soul towards God.

His Eminence [now Saint] Philaret, the Metropolitan of Moscow, explains this beautifully in his "Teaching on Virginity":

“Pleasing God, and for this the sanctification of the soul and body, is the aim of those who struggle in virginity. For this he who lives as a virgin avoids the married life so that the particular inclination to things earthly does not hinder or turn him aside from his striving towards God. By its striving with all the powers of mind and love towards the Lord, and by directing its activities towards pleasing God, the virgin soul is called the bride of the Heavenly Bridegroom.”

This is why virginity is counted as higher than the married life. From the very earliest days of Christianity, the vow of virginity was held in the highest esteem, and virginity was treasured as a life equal to that of the Angels. “There is no struggle greater than virginity,” says the Venerable Theognostes, “He who leads the unmarried life is a marvel even to the Angels, for how many labours and how much strength is required, being as he is of flesh and blood, always to strive to be undefiled and to imitate the immaterial Angels! And indeed, how great and exalted is this virtue, which almost seems impossible, as though it exceeded nature, were it not that the Lord grants help from above.”

But in praising virginity in this way, the Holy Fathers forbid us to denigrate marriage. The call virginity **gold**, and the married life, **silver**. **“He who leads the virgin life,”** says St Cyril of Jerusalem, **“must not become proud before those who have entered into matrimony; for ‘marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled’ (Heb. 13:4), as the Apostle says. And you who maintain innocence, were you not born of marriage? Disdain not the silver, because you are gold.”**

But, naturally, the vow of virginity has its own power and significance, only when the one leading a virgin life tries to maintain not only his body but his soul also in complete purity and chastity. “Everything must be pure and undefiled in the one who lives as a virgin, having devoted himself to the unmarried life. His gaze must be directed only to heaven, and his ears ready only to hear about the true eternal life; his imagination must dwell only on images pure and holy.” Such, according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, is true virginity!

... to be continued in the next issue.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“WE CANNOT SAY the Orthodox Church’s mission in this country is a blinding success. What do you consider are the greatest impediments to its progress?” - L.P., Blackburn

THIS is a wide open question, and one that we could give a dozen different and quite honest answers to. I suppose that the fundamental answer is the devil and sin, but to be a little more specific, rather than looking at enemies without, I think we should consider our own failings, and three things come to mind.

The first is a *disordered emphasis on ethnic identity*, first on the part of the immigrants, and now, even more sadly, on the part of British converts to Orthodoxy, who seem to be adopting forms of xenophobia as if it were a virtue rather than a vice, or equally disastrously throwing themselves into an “ethnic identity” which is not their own, and losing sobriety. But, I think enough has been said on this subject, time and again.

I would like therefore to mention the other two subjects that spring to mind. The first I can only call *“Anglicanisation.”* By using this term, I mean absolutely no disrespect to the Anglican Church or its faithful members. Indeed, I am always grateful that I was raised as an Anglican, otherwise it is unlikely that I would now be an Orthodox Christian. Also I should point out that it is now well over forty years since I was an Anglican and so the Anglicanism that I knew is probably now something of the past, but it is that Anglicanism of the late fifties and early sixties that makes me use that clumsy and perhaps unfair term. It seemed, to me at least, to have a lot to do with middle-class respectability, decency, with a kind of minimal religious observance, which was definitely not supposed to disturb one’s life in any way, and was, it seemed, something that one should not take too seriously. Anything that was likely to change one’s life could be safely put down to “symbolic,” “conventional,” “optional,” or just a legacy of an age gone past, and the problem side-stepped.

Surprisingly it was the Orthodox immigrants to this country who first adopted this form of anglicanisation. One cannot blame them too much. In those days, Britain was a much more conservative country and homogeneous society, and the new-comers did not want to stand out. I recall that even in the seventies, I was advised that I should wear an overcoat over my cassock when I went out rather than a rason, in case I looked foreign! As I was English, that prospect did not much worry me, and I still do not have an overcoat. However, this worry about looking foreign led to clergy adopting goatee beards, wearing dark suits and dog-collars, etc - a small chipping away at the beautiful mosaic of Orthodox tradition. And, of course, they still looked foreign, and perhaps more so, because of the mismatch of their features with their attire, much like ladies with rather dark complexions who blond themselves. The very mismatch draws attention to the disparity. At a deeper level too, this process led to a diluting of Orthodoxy - people used Anglican (or R.C.) terms such as christening instead of Baptism, mass instead of Liturgy, and, on the rare occasions that they used English in services, uncritically adopted translations used by Christians of the Western denominations, whether accurate or not. And with all this, alas, came the “middle-class respectability, decency, with a kind of minimal religious observance” which I mentioned above. So we end up with a kind of Eastern-Rite Anglicanism, rather than the living Tradition of Orthodoxy.

This process of anglicanisation has also been given further impetus by more recent conversions to Orthodoxy by (mostly) Anglicans. They are probably innocent of any blame for this themselves, but many have been “received” into Orthodoxy with little grounding in the Faith. Clergymen have been ordained with less than a minimum of training. Many thinking that Orthodoxy is simply a corrected version of their old faith; many enthusiastically adopting “ethnic” customs or even ethnic identities, with a naive enthusiasm, but with no deep understanding of what Orthodoxy is. And so we have parishes doing Vespers and the Liturgy every week, (more or less) according to Orthodox rites, but their Orthodoxy is not well grounded in the patristic and ascetic Tradition of the Church. Again, by default, a kind of Eastern Rite Anglicanism.

Perhaps some good will come of this - the Lord who is able to feed five thousand people from five small loaves and two small fishes, might, and I hope will, bless these initiatives and from them a deeper understanding might grow. However, oftentimes one has to bewail the fact that some of the people, so ill-grounded in Orthodoxy themselves, seek to correct Orthodoxy, to disparage and disregard that which is part and parcel of the Tradition of the Church and those who are striving to remain faithful to it. Little good can come from that quarter.

I have waffled long enough about that subject! The other danger I wanted to mention is *infantilism* - another ugly word, but the only one I can think of to express my concern. Again, in the first place this seems to affect those born into Orthodox families and cultures. They grow up with many church customs and traditions, some part and parcel of church observance, some simply folk customs, but they never progress to learn more about their Faith, or how to live in the society we now do. It is well enough to know that you bless fruit at Transfiguration, that you carry palms on Palm Sunday, or bunches of flowers at Pentecost - all these things are good and beautiful. It is even good to have certain folk customs which draw one to church observance - hiding a coin in the St Basil Bread, holding a star with an icon on it at Christmas, etc. But we have to grow up! It is unrealistic and destructive to try and live our lives as though we were still children. The Holy Apostle Paul himself says, *“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”* To use a dreadful expression, we have “to live in the real world.” We need to know what we believe, and how that should affect our lives. How, as teenagers, do we deal with perhaps living away from home for the first time, and the temptations of sexual license, drugs, partying, drinking, bullying, etc. How, later, to conduct ourselves in the work-place, to deal honestly and justly with our responsibilities. How to bring up our children, and pass on our Tradition to them. If our faith is nothing but folklore - it will not sustain nor direct us. We might still attend Orthodox services on Sundays, but our lives will be directed by the mores of the materialistic, consumerist society around us. We shall not be a light in that society, but simply part of the darkness.

Nor will it sustain us if our understanding of our Faith is that which can be expected of a nine-year-old! How often over the years, I have heard adult, intelligent, Orthodox Christians, plead ignorance of their Faith - and that at a time when because of literacy, the number of books available, and even internet sites (good ones!), we have perhaps more opportunities to learn about our Faith than any earlier generation. The excuse is *ignorance*: the fact is *lack of interest*. Why spend time warping your mind and muddying your heart, watching *Eastenders* or reading the *Daily Mail*, when you could be studying something edifying? Why? - because you choose to!

Also we, converts, fall into another form of this infantilism. In any parish worth its salt, we are instructed in the Faith before Baptism, and sometimes quite rigourously, but many then think, "I've got there! The course is over! Nothing more to do!" Not so, the Israelites after the crossing of the Red Sea (Baptism) had forty years in the wilderness before they entered into the Promised Land, and so we also have to keep up our rigour, keep striving to learn, not only from books and from asking questions (both excellent things to do), but from the people who have been Orthodox before us. Here I suppose I was particularly fortunate, I became Orthodox at a time when many of the old Russian emigres were still with us in this life. Oftentimes one could learn more from seeing an old babushka cross herself, or how an elderly priest served, than one could from twenty chapters of a book. Such people are now few and far between - most of the immigrants coming from Eastern Europe are themselves converts. But "teachers" are still to be found, and we should seek out opportunities to learn. See that one making proskynias, or coming to clean the church, while I gossip. See another taking a rebuke, or another defending someone who has caused them hurt, while I criticise and moan. Perhaps one thing that prevents us from doing so is another sliding back into the Protestant ethos of our past - a destructive determination to do it alone, our way, which in turn leads to pride and judging, rather than that quintessentially Orthodox virtue, humility. Saint John of the Ladder says: "*It is impossible for snow to burst into flame; still more difficult is it for humility to dwell in an un-Orthodox person*" (Step 25:32). We, converts, too, have to grow up, and paradoxically the measure of our growth in Orthodoxy is humility.



NEWS SECTION

Patriarch's Anti-Abortion Proposals

HIS HOLINESS, **Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia** has proposed to **Russian President Dimitri Medvedev** a series of family policies that would restrict access to abortion, reports the *Agence France Presse*. The Patriarchate requests that the expenses of abortion no longer be covered by the health system (except in the case of danger to the woman's life); it also proposes the obligation to inform women about all the negative consequences of the interruption of pregnancy and hopes, moreover, for the introduction of an informed consensus and a time of reflection. The document of the Orthodox Church also suggests the creation of a "crisis centre" in all obstetric clinics that would be staffed by counselors and religious persons. The report cites worries about the decreasing size of the population. Although the Patriarchate's initiative is much to be welcomed, it is odd that it cites worries about population decrease as the basis of its recommendation rather than the sin of abortion itself, or concern for the infants killed. Perhaps this was simply a diplomatic ploy, so that the Church's voice would be heard in government circles. Abortion was introduced in Russia in 1920, three years after the Revolution, and thus Russia became the first country in the world to legalize the practice. Prohibited again in 1936 by Stalin (with the exception of some situations), abortion was reintroduced in 1955. Less than 10 years after this date, in 1964, the highest level of abortions was recorded in the history of Russia or the then Soviet Union: 5.6 million. The number of abortions has begun to drop in Russia over the last decades. However, despite this decline, the level of abortions exceeded that of births in 2004: 1.6 million abortions as opposed to 1.5 million births.

“A SCIENTIFIC ORTHODOX VIEW OF FALSE HISTORIOGRAPHY”

A CONFERENCE on this subject was held in Moscow in mid-October, last year. Two prominent clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad - Moscow Patriarchate (ROCA-MP), **His Grace Bishop Agapit of Stuttgart** and **Protopresbyter Nikolai Artemov**, addressed a surprisingly frank letter to the conference, since they were not able to attend it. The message in full may be found at: http://rocorstudies.org/?sid=130&aid=11399&idpage=rocor_articles&refFrSb=10156&sdid=69. The letter begins by tracing the Soviet use of the term “falsification of history.” It then remarks that the regime ostensibly fell twenty years ago, but adds: “the most important thing has still not taken place in Russia: the spiritual assessment by society of the tragedy that befell their own country in the twentieth century, and the liberation of the Russian people from Bolshevik myths and fictions. It is necessary to take measures against the distortion of history. But this must be done upon the foundation of repentant reconsideration of the actual facts of our Russian history, casting off the Stalinist stereotypes. But that’s precisely what isn’t happening.” They note various symbolic and liturgical gestures, but point out that post-Soviet Russia compares unfavourably with Germany, “which has struggled much and continues to struggle to understand her historical path.” They protest against the fact that archives remain closed, against the rehabilitation of Stalin, and the consequent denigration of the witness of the New Martyrs. They conclude: “Historical practice must receive a strong factual basis through the opening of the archives. The work must be carried out not amid repressive and propagandistic shouts, but in an atmosphere of full methodological liberty. Through living, open, and fearless dialogue, Russian historiography is called and is able to make, at last, a true and peace-making statement, through a balanced assessment of the tragedy that afflicted so many nations in the twentieth century.” Doubtless, given the ecclesial position of its authors, their sincerity will be called into question by many; or it will be argued that this voice of “dissent” by clergymen now within the Moscow Patriarchate has been purposely allowed to suggest that there is greater liberty within that Church than we have been led to believe. On such matters we are

not competent to comment, but the sentiments expressed in this letter are surely to be welcomed.

MUSLIM SHIELD FOR CHRISTIANS

THE PRESS has rightly brought to the attention of the world the horrific attack on a Coptic church in Alexandria on New Year's Eve which left 21 people dead. Other less brutal attacks on the Christian minority there over the past few years have received less coverage, even though they are equally distressing. However, these dreadful atrocities only feed an anti-Muslim bigotry, which is perhaps being used by the powers that be to deflect attention from the real woes in our society and its causes. There are Muslims who are fanatics and full of hatred, but there are also others, who, although we cannot accept their beliefs as true, live peaceable and responsible lives, and even at times shame us Christians. One very moving incidence of this: on the Coptic Christmas celebration, was reported by *ahramonline* thus: "Egypt's majority Muslim population stuck to its word Thursday night. What had been a promise of solidarity to the weary Coptic community, was honoured, when thousands of Muslims showed up at Coptic Christmas eve mass services in churches around the country and at candle light vigils held outside. From the well-known to the unknown, Muslims had offered their bodies as 'human shields' for last night's mass, making a pledge to collectively fight the threat of Islamic militants and towards an Egypt free from sectarian strife. 'We either live together, or we die together,' was the sloganeering genius of Mohamed El-Sawy, a Muslim arts tycoon whose cultural centre distributed flyers at churches in Cairo Thursday night, and who has been credited with first floating the 'human shield' idea. Among those shields were movie stars Adel Imam and Yousra, popular Muslim televangelist and preacher Amr Khaled, the two sons of President Hosni Mubarak, and thousands of citizens who have said they consider the attack one on Egypt as a whole." This is a welcome return to a polity which was generally alive in the Levant, where Christians, Jews and Muslims, lived together amicably, in days before the turmoils caused by the "Great Powers" in the last, the ugliest, century in history.

PATRIARCH CONGRATULATES LUKASHENKO

RECENTLY, **Alexander Lukashenko** won another term as President of Belarus, in an election which the majority of disinterested observers considered “flawed.” His secret service, still known as the KGB from Soviet times - in Russia they have at least changed the name! - , has harried his opponents and helped him maintain Belarus as a Soviet-style police state. Nonetheless **Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia** found it within himself to congratulate the “newly-elected” president in the warmest of terms. The news agency *BelTA* reports: “I cordially congratulate you on the victory in the election of the President of the Republic of Belarus. Occupying the supreme state office in the previous years, you have faithfully served your country and people. The results of the election have demonstrated the level of people’s trust in you,” Patriarch Kirill said in a message addressed to the President of Belarus, which is available on the official website of Moscow Patriarchate. Patriarch Kirill has noted that Belarus has created a system of partnership between the Church and the State, a system that embraces the various aspects of life and has absorbed the best European practices, paying heed to the particular features of the Belorussian society at the same time. His Holiness hopes that Belarus will unswervingly follow the path of development of brotherly relations with Russia and with other countries that have historical and spiritual bonds with Belarus. The Head of the Russian Orthodox Church has wished peace, good health and energy to the President of Belarus in his labor for the good of the Homeland.” Perhaps we should simply refrain from commenting!

PRACTICAL TIP

TAKE PAINS to equip yourselves with a good library of Orthodox spiritual reading, and, especially as we now approaching the Holy & Great Lent, make sure you have books of spiritual content to read during this period to nourish yourselves spiritually. We take great pains to make sure our bodies are fed, but we should take equal pains to make sure our minds and souls are nourished. Occasional church going and flicking through the news section of a magazine like this will leave us spiritually starved.

SIR-UK NEWS

BAPTISM AT SAINT EDWARD'S

CATECHUMEN **Anne van der Lee** was baptized at Saint Edward's Church on Wednesday, 23rd December / 5th January, the day of the Ten Martyrs of Crete and St Niphon of Constantiana. With the Christmas services, she was thus able to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive the Holy Mysteries, either at the Convent or at Brookwood (travelling down by train every time from inner London) on every one of the eight days she was wearing her chrim robe - although she was once almost tempted to relinquish her candle! Anne, the mother of Katherine Kirk who was baptized earlier in the year by **His Grace Bishop Joseph of Washington** at the **Parish of the Ascension in Fairfax, Virginia** (ROCA), became a catechumen here at the beginning of last year, and at her Baptism, **Presbyter** **Joanna Fretwell** stood as her sponsor. We pray that the light of Christ may ever shine in Anne's life and never be extinguished. To Anne, named after the Mother of the All-holy Theotokos, and to her Godmother: *Many Years!*

THEOPHANY CELEBRATIONS

AS HAS BECOME CUSTOMARY, after the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's Church on the feast of the Theophany, we made our way in car convoy to Chertsey, for the **Great Blessing of the Waters** on the Abbey River, the site of the seventh century monastery founded there by **Saint Erkenwald**. Here we enjoyed the still undiminished hospitality of **Robin and Mary Haigh**, who again allowed us and many of the local people, for whom this seems to have become an event in their calendar, to assemble at their home, Abbey Bridge Farm, and bless the waters from the paved area running alongside their house. After the service, this year it was **Dimitri Mihai** who dived in to receive a blessing. Then, we repaired to the farm's old medieval barn for refreshments, including hot, freshly made sausage rolls, all prepared and served by the Haighs and their helpers. We really cannot find words to express our gratitude to them for their kindness and hospitality. May God's blessing ever be upon them.

TWO NEW BOOKS

OUR BROTHERHOOD has just produced a 158 page softback book, "*The Ark of Salvation,*" subtitled "*A Young Adult's Guide to the Orthodox Church.*" It has been published by the **King Edward Orthodox Trust**, and was conceived of because, in running the Sunday School classes, we saw that, though there were books a plenty for young children, there were few that were addressed to teenagers and young adults. In the first part of the book we discuss the Orthodox Faith and worship, and in the second we try to address how our Faith should be implemented in our daily lives. We were helped, particularly in this second part by a number of young people in our congregation, who both suggested topics that should be raised and "vetted" our efforts. We worked in this way, hoping to address the concerns which the young really face living as Orthodox Christians in our post-Protestant society, rather than dictating to them what their concerns should be. A reader in the States who has already obtained a copy has emailed: 'Mother sent me a copy of this book - which I love! Congratulations, and thank you. I am always on the lookout for good Orthodox books for my children, and have found that there is a real gap between "children's" orthodox books and the adult fare - X, for instance, (now 14) tends to be too sophisticated (so she thinks) for the former and does not have enough understanding or interest to tackle the latter. Y is starting to develop the same problem. But this book, while being simple, does not patronize, is accurate (as far as an ignoramus like me can tell [*actually an ignoramus with an Oxford BA in zoology and a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of England and Wales!*]), and forms a really good basis for understanding, thought and inquiry about practical Orthodoxy. Not just for children!" We hope this means we have hit the mark. The book is available from the Brotherhood bookstall at **£8 per copy**. We will send copies by post for £10.50 (the cost plus p&p), and hope you will benefit from it.

BROOKWOOD PARK LTD - the Cemetery - has produced a forty page booklet by **Brian Parsons, Erkin Guney and John Clarke**, entitled "*The Glades of Remembrance.*" It gives a history of the glades and of their present restoration, and it is lavishly illustrated throughout

with colour and black-and-white pictures, including some of Orthodox goings-on! Obtainable from: Brookwood Park Ltd, Glades House, Cemetery Pales, Brookwood, GU24 0BL; Tel 01483 472222; email: enquiries@brookwoodcemetery.com

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY

THE WINTER LECTURE of the Society was given on Wednesday, 26th January at 7.30 p.m., in the main hall of the **Brotherhood's Old Mortuary** building. The presentation, which fell into two parts, punctuated by a long break for refreshments and socializing, was made by **John Clarke**. It consisted largely of a slide show, photographs of the monuments in the cemetery and the renovation work being undertaken, augmented by John's commentary on the slides and background information. The majority of the slides had been made several years ago by **Mike Sleigh**, and subsequently donated to the Society. They clearly showed the results of recent improvements in the cemetery's management, and in some cases the results of the wanton vandalism that strenuous efforts are now being made to curb. **Cllr Glynis Preshaw**, our local councillor, and **Mike Peel, the chairman of the village Residents' Committee**, were among the thirty or so people who attended the lecture. A very pleasant evening drew to a close at about 10 a.m.

WORKS, FUNDS & THANKS

AT THE END of last year, we effectively saw the completion of the three major development projects that have occupied us for the last decade or so: a) the building of the New Monastic House and the refurbishment of the Old Mortuary; b) the re-roofing of Saint Edward's Shine Church; and c) the renewal of our driveway and the correction of certain landscaping and land drainage problems. We accomplished all these works, the cost of which approached a million pounds, through the kindness and generosity of our parishioners and the readers of this magazine, and a number of contributions from various charitable trusts.

We would like to thank all those who helped us so magnificently, and who supported us through a trying period. It is little if anything short of a miracle, as we have no powerful backers and had not accumulated substantial funds when we began. The charity which owns and administers our property, and thus took responsibility for all these improvements, the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Limited** (registered charity number 284929/0) has no investments, and relies solely on your voluntary giving and the relatively small income from the administration of the Orthodox cemetery here. Now at the end of this work, the monies left in KEOTCoLtd's bank accounts approximate just £25,000 - money which will be used for the administration & running of the St Edward property in the months ahead.

VISITORS

3rd January: **Mike Powell** of Ash, a nearby village, brought a group of about eight people to see the church. Most work in Central London and meet on a regular basis to visit sites of interest.

4th January: **Archpriest Gennady Andreev** of the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral Parish, Ennismore Gardens, London**, visited us, accompanied by **Subdeacon Igor Khomenets**, who kindly brought us some holy oils from the renowned **Pochaev Lavra**. Our visitors venerated the shrine of Saint Edward, and chanted a moleben to the holy martyr before his sacred relics.

15th January: **Deacon Dionysios Higgs**, from Telford, and his diaconissa, **Rebecca**, visited us and attended Vespers at Saint Edward's. Afterwards they made our acquaintance, and had a brief look at the Exhibition Room.

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EVERY LIE is from the evil one, and "lips that lie are abominable to the Lord" (Prov. 12:22). "And "Thou shalt destroy all them that speak a lie" (Ps. 5:6), says the Prophet.