

FROM THE FATHERS

“THE RESULT of love of pleasures is negligence; and negligence gives birth to forgetfulness. For God has given every man knowledge of what is good for him.”

VENERABLE MARK THE ASCETIC, + EARLY 5TH CENTURY

“A PERSON who trusts that he can find rest in the delights and abundance of earthly things is deceiving himself. By the frequent disorders of the world, and at last by its end, such a one is proven convincingly to have laid the foundation of his tranquility upon sand.”

VENERABLE BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

“LET US SHUN the love of matter and our attachment to matter with all the strength we have, as if washing dust from our spiritual eyes; and let us be satisfied simply with what sustains our present life, not with what pampers it. Let us pray to God for this, as we have been taught, so that we may keep our souls unenslaved and absolutely free from domination by any of the visible things loved for the sake of the body.”

VENERABLE MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, + 662 A.D.

“IF YOU KNOW that all visible things are a shadow and all pass away, are you not ashamed of playing with shadows and hoarding transitory things? Like a child you draw water with a bucket full of holes; do you not realize it and take it into account, my dear friend? As though there were nothing more serious than appearance and illusion, as though reality has been taken from them?”

VENERABLE SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN,
+ 1022 A.D.

“GUARD YOURSELF against luxury as against a plague. It greatly weakens a Christian’s soul. It teaches you to steal what is another’s, to offend people, and to hold you hand back from giving alms as is required of a Christian.”

SAINT TIKHON OF ZADONSK, + 1783 A.D.

“CAN YOU place your hope in the world? Whom has it not deceived? To whom has it not lied? It promises much, but gives very little. Only those who hope in the Lord, according to the words of the Prophet David, do not sin, that is, they are not deceived in their hope!”

VEN. ANTONY OF OPTINA, + 1865 A.D.

“IN OUR TIME the majority of people, proud of their progress and claiming to be Christians who do a lot of good, have been striving for the perfection of the righteousness of fallen nature and have turned their backs on the righteousness of the Gospel. Let this majority listen to what the Lord says: *This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* (Matt. 15:8-9)”

SAINT IGNATIUS (BRIANCHANINOV) OF THE CAUCASUS,
+ 1867 A.D.



On the Occasion of the Commemoration
of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (29th June)

A Most Timely Question:

Witness to the Ethos of Orthodoxy Or Syncretistic Coexistence?*

*Having your way of life upright among the nations, that they may,
having witnessed your good works, glorify God.”*

(I Peter 2:12)

IN our days, we are reexperiencing in our lives and are faced, as Christians, with an *historic challenge*, a social phenomenon, which had been intensely experienced by early Christianity: a *globalized environment*.

Peoples, races, and languages, civilizations, nations, and religions all make up the multiform context in which the pious by now daily move, and they are developing a *dialogue of life*, in practice, with the heterodox and those of other religions and nations.

The ecumenists, who are alienated from the Orthodox, no less than the worldly-minded politicians and intellectuals, attempt in various ways to impose their own *rules*, in order for this unavoidable *dialogue of life* to succeed.

Their endeavor is always made with the prospect of a peaceful coexistence and an unhindered share in the goods of an earthly *chiliastic paradise*; but—and why not?—also with the prospect of a convergence and a *syncretistic synthesis*, whereupon our attitude towards the Truth and our relation to it would ultimately be such that no one would be *bothered*.

* * *

Pious Orthodox Christians, however, “walking in the Spirit,”¹ have, as steady guides in their earthly journey towards the **Eighth Day**, not the shep-

herds who are turning the Church into a mere religion, but rather the divinized members of the Body of Christ, the God-bearing and light-bearing Apostles, Fathers, and Teachers.

On this point, the Holy Apostle Peter emphatically exhorts us not to forget a fundamental rule, as we find ourselves among our contemporary “nations” of many kinds and names: a **“right way of life.”**²

The Chief Apostle reminds the pious, who live together with unbelievers, the impious, unorthodox, heretics, and the heterodox,

“to have right behaviour in their relations with others and a virtuous life,” and “to be adorned with evangelical manners and Christian virtues.”³

This Divinely-blessed **“right way of life”**—that is, Christian dignity and a conscientious behaviour and conduct on the part of the Faithful—, as a witness to the **ethos of Orthodoxy**, draws the particular attention of those alienated from the Church and, in consequence, impels them to knowledge of the Truth and the true God.

The Holy Apostle Peter’s exhortation towards a “right way of life” clearly echoes the words of our Saviour:

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven.”⁴

This fundamental truth concerning the spiritual and missionary power of a **“right way of life”** was proclaimed by St. John Chrysostomos with particular emphasis:

“No one would be an idolator if we were true Christians: if we kept Christ’s commandments when we are wronged and our property is stolen; if we blessed when we are abused; if we did good when we suffer hardships. No one would be such a brute, that he would not hasten to piety if we kept to this approach.”⁵

* * *

The luminary of Athos, St. Nicodemos, relates the following wondrous, charming, and edifying “story recounted by many trustworthy people,” and which is a perfect commentary on the aforementioned teaching of the Apostle:

There were two neighbouring villages in Asia Minor, one of which was entirely made up of Turks without Christians, while the other was entirely made up of Christians.

Now, these Turks were very brutal and inhuman, and greatly tyrannized the Christians. By Divine wrath, a deadly illness broke out in the Turkish village alone. Almost everyone, young and old, men and women alike, was bedridden.

A most virtuous and God-fearing Christian, then, who was the eldest among them, took compassion on the Turks upon seeing them in such a miserable state. Thus, gathering together all of the Christians, he advised them all to forget the Turkish acts of tyranny against them and to agree to visit them in their illness, thereby keeping the Lord's commandment, which says: "Love your enemies and do good unto them." Advising them in this way, he persuaded them. They all went to the village and, entering the Turks' homes, took care of them and were in attendance on them until they recovered.

Then the Turks, seeing such great kindness and forgiveness on the part of the Christians, marveled that they had such a Faith and such a God that taught them not to return evil for evil. Wherefore, having assembled and discussed the matter, all in common accord were baptized and became Christians.

* Behold how the Christians' "right way of life" convinced an entire village to believe in Christ and, subsequently, to glorify Him.*⁶

(* Source: Ἅγιος Κυπριανός, No. 332 (May-June 2006), pp. 289-290.

¹ I St. Peter 2:11. ² I St. Peter 2:12. ³ St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Commentary on I St. Peter 2:12*. ⁴ St. Matthew 5:16. ⁵ St. John Chrysostomos, *First Homily on I St. Timothy*, § 3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 551 ⁶ St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Commentary on the Seven General Epistles*, note 2 (Venice: 1806), pp. 99-100.

Editorial Comment: How beautifully this contrasts with the crass xenophobia being pedalled in much of the cheap press nowadays.



A Contemporary Spiritual and Hesychastic Approach
to the Holy Words of the Gospel

Choose Between the Two Kingdoms: The Eye as the Light of the Soul*

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

(St. Matthew 6:22-23**)

“**If** the light that is in thee be darkness,” says the Lord, showing that the light of our body may give off darkness, just as it may give off light. All of the passions and sins enter into our body through the eyes, going first into the mind. Even a sinful incitement which arises from something that is heard develops into visual images from the memory of that which has been seen. Even the blind develop images in the eyes of their mind.

All of the beauty and grandeur of God’s works also enter through the eyes.

The things which we enjoy with our eyes feed our souls, for good or for bad. Where we direct our gaze, how we look at things, and how our mind is trained to interpret that which we see—all of these produce either light or darkness in our souls, our hearts, and our spirits. Our eyes help us to determine where we will store our treasures and which master we will choose to serve: God or the mammon of this world.

Many times in the spiritual writings of the Saints, we are advised to guard the direction of our eyes, to avoid dealing with things which can provoke us to sin or inflame our souls. It is not so much *what we happen* to see which darkens us as it is *where we choose* to fix our eyes and *what we allow* our mind to do with that which we see.

Through our eyes we allow envy into our hearts over the success of our neighbour, for his appearance, for his abilities, or for his possessions. Through our eyes we learn of which things to be covetous, what to desire in a sensuous

way, for what earthly material things to yearn. Through our eyes we see our brother's sins and we judge him. Through our eyes we share in the materialism, corruption, and atheism of the society that surrounds us. All of that will become our own way of life; it will become our treasure and we will attach our hearts to the present age.

Through the same eyes, however, we can see the empty vanity of the world around us, we can see the image of God in our brothers, and we can look with compassionate understanding on the weakness and the failings of our brothers—seeing God in their virtues and ourselves in their weaknesses. Through our eyes we can see the beauty of the created universe and sense the presence of God in it, seeing and perceiving the spiritual aspect of the universe. These things will lead us to a life of struggle to establish the things of God as our treasure and to store them up in Heaven. These things will lead us to choose to serve the true Lord, and the Kingdom of God will truly be manifested within us.

This appears to be the meaning of this passage: if the Kingdom of God can be within us, then so, too, can Satan's dominion just as easily be within us. We can decide what sort of kingdom to erect in our hearts; and, to a great degree, that which we prefer to see in the world around us, how the eyes of our mind interpret it, and what we allow to enter our hearts by means of our eyes will determine which kingdom will dominate in our hearts. If the light that enters into us through the eyes is the deceptive, false light of the devil, then it will indeed be manifested in our hearts as a great darkness. If it is the true light of the Kingdom of God, then it will shine as the radiance of eternal life!

*Source: *'Agius Kiprianos*, No.298 (September-October2000), pp.346-347.

** This Gospel lection will be read on the Third Sunday after Pentecost,
20th June / 3rd July, this year.



ADORNED in the blood of Thy Martyrs throughout all the world
as in purple and fine linen, Thy Church, through them, doth cry unto Thee,
O Christ God: Send down Thy compassions upon Thy people;
grant peace to Thy commonwealth, and great mercy to our souls.

TROPARION OF ALL SAINTS DAY, FOURTH TONE

ON MONASTICISM

By the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky
of Jordanville

Continuation

WELL, now we have become acquainted with monasticism, even though in only the broadest terms, but from all angles, having had explained the fundamental idea of monastic struggle, the causes for its flourishing, an overview of monastic history, and insight into the rites of monastic tonsure from both the inner and outwards aspects, we are in a better position to see clearly what the monastic vows are essentially and their significance, and it is easier for us to analyse those accusations which both liberal Protestants, who nonetheless call themselves Christians, and the atheistic communists, raise against monasticism.

As we have already said, in essence all these accusations boil down to this: **that the monks are egoists, thinking only of themselves, retreating from the world, not wishing to serve the people, and therefore nothing profitable can be expected of them.**

Those who say these things must needs first of all explain what they understand by egoism, and then analyze how their understanding of egoism actually corresponds with the facts. There are, of course, monks who are egoists, just as there are people who are egoists, because monks are people, and nothing human is alien to them, but this goes without saying. We are speaking of the idea of monasticism itself. Can it possibly be called egoistic?

What is egoism?

The meaning of egoism derives from the Latin word, *ego*, which means "I." From this it follows that **egoism is the serving of the "I" - oneself, the pleasing of oneself.** The egoist is a man places his "I" in the very first place and more than anything else in the whole world cares about his own **personal** wellbeing.

But can every concern about one's own "I" be called egoistic?

Those who assert this fall into a grave deception, for they broaden the meaning of egoism to such limitless extents that there could be in the soul of man no place left for any other feeling than the egoistic, and then, willy-nilly, to

a man all the behaviour and even all the secret movements in the soul of every man would come under the heading egoistic.

Facts. Why, for instance, does a good person try to do good for other people? Isn't it because doing good works brings him some inner satisfaction, that he finds doing good pleasant? But if such is the case, and we are to be guided by the above-mentioned broad understanding of egoism, the good person is without any doubt an egoist, because he does good, because it brings him some satisfaction, because it suits his particular "I." If we pose the question with this negative inclination, then in the whole world there is nothing at all but egoism, and this egoism would define every acceptable impulse, from which the actions of man proceed, both alike the bad and the good.

Thus we would come to such an absurd conclusion, if we were directed by the broad "logic" of the enemies of monasticism!

But, of course, in reality it is not so. By the term "egoism," we must understand only the serving of one's own sinful "I," the service of the old man, which we are commanded to withdraw from, with its passions and lusts. Egoism is the service of one's pride, one's self-love, which are exactly the very vices in the human soul, against which the monks are directed to struggle with the greatest force.

It is true that there is sometimes involved a subtle egoism, almost artfully hidden, but one can expose this. But to consider the good aspirations of the human heart as egotistical of themselves: this is, of course straining things, and is absolutely absurd.

Let us now settle the question fundamentally. Do good or evil aspirations lie at the basis of the idea of monasticism?

What do the monks strive for? What is considered to be the essential disposition for a monk? **"The mind and heart constantly abiding in God with the renunciation of everything,"** - this is how His Grace, Bishop [now Saint] Theophan the Recluse defines the essence of monasticism. Consequently, the true monk is one who is prepared to renounce everything in the world, only so that with the mind and heart he might constantly abide in God. He leaves everything that would disturb his drawing near to God. The principle desired aim in his life is this: striving towards God for union with God.

Might one call this striving evil, and, consequently, egoistic? Of course not! This striving towards God, because it requires one to recognise and expel even the slightest shadow of that subtle egoism, is **not simply the self-willed**

striving of man, but it fully accords with the will of God, for it was nothing but the accomplishment of this most important task which was decreed for man by the Divine Will Itself at his very creation.

God created man solely out of His love, and He settled him in Paradise, so that man might eternally be blessed in union with Him. But by the malice of the devil, man who had been created for the blessed life, did not hold to the height, fore-ordained for him. Sin, having gained entry through the breaking of God's commandment, though he was present in Paradise, distorted and deformed his nature which had been like unto God, so that instead of finding his delight in God, man began to find delight in serving the passions which he experienced. Instead of God, his very own sinful "I" occupied his soul: pride and self-love. Thus egoism entered his soul. The lot of human life from that time has been suffering. But God did not leave man to perish in this deplorable state. From that time, all human history is the unremitting Providence of God towards mankind, aiming to bring back man to Himself, to deliver him from suffering and return him to the blessedness that he had lost. It was precisely for this reason that the Son of God became man, and came down to earth, was crucified on the Cross, and rose again to **"that He might draw all men to Himself,"** that he might call man to union with God again, and grant him the grace-filled strength for this. It was concerning this that He so touchingly and expressively prayed at the Mystical Supper in what is called His High Priestly Prayer: **"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their words; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us"** (John 17:20-21).

... to be continued in the next issue.



"IF ANY BISHOP or Presbyter shall refuse to welcome back anyone returning from sin, but, on the contrary, rejects him, let him be deposed from office, since he grieves Christ, Who said, *There is joy in heaven over a single sinner who repenteth.*"

CANON 52 OF THE 85 APOSTOLIC CANONS

Pilgrimage to Bulgaria

ON THE QUIET INSISTENCE, and with the blessing, of **Bishop Ambrose**, I accepted an invitation to attend the consecration of the **Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Sofia**, at the end of May. This massive and impressive church was built solely by the offerings of the faithful of the Traditionalist Orthodox Church there, and it serves as the cathedral of **His Grace, Bishop Photii of Triaditza**. But the consecration was only one part, albeit the most important one, of my stay in that beautiful country. The invitation was sent by **Fr Deacon Nikolaj Petrov**, and **Lubina Gagova** acted as interpreter. Lubina and her husband, **Hristo**, showed me extraordinary hospitality, putting me up for the week at their apartment in Sofia, taking me to various holy places and acting as interpreters. All the time working together with Fr Nikolaj, they arranged a really uplifting pilgrimage for me. After the experience I came to appreciate that we in Britain have yet to learn what hospitality is!

At the airport I was met by them, and an enormous red rose was pressed into my hand. Later that day we went to the beautiful **Church of St Nicolas and St Panteleimon, the Boyana Church**, on the outskirts of the city. This tiny church which dates back to the tenth century, is covered with ancient frescoes, including a series of the whole life of St Nicolas the Wonderworker and his miracles. A short walk up the mountainside took us to a holy well, where we met one of the Old Calendarist parishioners collecting holy water from the spring.

Then I was taken to see **the Cathedral** that was to be consecrated at the weekend. In addition to the huge main church, there is a crypt chapel, and a side chapel dedicated to **St Seraphim of Sofia**. The whole structure also houses a library, cells for visiting priests, a prosphora bakery, a beautiful light and airy school room, an exhibition area (including one stand devoted to Saint Edward's), offices, workrooms, and storage space for clothes for the poor. In the lower church they were just finishing a pannikhida, and so we were treated to koliva. We then went on, at his invitation, to the residence of His Grace Bishop Photii, which is a short walk from the church. Before meeting the Bishop, we were shown into the house-chapel of **St Mark of Ephesus**, and given an opportunity to venerate the holy things there. In the event, rather than being a quick courtesy call, this visit lasted well over two hours. Though the Bishop spoke to us in a light-hearted, even jovial, way, his speech was full of teaching and was

edifying. He particularly spoke of the damage that nationalism has done and is able to do to the Orthodox witness. By the time we left, the evening was far spent, and, having retrieved the car from the church car park, we hurried home to bed.

On the Wednesday morning, I was taken by Deacon Nikolaj and Hristo to the tiny **village of Bozhichen**, in the far north of the country, a journey of about two hundred miles. On the way we passed **Pleven** where, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, a signal victory was won against the Turks, a milestone in the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. At Bozhichen we found **Fr Nikolaj Ivanov**, one of the cathedral clergy, standing, waiting for us, outside the gates of his little country retreat there. He has a small cottage, which he has renovated, with views stretching for miles over the valley below. He has established a beautiful garden out front and is working on the rest of the property. In the cottage, a small chapel has been dedicated to **St Dimitri of Besarbovo**. After Father and his helpers had provided us with a good meal, we set off for nearby **Ivanovo**, where numbers of hermit monks used to struggle in caves in the cliffs of this forested gorge. Monks inhabited this region from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. There we visited one such hermit's chapel, high on the cliff face, now partly eroded, but still retaining its ancient frescoes. Then travelling past Bozhichen again, we visited the **Monastery of St Dimitri of Besarbovo**, again a monastery built into the cliff face on the edge of the village. The monastery was founded during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (12th - 14th centuries). Its most renowned member, St Dimitri, lived here in the early eighteenth century, though his sacred relics are now enshrined in Bucharest. In the 1930s, a monk named **Fr Hrisant**, whom Fr Nikolaj remembered, started restoring the monastery, which had been abandoned for some time. We visited the cave church and the original grave of Fr Hrisant. Below the caves, a fine modern monastery (New Calendarist Church) has been established, and one of the young monks invited us in for coffee and refreshments, and then took us to the new church which they are building. This necessitated going through their "farm" - a small yard with hens and turkeys and chicks, guarded by a monk and a Jack Russell. We returned to Fr Nikolaj's Bozhichen retreat for a late supper and bed, but before sleep were treated to a lullaby of wolves howling, fortunately in the distance.

After breakfast, we set off down South again, first calling at **Veliko Tarnovo**, "**the City of the Tsars.**" It is a city set on three hills, and on one of these there are the remains of a massive medieval fortified complex, which included the palaces of the Bulgarian Emperors and the Patriarchate, various

residences, churches and a monastery. The complex is topped with a massive church, sometime the Cathedral of the Ascension, and built on the site of an earlier Roman basilica, but in Communist times, it was “restored,” and has been frescoed by an artist reputed to have been into occultism, in a sick and depressing modernistic style, which attempts to be a parody of Christian iconography. It is sadly a defilement at the centre of a beautiful and historic city.

As one who was formerly named after one of the Forty Martyrs and was ordained on the feast of **Saint Sava of Serbia**, I was pleased to be able to see the **Church of the Forty Martyrs** in the valley below the fortifications, where Saint Sava, who reposed in Tarnovo, was first laid to rest.

We then took a walk round the ancient town and lunched at the **Hadji Nikoli Inn**, named after the successful merchant who built it as his residence, and who, incidentally, took an active part in the struggle for an Autocephalous Bulgarian Church. The mansion now houses an art gallery and a small museum, with the most beautifully wrought artefacts from the fifth and sixth centuries before Christ. The workmanship was such, that we should be ashamed that we think of those early peoples as barbarians - a name which probably more befits the people of our times in the West.

Travelling on towards Sofia, we visited the **Monastery of Kilifarevo**, which was originally founded in the fourteenth century by **Saint Theodosius of Tarnovo**, a disciple of the great hesychastic father, **St Gregory of Sinai**. The present monastery, situated by a river bank in a wooded valley, dates from the early nineteenth century and is now a community of nuns. We arrived in the middle of a rainy afternoon, but an elderly sister came out to open the church for us and greet us. Then back through the Balkan Mountains to Sofia.

On the Friday morning, instead of a planned journey, we arranged to meet up with the **Bishops George, Ambrose and Klemes**, who had arrived from Greece and Ukraine, and the clergy from the **American Exarchate** of our Synod, who were headed by **Archimandrite Akakios**. The day before they had visited the site of the martyrdom of the **New Martyrs of Batak**. We met outside the huge **St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral**, which is dedicated to the name saint of the **Emperor Alexander II of Russia**, who is known in Russia as the **Tsar Liberator** because of his edict liberating the serfs, and bears the same epithet in Bulgaria because of the rôle he played in liberating the country from the Ottomans. Outside the cathedral is magnificent and beautiful; inside it is something of a disappointment, although sumptuous and grand in design. The

iconography is of a rather lumpen and decadent type, typical of that at the turn of the twentieth century.

Just across the square from the Cathedral is the **Saint Sophia Church**, actually named for the **Holy Wisdom of God (Christ)**. The present building dates back to the fifth century, but it stands on the site of an earlier church, and there are evidences of Christian burials there dating back to the second century. It is probable that the renowned **Council of Serdica, A.D. 347**, was held in a church on this site, and that **Saint Athanasius the Great** visited it. (Serdica was the original name of the city of Sofia).

We passed the place where the **New Martyr George of Sofia** was slain, now marked by a fountain, and saw many of the sites of the city, too numerous to tell of here, but three cannot go without mention:-

The **Russian Church of St Nicolas the Wonderworker** was built in the years immediately before the First World War in typical Russian “tent” style, and was the spiritual centre for the Russian emigrés in the city. The bells were a gift from the **Tsar-Martyr Nicolas II**. In the crypt, there is a tiny entrance with a candle stand, then a small anteroom, which leads to another tiny room in which the tomb of **St Seraphim (Sobolev) of Sofia**, himself a Russian emigré, lies. Although St Seraphim has only been glorified by our Sister Church, the Traditionalist Orthodox, and not by the New Calendarist hierarchy of the State Church, these three small rooms were crowded with people who had come to venerate the Saint’s tomb, who were writing petitions and lists of names to be commemorated there, who were simply praying there. Undoubtedly in that small crypt there were more people gathered than in the huge St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. The small stairway up to ground level was jammed with people coming and going.

The **Saint George Rotunda Church** is the oldest building in Sofia and in the early fourth century was part of the imperial palace complex in Serdica. At some time it was converted into a church, and fresco fragments date from as early as the sixth century. Under the Ottomans, the church was turned into a mosque, and painted over with floral decorations, but now the fresco fragments have been restored. Apparently in Communist times, some powerful woman decided this relic of the Christian past should be demolished and called in a band of soldiers to do the work. Probably as a photo-opportunity, she took a pick-axe and took the first blow against the church. Immediately she fell down paralysed, and the soldiers decided not to continue with her plan. Soldiers often have more sense than politicians. The beautiful little church is still there.

The **Saint Nedelya (Kyriaki) Church** stands on the site of the forum of the Roman city. In the 15th century the sacred relics of the **Serbian King, St Stefan Milutin**, were enshrined here, and we were blessed to be able to venerate them. In 1925, a communist terrorist attempted to assassinate the Bulgarian Tsar by exploding a bomb there. The Tsar himself did not attend the service there that day and was spared, but a plaque records that many others were killed.

After our tour of the holy places in the city centre, we went home to rest in readiness for the Vigil that evening at Bishop Photii's cathedral. The services, the Friday evening Vigil and the Consecration of the Church and the Divine Liturgy on the Saturday morning, have been better described than I could ever do on the Synod in Resistance website (< http://www.synodinresistance.org/Info_en/New.html>), and pictures have been posted on the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad website (< <http://news.ruschurchabroad.org/>>).

Five Bishops led the celebrations, **Bishop Photii**, **Bishop George of Bolgrad and Belgorod-Dnestrov (ROCA)**, **Bishop Ambrose of Methoni**, **Bishop Klemes of Gardikion (SiR)**, and **Bishop Glycherie of Iasi (Romanian)**. **Abbess Alexandra of the St John of Shanghai Convent in Egorovka, Ukraine**, and **Archimandrite Nifon** from Romania, who once visited us and served at Brookwood, were among the guests from abroad: from Greece, Romania, Ukraine, America, and Britain. Thus, all of the four Sister Churches of Traditionalist Orthodox Christians were represented, and prayed together at this most important event in the life of the Traditionalist community in Bulgaria.

The services were conducted in a way very similar to that of the Russian usage, and, naturally mostly in Church Slavonic. However, there was some Greek and Romanian as well, and when *our* Deacon, Nikolaj, who is not fluent in English, nevertheless intoned a litany in English, the choir immediately responded in English too, even though this cannot have been something they were accustomed to or prepared for. When the Bishop preached, his sermon was distributed to the guest clergy in English translation. I was going to put it in an issue of this magazine as it was so edifying, but it has already appeared on the internet, and so will not now do so, though if anyone would like a copy please contact the Brotherhood. The reading of the Hours and the Scriptures was measured and easy to follow, and the chanting avoided aping operetta, and was always in a churchly and prayerful manner.

On the Sunday, the Bishops celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Bishop Photii's house chapel, and at the Cathedral eight priests concelebrated. Afterwards we were whisked away to the home of a parishioner in the nearby town

of Bankya, where the Bishops joined us, and where they and the guests from abroad were treated to a meal under an awning in the garden.

On Monday, we visited the **Convent at Knyazhevo**, which is dedicated to the **Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God**, and is under the omophorion of Bishop Photii. When we arrived, Deacon Nikolaj introduced me to one of the oldest nuns as “from England,” and her immediate response was: “King Edward!” We first visited the graves of the foundress, the **Ever-Memorable Abbess Seraphima, and Archimandrite Seraphim**, which with a few others are under a beautiful wooden canopy, the inside of which is frescoed with icons. A little later others arrived, and we went into the church to await the arrival of Bishop Photii and Bishop George. At this point the Bishops from Greece and Romania had already left. After a short prayer service, Bishop George gave an inspiring talk, warning against following the ways of the world, and that we should not, like so many of our fellow Orthodox, think that by going to church on Sundays and having confession and Holy Communion occasionally, we are in any way living in an Orthodox Christian way. Then all those present came up to receive the Bishops’ blessings: after the guests, the nuns. There seemed to be a never ending stream of them - fifty-five nuns and sisters in all, - and, for all that there were so many, everything was quiet and orderly. We then visited a new church built there dedicated to Saint Seraphim of Sofia, and lastly the oldest church, that of the **Holy Apostle Luke**. Then the sisters treated all their guests to a meal in the refectory. When we came out, before we bade our farewells, Bishop Photii took the opportunity to give them an open air talk and some encouragement.

Then three car loads of us, Bishop George, the American contingent, the goodly deacon, some drivers, translators and myself, went to the famed **Rila Monastery** in the mountains to the south of Sofia. Rila Mountain, still partly snow capped despite the generally very hot weather there, was visible long before we reached our destination. The monastery is massive, though it appears that only a few monks now live there. In the main church we were able to venerate the sacred relics of St John and an ancient icon of the Mother of God, which was surrounded by about forty relics of various saints. The deacon also managed to arrange for us to be taken up into the tower alongside the church, where at the very top there is a ancient chapel dedicated to the Transfiguration. Here we chanted the paschal hymns in Slavonic, Greek and English, and then the lady guide herself chanted “Christ is Risen!” to a different melody.

We returned to Sofia in the evening being unable to visit the cave of St John because of the bad weather. There my long-suffering hosts provided me and some guests from the parish, the Reader Vladimir and his wife, with our supper, and the next day they (perhaps with some relief) took me to the airport for the flight back to England.

Someone at that last meal asked me my impressions of their Church. Of course it is difficult on the spot to answer such a question, and my impressions are undoubtedly not of any great worth. Of the places we visited, though, it was not the famous ones that left the deepest impression, but Fr Nikolaj Ivanov's little retreat at Bozhichen, and, of course, the crypt in which the sacred relics of St Seraphim of Sofia repose, and the piety of the petitioners there. Naturally Bishop Photii's warmth, wisdom, and - there is no other word for it though it sounds odd, - his evident spiritual delight in serving, made a deep impression. He is in the truest sense of the word a *delightful* man.

And lastly, the extraordinary hospitality and kindness of the people was truly uplifting. I mentioned a rose was thrust into my hand as soon as I arrived. At the Sunday Liturgy, as I was handing out the antidoron, the tiniest of little girls gave me another red rose - ten days later it is still fragrant though it has dried out. And even at the airport, when I had gone through security, I had nearly two hours to wait. The only place of any interest at all on the concourse was a small souvenir shop. I went in out of curiosity. No one was there. Just as I was thinking of leaving, the girl meant to be serving there came in and apologised for not being around. To be polite (I am English) I spent another couple of minutes looking round and then made for the door, she shouted and ran across the store and gave me, as a present (!), a phial of rose oil! The fragrance of the Bulgarian rose pales besides the fragrance of their kindness.

And one other thing was truly uplifting - it was being among Orthodox Christians, who were devoted to their Faith, and eager and willing to learn about it. Here, in the West, by comparison we seem to get by as churchgoers (at best!). There I - and I am sure other clergymen visiting, - were bombarded with questions about the Church and the Faith, about what was happening here in England, etc. It was indeed, as the Psalmist says, **the head of their joy**. Just as happened when I came away from Moldavia two years ago, I left with the impression that, though often we stupidly strike a pose of superiority here in the West, we are only just making toddler steps in Orthodoxy. We have much to learn about living our lives in an Orthodox way. Through the prayers of these, our older brethren in the Faith, may we humble ourselves and learn to do so.

Fr Alexis

The Coming Month

JUNE very often falls almost completely within the **Apostles' Fast**, which starts on the second Monday after Pentecost, and lasts until the feast of the Holy Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, on 29th June / 12th July. So this fast may vary in length between eight days when Easter is late, or as long as six weeks when Easter is early. This year it lasts only 22 days, and the month dawns upon us on the third day of a fast free week.

The fast was inaugurated following the example of the Holy Apostles themselves, who, after receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, prepared themselves for their ministry with prayer and fasting, and also by this practice they prepared their successors - see Acts 13:3. During this fast we keep Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays most strictly. On Tuesdays and Thursdays we are permitted wine (alcohol) and oil, and on Saturdays and Sundays we are also permitted fish, but during the fast, of course, no meat or dairy products are eaten. Married couples should also abstain from conjugal intercourse, and all Christians should devote more time to prayer, almsgiving and spiritual reading. Perhaps in our days, this last is most important. One finds Orthodox Christians - as witness the point from correspondence in our last issue - who have very little understanding of their Faith. Sometimes, initially, they are in no way to blame for this. Those who are born into Orthodox families in the diaspora are often given little or no instruction in their Faith, are perhaps only given a few "rules and regulations" (some fictitious) and the perception that they belong to a particular "national" Church. In reality, this does not take them very far. Perhaps they become churchgoers, but hardly Christians. Adult converts to Orthodoxy fare somewhat better, because before their Baptism, they are usually given a period of catechism and instruction, and, aware that they are ignorant of many things, they tend to be more ready to ask questions - and so they get answers. But, however we started in Orthodoxy, we should not rest there. Some converts lose the "lead" they have, by assuming that after their Baptism they need no more instruction. We all do!

Today we have a blessing that was perhaps denied to most generations before us. Most of us are literate, the vast majority have access to the internet. If we apply ourselves we can find out more about our Faith, the lives of the Saints, and the practices of the Church. The only caution that I would give is to

be careful. Although there is a great deal of excellent material available - what other peoples except perhaps the Russians in the generation or two immediately before the Revolution, have had such ready access to the writings of the Fathers in a language they can easily and readily understand? - there is also a massive amount of rubbish. It is best to access only primary sources: the Lives of the Saints, the writings of the Fathers and those of traditionalist and tested teachers, rather than commentaries or discourses about these things. In any event, take advice. And, of course, ask questions.

The first Sunday in June this year (6th/19th), being the first after Pentecost, is dedicated to **All Saints**. It comes the week after Pentecost because the Saints are the first-fruits of the gift of the Holy Spirit given then.

In 1918, as the great persecution of the Church in Russia began, the Church there inaugurated a feast of **All the Saints Who have Shone forth in the Land of Russia**, and this was appointed for the second Sunday after Pentecost (this year 13th/26th). This was undoubtedly providential, as that Church was then in great need of the intercessions of her Saints, and indeed in the seventy years that followed the inauguration of the feast, the numbers of Saints who have shown forth in Russia was greatly augmented by the hosts of New Martyrs and Confessors. However, in recent years several other national Orthodox Churches have established their own 'All Saints of XXX' days. Perhaps wrongly one has the feeling that these are inspired more by nationalism than should be the case. But older even than the 1918 establishment of the Saints of Russia feast, there was a feast, little known, but not entirely unknown, in the Slavic Churches, dedicated to the **Holy Fathers of the Holy Mountain Athos**. These Fathers, although they struggled in the ascetic life on the Holy Mountain, came from many nations and ethnic backgrounds; they were united in their Orthodoxy and in holy monasticism.

And the third Sunday after Pentecost (20th June/3rd July) is dedicated to **All the New Martyrs who suffered under the Turkish Yoke**. Again, although the majority of these Martyrs lived in the Balkans or in what is now Turkey, they too came from many ethnic backgrounds and, although thus not enjoying ethnic identity, they were bound together by that much greater and more worthy bond: the love of Christ - a witness to us all.

The other great celebration that we have in June is the **Birth of Saint John the Baptist** (24th June/7th July), which this year falls on a Thursday, but on account of the feast we are permitted fish. The event itself is recorded in the first chapter of St Luke's Gospel, and the feast is kept for two days. As the

Gospel records (Luke 1:26), the Baptist was born about six months before our Saviour, and so his feast comes six months before Christmas. It thus falls at mid-Summer, when the days begin to shorten, whereas the Saviour's Nativity falls in mid-Winter, when the days begin to lengthen. Thus, even by the seasons of the year, we are reminded of the prophesy of the Forerunner, "He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). This feast is one of the two principal feasts of the Baptist in the Church Year, the other being his Beheading in late August, and it is celebrated in most churches with a full Vigil service.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

REPLY to a correspondent in Scotland: Many thanks for your query on the Celtic Church. Of course, the name is an anachronism. No one at the time would have thought of themselves as belonging to a Church by that name. They would probably not thought of themselves as Celts even, rather as British or even Roman. In that the name may be used in retrospect to describe those communities in what is now Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cornwall and Devon (perhaps even Somerset too!), their usages were at variance with the general practice of the Church, but it seems that this was largely through their isolation and not from a deliberate departure from the catholic usage. The main points seem to have been the Paschalion, the tonsure, the ordination (at least in some parts) of people straight to the episcopate or priesthood without going through the lower orders, and I suspect that there were many other small minor points, just as now there are differences of practice in minor matters between the different national Orthodox Churches.

From the time of the Council of Whitby (664 A.D.) onwards, they gradually accepted the general usages of the Western Church, which, with regard to the Paschalion, were then identical with the Orthodox usage of today. (I have heard the opinion expressed that the "Celts" used the Orthodox Paschalion, whereas Rome used the present Western one - this is nonsense. One of the major differences between the two usages today, is that Rome uses the Gregorian Calendar to determine the equinox, which was not introduced anywhere until 1582 A.D., and not in Britain until 1752 A.D. This process seems to have been complete by about the time that the Patriarchate of Rome separated from Ortho-

doxy. In Scotland, Queen Margaret was largely instrumental in bringing the last remnants of “Celtism” into line with Rome.

There is body now which calls itself the Celtic Orthodox Church, but it is not, as far as I can see, in any sense part of the Orthodox Church and never has been. Except that it is headquartered in Brittany and has a few adherents in Britain (where there are “Celts”), it has no relationship with the “Celtic Church” of old.



I HAVE a question, though, about the fasting guidelines on the calendars you provide. I'd always been led to believe that Wednesdays and Fridays were nearly always “strict fast” days (except during fast-free periods), meaning no oil or wine at all. However, the fasting guidelines you provide distinguish between f3 and f2 fast days (the latter allowing oil and wine). This distinction is not made on the online calendar which I have generally consulted until now. ... Why are some Wednesdays and Fridays classed less strictly (f2)? Is it something to do with there being a feast on the same day? Is it a difference between Greek and Slavic practice? - T.C., by email

YOU HAVE correctly divined the reason for some fast days being stricter than others. There are, in fact, slightly varying practices between the various local (national) churches, and even within those churches, which is one reason why in our magazine, I always present them as “guidelines” rather than “rules.” On days when there is an important Saint, then we are not so strict with the fasting. Properly this depends on the liturgical solemnity of the celebration, whether with a polyeleos, or with a Great Doxology, etc. It happens too that a particular monastery or parish might have their own practice, for instance on the day of their dedication saint, although one has to be careful that this practice is not stretched too far!

I looked at the link which you gave me, and I suspect that they have taken their calendar from another source and probably do not modify it to correspond more exactly with the variations which happen year by year, because the saints' days fall on different days of the week every year. But, even as their presentation is fallible, so is our own in “The Shepherd.” The strictest rule of thumb is “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” So follow the usage of your own church or parish, and always ask the advice of your spiritual father.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Religious Underground in the USSR

THE SHEVCHENKO UNIVERSITY OF CHERNIGOV,
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MEMORIAL INFORMATION
CENTER & MEMBERS OF THE KESTON INSTITUTE.

Dear Colleagues:

We invite you to participate in Ukraine's first international convention examining «The Religious Underground in the USSR», organized by a group of Ukrainian educational and cultural organizations under the leadership of the Shevchenko University of Chernigov. The conference will be held in Chernigov, Ukraine, on the 18th and 19th of November, 2011. The organizing committee also includes the Memorial Information Center (Moscow, Russia), and is being advised by members of the Keston Institute (Oxford, U.K.).

Although religious resistance to the totalitarian regime in the USSR has been studied in the West for over fifty years, it lacks attention of a similar scope from native scholars. Such attention is critically important now, because of the dangerous trend in Russian and Ukrainian scholarship that many Western scholars have noted, of rewriting recent Russian and Ukrainian history to reflect the politics and concerns of current regimes. This is especially true in matters concerning the Church.

The international convention “The Religious Underground in the USSR” aims to inspire dialogue between Western and Eastern students of this phenomenon, and to attract the attention of younger scholars. Several widely known scholars in the field have already offered to present papers at the convention, including Rev. Michael Bourdeaux, Xenia Dennen, Vladimir Moss, Lev Regelson, Mikhail Shkarovskii, Irina Osipova, Lydia Sikorskaia, and Rev. Aleksei Lebedev.

An exhibit presenting the history and achievements of the Keston Institute is planned for the convention. Copies of items from the Keston Archive located at the Baylor University (Texas, USA) will be displayed, including unique documents and photographs witnessing the history of religious persecution in the USSR. The conference programme also includes excursions around the city of Chernigov, led by the members of the National Association “Historical Chernigov.”

We invite papers describing underground religious movements and activity in the USSR from various perspectives: historical, political, theological, and sociological. Papers presented at the conference will be published in the conference proceedings which will be distributed by the organizing committee to Western and Russian and Ukrainian academic libraries.

Deadline: September 30, 2011

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SIR-UK NEWS

BISHOP SOFRONIE'S VISIT

OVER THE LAST WEEKEND within Pascha, **His Grace, Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** visited the Traditionalist Romanian Orthodox flock in England. On Saturday 15th / 28th May, the feast of the Venerable Pachomius the Great, the Bishop baptized **Flavian**, the infant son of **Nicolae and Daniela Costin of Hendon**, at Saint Edward's Church. The sponsor was **Ana Costin**, and the newly illumined was named for St Flavian the Confessor, the Patriarch of Constantinople (feast day: 18th February / 3rd March). On the Sunday, His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Romanian at the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden**. After the service, despite the precariousness of his state of health, His Grace made a 70 mile round journey to Brookwood again to officiate at the Baptism of the infant daughter of **Ioan and Simona Biosa**, who had been married in our church. The little girl was named **Georgiana**, after the Great Martyr, St George (feast day: 23rd April / 6th May). Her godparent was **Nicolae Ursache**. After the Baptism, as on the previous day, refreshments were offered to the participants by the parents of the newly illumined ones. We are uplifted by the pastoral love to the scattered flock in Britain that His Grace shows, despite his ill health, and we pray that the newly-illumined babies will grow up in the true confession of the Faith, as worthy spiritual children of this Archpastor.

SURREY CHURCHES PRESERVATION TRUST

ON SATURDAY 14th May, the SCPT visited Brookwood Cemetery, also paying a visit to Saint Edward's Church. While at the Brotherhood, they had tea and refreshments.

INTERMENT AT BROOKWOOD

JULIA WILLIAMS from **Weston-super-Mare** was laid to rest in our cemetery on 12th May. Julia was a Roman Catholic, although her husband, Peter, is Orthodox, and the funeral was held in her local church. For the interment, **Fr Russell**, the locum of the parish priest at the Knaphill R. C. Church served, and a great many friends and family members came up by coach from Somerset. After the short service at the grave side, the mourners were offered refreshments in the main hall of the Old Mortuary building by the Brotherhood.



PRACTICAL TIP

IT IS PROBABLY too late to take this on board this year, but after my visit to Bulgaria a thought occurred to me about holidays. We urge parishioners to make sure that, when they arrange holidays, they do so within reach of a local Orthodox church and have the contact details for that church in case of emergency, but, as we live in a world largely estranged from Orthodoxy, and we have to struggle to give our lives some Orthodox context, why not make a point of visiting an Orthodox country for your holidays and make it something of a pilgrimage? Learn from the piety and example of peoples whose culture was steeped in Orthodoxy (even though, likely as not, that great wealth is now being lost as they adopt our Coca Cola culture). Why just sit about on beaches in a place which is little more than a sun-drenched version of Woking, and waste time with endless amusements, when you could be at least catching the crumbs which fall from the table of once rich Orthodox cultures?