

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

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FROM THE FATHERS

"HE, 'IT SAYS, 'being rich, became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty ye might be rich' (2 Cor. 8:9). Therefore, His poverty is my inheritance; and the Lord's weakness is my strength. He chose to lack for Himself, that He might abound for all. The sobs of that squalling infancy cleanse me, those tears wash away my sins. Therefore, Lord Jesus, I owe more to Thy wrongs because I was redeemed than I do to the works because I was created. It would be of no benefit to be born, if there had not been the benefit of being redeemed."

Saint Ambrose of Milan, 339 - 397 A.D.

"A ROYAL VIRGIN of the house of David is chosen as the bearer of the Sacred Fruit, who had conceived her Divine and human Offspring in her soul, before she conceived Him in her body."

Saint Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, + 461 A.D.

"AS THE SON OF GOD by being born of a virgin showed that the dignity of virginity was pleasing unto Him, so also being now about to take flesh he chose to be born during the most peaceful period of time, teaching us also to seek after peace, and deigning to visit those who loved peace. There could be no greater sign of the peace at this time than this, that the whole world could be enrolled under one census."

Venerable Bede of Jarrow, 672 - 735 A.D.

"WHATEVER THE ANGEL had told her, whatever she had learned from Zacharias and from Elizabeth, and from the shepherds, all these things she stored in her mind, and, comparing them one with another, the Mother of Wisdom discerns one harmony of truth in all: that He was truly God that was born of her."

Venerable Simeon the Translator, tenth century.

"LIKE A GOOD SHEPHERD, who leaves the ninety and nine sheep on the mountains and goes to seek the one that had gone astray, the Lord is not satisfied with the the never-silent doxology of the numberless choirs of the the Angels, but He comes to call back to His glorification that which was a little lower than the Angels, the race of man that had gone astray."

Saint John of Shanghai the Wonderworker, 1896-1966 A.D.

Christ is born! Give ye glory!

ON THE APPROACHING Great Feasts of Our Saviour's Nativity and of the Holy Theophany, we greet all our readers, hoping that the grace of these two radiantly joyous festivals will illumine their hearts and minds throughout the Coming Year.

HERE JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

A GOOD MANY YEARS AGO, in much more peaceful times, I was privileged to be able to visit Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, and on one occasion was blessed to be in the Holy Cave at the Midnight Liturgy on Christmas night.

All heads have to bow under the low, narrow entrance into the main church. An earlier, higher Crusader arch was altered in the Ottoman period to make the present small entrance, apparently to prevent horsemen riding into the church in search of plunder.

The Basilica of the Nativity was smaller than I had imagined, but with the simple yet striking majesty and harmony typical of Byzantine building. One became immediately aware of the warmth and nearness of the sacred that pervades this wonderful place.

The church has been in constant use for worship since it was built by the Emperor St Constantine the Great, Equal-to-the-Apostles, in the early fourth century, over the Cave of the Nativity. Double rows of rose-gold columns from the original building remain.

The church was enlarged by the Emperor Justinian two centuries later, and remains much as it was in his day, except that the glory and the gold of the mosaics and the glass-like marble described by early pilgrims has almost entirely disappeared. A large area of the original mosaic floor, excavated in 1934, has been preserved, about two and a half feet below the present flooring, also the octagonal baptismal font from the baptistery of Justinian's time, with its inscription: "In memory, for the rest and remission of sins of those whom God recognizes." At the East end of the five naves of the Basilica is the Greek Orthodox sanctuary built directly over the Cave of the Nativity. The precious icons on the iconostasis are mostly gifts from the Russian Tsars and their families.

The Church of the Nativity was spared by the Persians during their conquest in the early seventh century, allegedly because they saw, over the entrance, the mosaic of the Wise Men in Persian costume. It was never attacked by the Moslems because they revered Christ as a prophet and respected His birthplace, even making pilgrimages and praying here. This reverence was never extended to the Church of the

Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) since they did not believe in the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

In 1482, King Edward IV of England paid for the roof to be repaired in lead and oak, but the Turks later removed the lead for making bullets, and the roof had to be replaced.

Inside the church, Crusader steps lead down to the holy Cave itself. From the earliest days of Christianity, Christian veneration has centred on this humble Cave, and the very steps by which the pilgrims descend must surely act as a reminder of the descent, the kenosis, the "self-emptying" of the Son of God at His Incarnation. Within the Cave, pilgrims kneel to kiss the silver star said to mark the place of the Birth, and a few more steps lead them down to the manger, a natural hollow in the rock, now overlaid with marble. Russian Tsars presented magnificent icons depicting the Nativity, some painted and covered in gold and silver, some embroidered in costly fabrics, to the Cave.

Considering the constant stream of pilgrims and tourists, I was extremely fortunate that for much of the time I was nevertheless alone and undisturbed during my visits to the Cave, because this is a holy place which simply demands time and silence if one is to attempt to take part in the eternal drama of the Divine Birth. Those who came as pilgrims naturally worshipped in their own way. Individuals knelt and prayed silently. Groups of Roman Catholics recited the rosary, and a party of West Indians quietly sang the carol "Silent Night." For me, words seemed somehow inappropriate and inadequate in the place where the Word became flesh.

I studied the icons hanging in the Cave, recognizing some of them from books I had read, and tried to listen to what the holy place was saying to those who came. In the quietness a fresh sense of wonder arose at the lowliness and humility of God's human entry into His world - how "He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men." The Christmas hymns are full of the great paradoxes of the Incarnation - how "He Who hath no beginning now beginneth to be," how "the One Whom the heavens cannot contain is contained within a narrow manger." And it had all happened, so quietly and simply, here in this very place.

Here, in the Cave at Bethlehem, the House of Bread, the Most Pure Virgin had brought into the world the Bread of Life, had wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, a place of food for animals, for Christ is the Sustainer and Nourisher of all creation.

In the past, the animals were always accepted as part of the Christmas story. In the West there was the beautiful old legend of the animals all kneeling in their stalls at midnight on Christmas Eve, while in the Medieval Mystery Plays the Ox and Ass were often given speaking parts. The Nativity icon shows them gazing into the manger in fulfilment of Esaias' prophecy - "The ox knoweth his Owner and the ass his Mater's crib." It was apparently an old Russian Christmas custom to put straw under the tablecloth in memory of the manger. *[And, a custom from Serbia which we follow here at Brookwood, is to strew the church floor with hay and straw during the feast - ed.]*

Here, to this Cave, the shepherds came "with haste," up the long steep hill from the Shepherd's Fields, where centuries earlier David, the shepherd-king, had tended his flocks. They came in response to the Good Tidings of the Angel of the Lord, eager to see the new-born Messiah, the perfect Shepherd-King promised by God through the prophets. I believe that their flocks were not ordinary sheep, but animals specially kept for Temple sacrifices, and perhaps some of these shepherds lived long enough to hear the Babe called the Lamb of God by St John the Baptist.

The shepherds usually figured largely in the old Mystery plays and doubtless in the "Ages of Faith," the audiences related to them readily as being "ordinary" people like themselves. St Joseph was a carpenter, a working man, and no doubt countless women took comfort in the knowledge that Mary, although Mother of God, would fetch water from the well, prepare simple meals and spin cloth for her family as they did themselves.

But it was perhaps the Wise Men from the East, even more than the shepherds, who captured the imagination of painters and writers, with their oriental majesty and splendour. I was once present at a Liturgy celebrated by an African Bishop from Uganda. With his quiet, reverent movements and his brilliantly coloured vestments, one felt that he could have stepped straight out of an Old Master painting of the Adoration of the Magi.

These Magi, the "sons of Babylon now come to David's daughter," were taken as representing the entire Gentile world. At an early stage they were transformed into Kings [*and indeed spiritually they were*], following the prophecy in Psalm 70 (71 in the Septuagint), vv. 10 & 11: "The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall bring gifts, kings of the Arabians and Saba shall bring presents. And all the kings of the earth shall worship Him, all the nations shall serve Him."

In the early traditions their numbers varied from two to twelve, before eventually settling at three. In the Arabic Infancy Gospel they are given the well-known names of Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. They were supposed to have taken some of the Christ child's swaddling clothes home with them, and these were miraculously unharmed by fire. It is said that they went to India where they were baptized in old age by the holy Apostle Thomas. Their bodies were brought to Constantinople and later moved to Milan, before being transferred to their final resting place in the Shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne Cathedral.

In times past, English Royal Christmas customs included offerings by the monarch in the Chapel Royal in memory of the Wise Men. We know that Henry VII in royal robes, with crown, orb and sceptre, had to "offer that day gold, myrrh and cense. Then must the dean of the chapel send unto the Archbishop of Canterbury by clerk or priest the King's offering that day." In 1762, George III "this day made the usual offering at the Chapel royal of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

The Star which led the Wise Men on their journey was supposed to have fallen into the well at Bethlehem from which Mary drew water, and from then on was only visible to "virgin eyes."

The many charming legends of the wise Men and the wondrous Star always lead us back - as indeed they must - to the facts upon which they are based, - that

"those who worshipped the stars were instructed by a Star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high," and to the focal point in the Bethlehem Cave, the star set into the floor, with its simple yet utterly profound inscription: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary."

Contributed by Mrs Miriam Lambouras of Broadstairs, Kent.

From

"THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N.R. Antonov

Continuation

Gothic and Renaissance Styles. Gothic churches might be referred to as "lancet" style, because according to their plan and the interior arrangement, although they reflect the earlier Romanesque style, they are distinguished from the latter by pointed, pyramidal, extremities which reach up to heaven: turrets, pillars and bell-towers. These pointed features are observable even in the interior of the churches, in the arches which unite the pillars, in the windows and in angular parts. Gothic churches are particularly distinguished by the number of high and wide windows. A consequence of this is that there is little space on the walls themselves for sacred depictions, and therefore the windows themselves were filled with depictions.

After the Gothic style, in the course of Western Europe's church architecture development, there followed the Renaissance style. Beginning in Italy, this style spread through Western Europe from the fifteenth century onwards, as part of a rebirth of "antique, ancient Greek knowledge and art." Having learned about ancient Greek and Roman art, architects began to adopt various aspects of classical architecture, sometimes going so far as to build Christian churches in the form of pagan temples. The influence of classical architecture was particularly marked by the employment of colonnades on the outside and in the adornment of their churches. The most complete incarnation of the Renaissance style is to be seen in St Peter's in Rome. The main features of the Renaissance style are the following: the church plan is an elongated rectangle, with transepts and with an eastern apse (derived from the Romanesque style), the arches and vaults rounded and not pointed, and domes are used (both things deriving from the Byzantine style and being a departure from the earlier Gothic); the external colonnades copy the ancient Greek practice. These churches were adorned with ornamentation in the form of leaves, flowers, figures of people and animals, which distinguishes it from the Byzantine ornamentation which was specifically Christian in derivation. The sculptured representations of the saints are also distinctive. It is these sculptures of the saints which most strike one as distinguishing the Renaissance style from the basilicas and from the Byzantine and Russian Orthodox styles.

§ 26. Russian Church Architecture. Naturally Russian church architecture had its origins in the establishment of Christianity in Russia in 988 A.D. Having received the Faith from the Greeks, as well as the priesthood and all that was necessary for the

Divine services, at the same time we adopted from them the form of their churches. Our ancestors received Baptism at the time when the Byzantine style predominated in Greece, and so our first churches were built in the Byzantine style. These churches were erected in the principal Russian cities: in Kiev, Novgorod, Pskov, Vladimir, Suzdal and in Moscow. *[There are long footnotes to this section which largely refer one to particular instances of the style, and we have omitted these footnotes for brevity's sake - ed.]* The Kievan and Novgorodian churches follow the plan of the Byzantine churches, being rectangular with three altar apses. Inside we have the usual four columns, with their vaults and the domes. But as time went on, differences appeared between the ancient Russian churches and the contemporary Greek ones, differences in the cupolas, in the windows, the doors and the ornamentation. In those Greek churches which had many cupolas, these were erected on special columns and were disposed at various heights in relation to the main cupola: in Russian churches all the cupolas were at one height. The windows in Byzantine churches were large and separate; in Russian churches they were small and there were few of them. The lintels in Byzantine churches were horizontal, but in Russian churches they were rounded. In the bigger Greek churches, there were often two narthexes. The inner one was reserved for the catechumens and for penitents, and the outer one, the porch, was bounded by columns. In the Russian churches, even the largest, they only built an inner narthex and that was small in area. In Greek churches the columns formed an integral part of both the exterior and the interior design of the churches, but in Russia, where there was a dearth of marble and suitable stone, such columns were omitted. Because of these variations, the Russian style is sometimes called not simply Byzantine but "Russo-Greek" by specialists. In some Novgorodian churches, the walls end at the top in sharp pointed decorations, something like those on the roofs of wooden cottages. Stone built churches in Russia were few. Wooden churches were much more common especially in the northern parts of the country, because there was an abundance of wood to build with, and because for the Russian master builders this material was more to their liking and was the indigenous material. The form or plan of the oldest wooden churches was a square or long rectangle. Either they had a curved dome, or turret like cupolas. Sometimes there were large numbers of these, set at different heights. A characteristic which distinguished the Russian cupolas from the Greek ones, was that above the rounded part itself, beneath the Cross, there was a special elongation, which gives it a onion-shaped form. Until the fifteenth century the Moscow churches were usually built by masters from Novgorod, Vladimir and Suzdal, and they follow the Kievo-Novgorodian and Vladimiro-Suzdalian types. But none of these churches remain. They were either completely destroyed through time, by fire or by despoliation by the Tartars, or they have been purposely rebuilt in a newer style. Other churches have been preserved which were built after the fifteenth century, that is after the throwing off of the Tartar Yoke and the establishment of the Moscow state. From the reign of the Great Prince John III (1462-1505), foreign builders and artists were invited and came to Russia, who with the Russian masters and in line with the church tradition of ancient Russian architecture, built various historical churches. The most important of these is the Cathedral of the Dormition *[in the Moscow Kremlin]*, which was built by Aristotle Fioraventi and wherein the sacred coronations of the Russian monarchs were solemnized, and the Cathedral of the Archangels, built by the Italian Aloysio, where the Russian princes lie at rest. In the course of time, Russian

architects developed their own national style. The first glimpse of a truly Russian style is found in the so-called "tent" or spire churches. Sometimes several separate chapels are united into one church, and each has its own spire or tent-shape, crowned by cupola or onion dome. In addition to the mass of cupolas, with their onion-shaped domes, the tent style is distinguished by the diversity of colours and the various tints used in the exterior decoration of the various parts of the church. The church in the village of Dyakov and the church of St Basil the Blessed in Moscow are examples of this type. The period when the tent-shaped churches flourished in Russia came to an end in the seventeenth century; thereafter the style was not so widely favoured and it was even discouraged by the ecclesiastical authorities (perhaps because it was so different from the traditional Byzantine style). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was however a renewed interest in this type of church. A number of historic churches were again erected in this style, for example the Holy Trinity church of the Saint Petersburg "Society for the Propagation of Religious-Moral Enlightenment in the Spirit of the Orthodox Church," and the Church of the Resurrection built on the site of the assassination of the Tsar-Liberator (Alexander II). There were other types of church in national styles besides the tent-shaped ones:- a) those which were built extremely high in the form of a cube, which had inside upper and lower churches on two floors; b) a similar type with two different shapes, a rectangular plan for the lower church, with an octagonal plan for the upper; c) a form in which a series of rectangular frameworks are layered upon each other. In the reign of the Emperor Nicolas I, a military church in Saint Petersburg was erected by the architect, K. Ton, which was of a unique design, and was therefore called the Tonov style.

Of the Western European styles (Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance) only the Renaissance form was employed in the building of churches in Russia. Examples of these are the Kazan and St Isaicius Cathedrals in Saint Petersburg. The other Western styles were only used in the building of heterodox churches. Sometimes however there was a mixture of various styles, the basilica with the Byzantine, or Romanesque with Gothic.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a great growth in the building of house churches. These were in the palaces and homes of rich people, or at educational and governmental institutions and at almshouses. These churches were akin to the ikoses of the early Christians, and many of them were richly and artistically furnished, thus being treasuries of Russian art.

... to be continued with "The Artistic Significance
and the Moral Instruction of the Historic Churches

CALLING the Magi by a star,
Heaven brought the first fruits of the nations unto Thee,
a Babe lying in the manger;
and they were amazed to see neither sceptre nor throne
but only utter poverty.
For what is meaner than a cave?
What is humbler than swaddling clothes?
Yet therein shone forth

the wealth of Thy Divinity:
Glory to Thee, O Lord.
Ypakoe for the Nativity

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF FATHER GEORGE CHEREMETIEFF

Thoughts on a Journey
Continuation from last issue

The Spiritual Israel

There are three crucial moments in the history of mankind: the Fall of our forefathers, the covenant between God and the faithful Abraham, and the first coming of Christ on earth.

1. The Fall of Our Forefathers

Man, who had been created with a soul which ruled over earthly life and the material, fell, being deceived by the devil. A proud mind and a coarse body (those crowns of this earthly life, which turn to dust and rot when the soul leaves the body) think they can rule over the immortal soul which was given by God and returns to God. And so man's life becomes absurd. It always happens like that when a weak thing, strong only in its own little material sphere, forcibly attempts to rule over, or to be on a par with, absolute power.

It always happens like that when some nonentity of a person attempts some task, which is beyond his strength. Just imagine the picture: a drunken and brawny navy tries to assert his brute strength and pits himself against the mind of a Professor Mendelejev [*Russian Chemist (1834-1907) who formulated the periodic law, and after whom the element medeleevium was named - ed.*]. He forces him to haul wooden barges, and occupies himself with trying to do researches in his laboratory. Mendelejev would not be able to pull the barge even for a mile, and the navy would utterly destroy Mendelejev's work. It would be absurd. But there is an even greater absurdity: man did not trust God and desired to be on a par with the absolute Power, Wisdom and Majesty. He desired to arrange his life himself, without his Creator. Here we not only have the absurdity of "equality," but the stupidity of weakness and imperfection, themselves already thrown off course, thinking to be on a par with the Source of all power and thought.

And so we see (even now) what happens when man arranges his life without God. Nations have also rejected God and religion; reason has decided to stand on its own, without conscience, and to rule the world and the fate of peoples. Technology has decided to place itself above the altar. And the result: poverty, hunger, destruction, resentment, fear without measure, and the ephemeral, absolute and unjust rule of a clique of people who have not been granted power, but have snatched it by means of a technology which is destructive of everything and by propaganda which confuses everything.

Where is human dignity? People are turned into a herd; they are thrown from pillar to post across the world's globe. And the more this continues, the worse it becomes; and the torments will be without end until people humble their arrogance and, under the burden of the world's disasters, again turn for help to God, their Creator. From the Fall all this absurdity and suffering ensued. In Paradise's Kingdom of the Spirit, it was not possible that man should be in such a state. Just as a drunken revolutionary soldier would be unable to stay usefully in a learned college; he would get bored and would be confused by the teaching.

Man was cast out of Paradise, and Paradise itself was taken away from the earth. But tell me: How is it that God could permit man to fall, and the devil to fall away? Could He not have prevented this? Of course He could have, for God possesses all power. But God, the Eternal Source of love, did not create slaves. He wanted loving children and not bound slaves. He wanted children, who of their own freewill would come to love and to eternal righteousness. God desires that His ministers would have their dignity, to which they attain when they have contested against the temptation to sin and against an exterior "truth" which is itself a temptation, having the appearance of inner truth but in reality being completely opposed to it. For this cause alone man was given free will. It was not given simply to make exterior decisions in the various circumstances of life (where to live, or what line of action to take - all these small details have all been foreseen beforehand), but it is granted so that one might voluntarily chose to follow good or evil. To believe in God and gratefully humble oneself before His love, His Majesty, Almightyness and Intelligence, - or, proudly, in accordance with our own limited understanding, to do that which is foolish and then to think that, having created catastrophes and forced other people to become a herd of slaves, we have been great.

It is only with regard to this one decision, to give oneself over to God or to the temptations of the enemy, that the freedom of man's will consists, and it is only in this regard that he is responsible for himself. Some people might say that such a belief is fatalistic. But in the Orthodox service of Preparation for Holy Communion, in the Prayer of Saint Simeon the New Theologian, we find written word for word: "Yea, Thine eyes did see my being while as yet it was unfashioned. In Thy book all thoughts and actions, even those not yet enacted, are inscribed for Thee already."

But how did this come about? The devil deceived Eve, and then Eve deceived Adam. But that wasn't the most important fall. The most important was that these people believed the devil that they would become "like gods" and consequently they showed that they did not believe in God, their Creator, at all. They had resolved to live without God. The result of this was that the material usurped the rule over man. The soul remained, but it did not rule anymore and only manifested itself through qualms of conscience. The creature's mind and his cellular body took first place. From this there came arrogance and corruption and all the other deceits of a corrupted and proud mind, as well as the rude instincts of the body. Adam, created for spiritual blessedness, had to toil to nourish himself, and Eve had to bear children in pain. In spite of this, God did not abandon them but He commanded them to bear these two punishments and to seek God in this earthly desert and to call upon him in misfortune, promising His aid.

But let none of us blame our Forefathers. With our weak faith, our pridefulness of mind and bodily sensuality, without a doubt, we would have done the same, if not worse.

2. The Covenant Between God and the Faithful Abraham

Now let us see what the reason was that God sealed a covenant with Abraham. At that time the majority of people had forgotten about God, they did not seek Him, they did not revere Him, and for the most part they lived according to the desires of their animal-like nature and creaturely reason. Those which did search out the Divine, having forgotten the True God, bowed down instead before the creations of their own hands, or before animals or natural manifestations. It was then that Abraham continued to honour the True God and to try and live according to His precepts. Seeing his faithfulness, God decided to test it, just as gold is tested and cleansed by fire and is strengthened by the hammer upon the anvil.

He ordered Abraham to offer as a sacrifice and to slay his only son, Isaac. No matter how much Abraham loved his son, the Lord's command was sacred for him. He prepared an altar, laid Isaac thereon and even took up the knife in order to kill him. But God held his hand, for He did not desire the death of the boy, and only wished to test the faithfulness of the father.

After this God concluded His covenant with Abraham, saying: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Gen. 22:16-17). And God gave him another promise, that the Saviour of the world would issue forth from among his descendants, adding: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice" (Gen. 22:18). So Adam was punished for not believing God, and Abraham was blessed on account of his faithfulness. Abraham "believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). For his faith and his obedience, he received a reward from God.

Now let us see for what purpose God made His covenant with Abraham. The Lord said: "I have chosen him, because he will command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19). Did the descendants of Abraham fulfil this covenant of God? Yes. Because despite the recalcitrance and the straying of the majority, Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, kept God's covenant and faith in the one True God until the coming of the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Did all the Jewish people remain faithful? No. the majority of them fell away. But they recognized the Law of Moses as binding, and the majority who fell away was not regarded as legitimate, but rather as under the judgment of the law. But from that dreadful moment, when the Jewish people denied Christ before Pilate, they (although the greater part of them did not comprehend this) rejected the God of their fathers. For Christ said: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). The High Priests and the Pharisees knew that they were betraying the Messiah. It is from this moment that their formal apostasy begins, and the Talmud begins to become the fundamental codex of their law.

We can certainly say that many people of the house of Israel of old had earlier rejected the God of their fathers and worshipped the dark spirits. To be convinced of this, one need only read the eighth chapter of the book of the Prophet Ezekiel. But until the judgment before Pilate, they stood in fear of the people. But have all the Jewish people denied? No. Not all. The chosen of God from among the people of the Jews maintained their faithfulness to God, they believed the Prophets, who foretold to them the coming of the Messiah, and when He did appear, they trusted Him; they did not deny Him before Pilate, and after the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven, they formed the first Christian community, that is the Church of Christ on earth. It was from them, that the Faith was transmitted abroad, and through them that the pagans were brought into the Lord's Church. It was from the Jews that the Holy Apostles came. Even the Apostle Paul, who so widely illumined the pagans, was from among them. It was from among them that the Mother of God came, the Ever-Virgin Mary, the only Pure One and only Blessed One.

To be continued in the next issue, with "The Christians, the Spiritual Israel"....

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"E's mother tells me that it is not Orthodox to make a will, and that if I do so I will die. I feel that I ought to. What is your line on this?" - T.S., London N.8.

Well, your mother-in-law is right in one respect! If you make a will, you will die; but it is also true that if you don't make a will, you will die! Do not accept such superstitious stories as Orthodox teaching. It is perfectly acceptable for Orthodox Christians to make wills and it is even desirable that they do so, not only to pass on their properties to those they wish to benefit, but also to make clear that they wish that they be laid to rest according to the practices of the Orthodox Church (no cremation, no embalming, organ donation, etc). The one thing that is NOT Orthodox is to make bequests which ignore charitable causes or simply make miserly token bequests in this regard. It is customary for the bereaved to make donations to churches and monasteries and other charities in memory of their beloved ones, and this benefits their souls. But one should not leave this ministry of almsgiving to others; in your will you should make generous provision for gifts to charity.

THE COMING MONTH

FOR THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN, Christmas fills the whole month of December, but not in the same way as it does for those who observe the Disneyland festivity. For them Christmas is concerned with parties, presents, glamour and glitter, perhaps a touch of religious sentiment, and a great deal of self-indulgence, and these things occupy the whole month up to 26th December.

For us, it is different, the first twenty-four days of the month are kept, observing the fast as a period in which we prepare ourselves to meet the New-born Saviour. Rather than gourmandising, we try to keep the fast, that the Church appoints regarding food, so that we come to understand that the Mother of God's "strange childbirth" calls us not to immerse ourselves in the world and its pleasures, but rather

to "estrangle ourselves from the world by transporting our minds to Heaven," as it says in the Akathist Hymn.

Nor is our preparation confined to food-fasting - many people who have no religious convictions are vegans and keep a stricter "fast" than the Church enjoins on us - we are also encouraged to use the fast for deepening our prayer-life, spiritual reading, and practising the virtues, particularly one of the simplest and most beneficial: almsgiving.

Perhaps we should reflect for a moment on what it means to deepen our prayer-life. This can sound incredibly "mystical" and something outside the reach or, to be brutally honest, the interest of most of us. So, by and large, most people simply ignore it. But in doing so, we lose a great of benefit. So, what does it entail? First we have to understand that there are different types of prayer: communal prayer in church, the reading of prayers from the Prayer Book at home, the saying of one's own prayers, the recitation of the Jesus Prayer or some other short prayer, simple prayerful thoughts, and quiet. Some people rely almost exclusively on one of these types. People often will excuse themselves by saying such things as "I don't attend church much, but I say prayers at home in my own way," or: "I usually feel too tired to say prayers at night, so I simply ask the Lord to care for me." This is undoubtedly better than nothing, and undoubtedly sometimes it is all one can do, but if it becomes habitual it is like living on a diet of boiled cabbage and nothing else. The body requires various foods, and spiritually we need the various forms of prayer. Each of them serves a purpose and helps and supports the others. To change the metaphor, the prayers in church are like a skeleton for the rest of our prayer life; they give us a form and a support. Without them how do we know how to pray, or what to pray for; the same is true to a lesser degree to those formal prayers we read at home. They are the words of holy Fathers and teachers of the Faith, and they inform us and instruct us. But a skeleton, without flesh and blood is dead. So those who confine themselves simply to going to church (even if they attend) and reading the set prayers at home, will find that they are spiritually dry. The body needs to be nourished, and for this it has a digestive system, and so we need also to say our own prayers, conversing with God and His saints about the things that intimately concern us. The body also needs air to breathe and a respiratory system, and so we need the continued practice of the Jesus Prayer or some other short petition to keep us breathing spiritually. Simple prayerful thoughts can serve a number of important purposes: a plea for help in time of temptation, the casting out of a wrong thought or feeling, giving of thanks for a blessing, blessing the start of a task, for strength in a difficult situation, intercession for others, etc. And we need also quiet, lest our praying be a harangue against God rather than converse with Him. We have all suffered from people who never stop talking and who talk at us, but never listen. Because of our pride we are hurt by this, and so we should be aware that it is not a very kind thing to do to God. So there are different kinds of prayer, and during the fast we can try and improve each level. It may be only to pause and ask God's blessing before setting off to work, but if it is something that has never crossed our mind before - it will be an improvement, a deepening, even of a millimetre, of our prayer-life.

The last five days of the fast fall within the Fore-feast or Pre-festival period, and during these days the fasting regulations are somewhat stricter. In these days the

prayers of the Church remind us of the All Pure One and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem for the Birth of the Lord. Throughout the fast, the Church has supported us and inspired us with her hymns and prayers, turning our attention to the Lord's Birth at Bethlehem, but during these days whole services are appointed to be read in church to that end.

The Great Feast itself is kept for seven days, during which time there is no fasting, for the Bridegroom is in our midst, born into our world for our salvation. Besides the festal Vigil Service of Christmas Eve and the Divine Liturgy on the day of the feast (25th December/7th January), there are several commemorations throughout the seven days particularly connected with the Saviour's Birth. On the second day of the feast, we fittingly honour the Mother of God who brought the Saviour into the world. On the third day we have the feast of St Stephen the First Martyr. Christ is born, and Stephen responds exactly in accordance with the teaching from the Akathist Hymn which we quoted above. He estranges himself from the world for Christ's sake, by suffering martyrdom. On the fourth day we have the Twenty-Thousand Martyrs of Nicomedia, who were burned in their church as they celebrated the Nativity of Christ. On the fifth, yet another band of martyrs -the Holy Innocents, slain by Herod in his attempt to destroy the Messiah. The last day of the feast, 31st December according to the Church Calendar, falls on a Sunday this year, and so it is not only the Leavetaking of the Feast but, being the Sunday after Christmas, it is the day on which we hymn the Kinsmen of the Lord: Saint Joseph the Betrothed, St James the Brother of God, and His ancestor, the Prophet, King and Psalmist David. On this day, at Brookwood, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St James.

It may seem inappropriate that during such a festival of joy, we have so many remembrances of death, even bloody deaths, martyrdom, the slaying of the Innocents, etc. These things remind us again that our Faith is not primarily concerned with the good of this world, or with easing our journey through this life, but is indeed a call to "estrangle ourselves from this world by transporting our minds to Heaven," where is our hope and our desire.

NEWS SECTION

SCHISM FROM ROCA

AFTER THE ELECTION of Metropolitan Lavr as the new First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad at the Assembly of Bishops held in New York City in October, Metropolitan Vitaly and Bishop Barnabas of Cannes (who was under synodical censure) irregularly consecrated several other bishops and dissociated themselves from the ROCA Hierarchs. The news items which have reached us about this sad development are confused and, as might be expected in the circumstances, tendentious, but a new Synod has been formed calling itself the "Russian Orthodox Church in Exile," a title earlier used by our own Church. On 8th November, four hierarchs of the New Synod issued a declaration regarding their position, which gives every impression of having been hastily put together and being ill-conceived. One suspects that it was not primarily the work of Metropolitan Vitaly, a man of learning and of long Archpastoral service. On 11th November, His Grace Bishop Agathangel of Odessa issued a very cogent statement regarding the charges that had been brought

against representatives of ROCA in their treatment of Metropolitan Vitaly. On the same day, Bishop Gabriel issued a statement from the Chancery of the Synod of Bishops of ROCA, outlining the development of the schism, and calling the pastors and the flock to be sober-minded. Unfortunately, conflicts did continue, and on 22nd November, Metropolitan Vitaly, was the object of some abuse. The Chancery of the Synod of Bishops responded immediately to this, stating, that "it is necessary to act solely by peaceful methods, through calm and quiet conversations and persuasions, and absolutely not through the use of any type of physical force." They categorically condemned attempts to place the retired Metropolitan under duress, and pending an inquiry into the event which drew forth this statement, the Right Reverend Bishop Michael was relieved of the administration of the Canadian diocese and sent to reside at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY. The temporary administration of the Canadian diocese was delegated to the Most Reverend Metropolitan Lavr in its Eastern part, and to the Right Reverend Bishop Kyrill in its Western part.

NEW FINNISH PRIMATE

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF FINLAND elected Metropolitan Leo of Helsinki to succeed the retired Archbishop Johannes, on 25th October. The primate of the Finnish Church bears the title Archbishop of Karelia and All Finland, and the Church itself forms an Exarchate of the Œcumenical Patriarchate, so the election of the new primate has, according to the Church Tomos of 1923, to be confirmed by Constantinople.

PATRIARCHATE - SYNOD EXCHANGE

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, we reported that Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow had addressed a "Fraternal Letter" to the Assembly of Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The ROCA bishops responded, attesting that "the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church had always been their desire" - a desire which "has penetrated the prayer life of the Russian diaspora." While responding positively to the Patriarchal approach, the Bishops set forth in measured tones their worries about the involvement of the Patriarchate in ecumenism, and they called upon the Patriarchal hierarchs to condemn the sin of their Church's former collaboration with the agents of the atheistic state. In doing this the ROCA hierarchs were careful to state that they had no right to condemn the collaborating hierarchs but adhered to the principle of condemning the sin but not the sinner. They ended: "We inseparably associate the movement toward our union with a movement toward the triumph of the truth. In His High-Priestly Prayer, aptly mentioned in Your address, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to God the Father, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth ... for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth' (Jn 17:17,19). Let our union also be sanctified through the truth and let us then be united, and our flock will recognize in us witnesses of righteousness and God's love."

News reports indicate that this reply was thought to be "stern" by the Patriarch, and the editor of "Moscow Church Herald," Fr Sergei Chapnin, is reported as saying that "the demands regarding ecumenism and Sergianism are clearly set forth in ideological, not theological, terms."

In an interview with Dmitri Safonov, Patriarch Aleksii started by expressing the thought that the ROCA response would be "milder." He expressed hope that

nonetheless progress could be made but thought that time was of the essence as within another decade the Church Abroad would no longer be able to call itself Russian. He dismissed the objections to Sergianism, by suggesting that Metropolitan Sergius was aligning himself not with the Soviet government but with the Country. This new interpretation might be accepted if the subsequent implementation of Sergius' policy supported this view, rather than the one which has hitherto been accepted as given. The Patriarch also dismissed the condemnation of ecumenism by saying that "we must associate with one another. Today, when the world meets up with global terrorism, it is necessary to unite efforts even with Islam." It seems "the threat of global terrorism" is being used in many spheres to excuse or promote wrongs, and it appears that here the Patriarch is confusing ecumenism (which undermines the Church's teaching concerning her unique role in the salvation of souls) with the natural and perfectly acceptable co-operation of peoples of various faiths, and none, in combating social injustice or evils such as terrorism. But it must be added that these answers were given in an interview, they are not the considered response of the Patriarch or of his Synod of Bishops.

ORTHODOXY IN CHINA

"THE VOICE," a new and excellent magazine published by the St John the Baptist Skete, Kentlyn, NSW, Australia, carries in its November issue a report by Father Vladimir Boikov of his recent pastoral visit to China. Fr Vladimir is the pastor of the Vladimir Icon Church in Rocklea, Queensland, and his parents lived in China until 1965, and he tells us that he has Chinese lineage, even that he looks Chinese! Evidently for these reasons, he accompanied Archbishop Hilarion of Sydney when, in December, 2000, His Grace made a visit to the scattered faithful in China. The Archbishop, finding that, despite being left with little or no pastoral care for decades, there were many Orthodox Christians in China, who had been unable to leave and were thus forced to live through the terror of the Cultural Revolution, has assigned Fr Vladimir to minister to their needs. In October this year, Fr Vladimir therefore made a second visit, going to Beijing, Shanghai, Harbin, Hailar, Erguna, Yakeshi and several other smaller towns. He outlines what he found in each place, and concludes with the comment: "With God's help I baptised 50 people this year and communed around 150, whereas last year I baptised 25 with Vladyka's help and communed only about 20-30." He met the last surviving priest of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, Fr Alexander Du, who lives in retirement in Beijing, caring for his dying matushka. He also tells us that there are three possible candidates for ordination among the Orthodox in Shanghai, two who are studying Greek in Greece under the auspices of Metropolitan Niketas of Hong Kong, and one whom they hope the Australian diocese of ROCA will sponsor. The Moscow Patriarchate is also helping an Orthodox outpost in Erguna. At the present time, there are no serving Orthodox clergy resident in mainland China, and one problem is that to be allowed to serve there they have to be Chinese nationals.

SUFFERING OF CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

FATHER SERAPHIM HOLLAND, priest of the St Nicolas Orthodox Church in Dallas, posted two letters on the internet on 7th November. The first is a long report of the sufferings of the Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land issued by Robin Wainwright of the Holy Land Trust USA, and Sami Awas, of the Holy Land Trust

Palestine. This report, dated 27/10/01 and issued from Bethlehem, states that "at least 22 people from Bethlehem have died in the past 10 days." Three of these were young men on Israel's "wanted" list. The other nineteen were innocent victims of aggression. The report gives details of some of these, and we would be pleased to send photocopies of it to any readers who are interested. One particularly sad case we will copy in full:-

"On Saturday, October 20, a young 17-year old boy named Johnny Thaljah was walking across Manger Square at noon. If any of you have come to the Church of the Nativity as a pilgrim in the past three years, you may have met Johnny. He would often sit at the entrance to the Church and hand out scarves or other covering for those who wished to enter the Church but were inappropriately attired. An Orthodox Christian, on this day he had just been at worship with his family in Nativity Church. He was carrying the baby of one of his cousins, trying to make the baby laugh. Less than 100 feet from the Nativity Church, he was shot by an Israeli sniper from a hill nearly a mile away. Johnny gently laid the baby down on the stones of Manger Square and then fell over dead. Johnny was not on anyone's "wanted" list. He was a Christian worshipping with his family in the oldest Christian church in the world. Johnny was shot dead for sport, serving as human target practice. Perhaps a wager or competition between Israeli soldiers to see if they could hit a moving target at such a distance. Like shooting a rabbit or a squirrel. They are very good. And their equipment was the very newest and best sniper rifles U.S. dollars could buy."

Before posting this report, Fr Seraphim contacted Sister Maria in the Holy Land for collaboration of the incidents. She confirmed that as far as she knew all the accounts were factual, and said that their next-door neighbours were friends of Johnny's family and knew him well. She added details of the constant harassment that the Palestinians are made to suffer, ending "the saddest to see is that as the situation deteriorates the plight of the Palestinian Christians becomes ever worse. Very hard to convince a family man to stay here if he really cares about the welfare of his family. The 'Holy Sites' will stay open, but there will be little 'living Christianity' here."

BROOKWOOD NEWS

SAINT PANTELEIMON ICON ARRIVES: Some time ago, we asked readers to contribute towards the commission of an icon of the holy Great Martyr Panteleimon the Healer for Saint Edward's Church. Monies were collected, and in due time an order was placed with the sisters of the Convent of St Elisabeth, Etna, California. We took delivery of the icon on Monday 19th November. The icon depicts the Saint, half-stature, and four smaller icons, within the beautifully gilded frame, of St Eubulla, St Panteleimon's mother, and the three holy hieromartyrs Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates, whose lives are so closely bound up with that of Saint Panteleimon. At present the icon is being mounted in a wooden and glazed frame for safe-keeping. Our thanks to Abbess Elisabeth of the Convent at Etna and her sisters for such a beautiful icon, and to all those of you who contributed towards it. May the Saint's prayers ever bring you blessings.

DECANAL VISIT: Unable to fulfil his obligation as dean of the English language parishes earlier in the year, because of Fr Peter's injury, Fr Alexis visited the missions at

Congleton and Birkenhead over the weekend of 10th and 11th November. On the Saturday evening, after visiting one of the parishioners who was sick, Fr Paul Elliott and he served the Vigil Service at the St Werburgh Chapel at the home of Mrs Barbara Worth in Congleton. On the following morning, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the two priests at St Elizabeth Chapel at Fr Paul's home in Birkenhead, after which all those who attended were treated to a festive meal. It was a blessing to see with what care this chapel has been furnished and how this small mission has grown over the past two years. It was with some difficulty that the congregation managed to squeeze into the chapel, and it was good to meet so many new faces among them. Undoubtedly, the mission will have to find a larger chapel in due course, and we ask the prayers of the faithful for God's help and guidance in this regard.

BROTHERHOOD NEW HOUSE: At the time of going to press, on our behalf, Hoble Designs Limited have submitted a planning application to Woking Borough Council, as a result of which with Irina Hoble we met representatives of the planning department on site on 19th November to discuss some modifications to the plans. At present we are awaiting their suggestions and advice. We particularly grateful to Mr Kostas Lambrinidis of Coulsdon, a member of the Convent congregation, for his offer of professional help on the civil engineering side of things.

VISIT OF ORTHODOX YOUTH: On Sunday 18th November, our congregation at Brookwood was happily swelled by the visit of numbers of Orthodox Youth from Paris and their London hosts. The young French Orthodox delegation, mostly from the Cathedral on rue Daru, were in this country to talk with and meet their counterparts in the Greek Orthodox Youth of Great Britain.

ANOTHER INFLUX OF DEACONS: On Thursday 29th November, Father Stephen Platt of Oxford visited our Brotherhood, bringing with him two guests from Russia, Hierodeacons Cyril and Methody. The young hierodeacons from the St Petersburg Theological Academy are twins and were accompanied also by their mother, Ludmilla.

PRACTICAL TIP

REMEMBER the priest is NOT a wizard. This might seem an extraordinary "practical tip," but it is one which seems very necessary. Very often one notices people who carry on their lives with very little regard to their Christian confession of faith or its moral implications, but who, as soon as something unpleasant happens, expect the priest, - with a house blessing, with an exorcism, through anointing, or saying a prayer, by imparting to them the Holy Mysteries (even though they may have done little to prepare for their reception), - to magic all the unpleasantness away. Things do not happen that way. We must strive to know and understand our Christian Faith as far as our capabilities allow, to live according to its precepts, to lament over our failures and shortcoming in this regard, and then the various priestly ministries will indeed bring us blessings. Even so, they will not necessarily "magic" away what disturbs us, - it may be that what disturbs us is permitted for our salvation.