

# ***The Shepherd***

## ***An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine***

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### **FROM THE FATHERS**

"IF YOU DENY yourself and constantly renounce your own opinions, your own will, your own righteousness (or what amounts to the same thing, the knowledge, understanding, will and righteousness of fallen nature), in order to plant within you the knowledge of God, the will of God, and the righteousness of God, taught us in the Holy Gospel by God Himself, then fallen nature will open fire within you and declare a savage war against the Gospel and against God. Fallen spirits will come to the help of fallen nature. Do not fall into despondency on this account. By your firmness in the struggle show the tenacity of your purpose and the stability of your free-will. When thrown down, get up. When duped and disarmed, re-arm yourself afresh. When defeated, again rush to the fight. It is extremely good for you to see within yourself both your own fall and the fall of the whole of mankind. It is essential for you to recognize and study this fall in your own experience, in your heart and mind. It is essential for you to see the infirmity of your knowledge and intellect, and the weakness of your will. The vision of one's fall is a spiritual vision. The vision of one's infirmity and weakness is a spiritual vision"

*Saint Ignatius (Brianchaninov) of the Caucasus, 1807 - 1867*

"MY GOOD AND BELOVED BROTHERS, whoever is wronged in this life and wants to seek justice, let him know that it is thus: to bear the burdens of his brother, of his neighbour, until his final breath, and to be patient in all the sorrows of this present life. Because every affliction that befalls us, whether from men, from the demons, or from our very own nature, always has enclosed within it the corresponding profit. And whoever passes through it with patience receives the payment: its pledge here and its fulfilment there."

*Righteous Elder Joseph the Hesychast, + 1959 A.D.*

### **THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF THE FEAST OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD**

From the Teachings of Archbishop Nicanor of Cherson

ON THE FORTIETH DAY after the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His righteous parents, that is His ostensible father Joseph and the Most Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, took the Infant Jesus to present Him to the Lord (for it was written in the Law of the Lord, that every male child that openeth the womb "shall be called holy unto the Lord" and must needs be consecrated to the Lord) and to make an offering for Him in accordance with the prescriptions of the Law: a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. With a quiet joy the holy parents take the Infant Jesus to Jerusalem, and presenting Him before the Lord, they bring the redemption appointed by the Law

for Him, they make the sacrifice to the Lord appointed by the Law for Him. In Jerusalem, it is with joy that they, the Pre-eternal Child and His holy parents, meet the Elder Simeon, who had been brought there by the Holy Spirit, the Prophetess Anna the daughter of Phanuel, and many other people who were looking for the promised redemption in Israel. On 2nd February, we celebrate this joyful occasion, the Meeting of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How often our lips are accustomed to pronouncing these sacred words. And how often it is the case too that their significance hardly at all strikes our minds; how shallowly we delve into their meaning! They brought the Child Jesus up to Jerusalem, and there they met him, and from this we derive the title of this feast: the Meeting. There is great significance in this title, for the event which would otherwise be inaccessible to the understanding, as would the whole mystery of redemption.

Jesus Christ, the Lord Pantocrator and God all-perfect and infinite, the first-begotten and only-begotten Son of God the Father and of one essence with Him, He Who was born of the Father before all ages, the firstborn of all creation, is sent by the Eternal Father to the meeting of fallen creation, that He might be hypostatically united to this creation. He it is Who offered Himself a sacrifice to God the Father, that He might present Himself in the Meeting before the Face of God, that this Face, which had been wrathfully averted from sinful mankind on account of his sin, might be turned again to meet people with love, a love redolent of the fragrance of the immaculate redeeming sacrifice of the firstborn and only-begotten Son of God. And He, the Firstborn, the Son of God, the Lord and God, becomes the firstborn of the immaculate Lady, His Mother, the Ever-Virgin Mary, the first-begotten of Mary. He is called the son of the Righteous Joseph; He takes a widely used human name, Jesus, which was common among the Jews; He is manifest not only as truly man, but as the Godman in Whom the most pure Nature of the Godhead is hypostatically united with sinless human nature, in Whom, in one Person, God meets man. This Jesus, as the firstborn of His Mother and of Joseph who is called the father, is taken up to Jerusalem, to the Temple of the Lord, that they might present Him to the Lord, that in the Meeting there might be seen the turning of the Lord's Face again to the people; He is taken up as the heir of the rights of primogeniture in Judah; according to the fore-ordaining of God He also receives in Himself the right of primogeniture according to the order of Aaron; and along with the rights, unto their fulfilment He accepts the responsibilities of both these primogenitures: the duties of the high, spiritual King and those of the eternal High Priest. Having taken the name foreordained for Him, Jesus, He accepts also in very deed what it means, namely to be our true Saviour and the Christ, the promised Redeemer, the promised destroyer of the tempter serpent, the Propitiation of the enmity between God and man, the Breaker-down of the middle wall of partition which was raised up though that enmity. On the day of the Meeting, He is presented to God not only as the firstborn of His Most Pure Mother, but as the Firstborn of the whole of mankind, as a most holy Firstling, and that He might be a Firstling in two senses. He is a Firstling, on account of His sacrifice to God for sinful mankind; He is a Firstling also as the inheritor and mediator of God's gift to mankind; He was made, as it were, the Divine Firstling, as a kind of leaven or fermenter to bring to life the deadened human dough, through the saving action of the Grace of God.

And here we have the innermost meaning of the joyous feast, the Meeting of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Him, in the Person of Jesus Christ, Divinity and manhood meet. He, as the firstborn of mankind, is now presented before the face of God, so that in His Person, He might present all mankind before the Face of God through Himself. He is the Firstling, offered for mankind in the purifying sacrifice before the Face of God. He is a Firstling in yet another sense, a Firstling consecrated to God, thus actually hallowing and sanctifying mankind. For this reason, the righteous Simeon, taking Him in his arms and offering up the pre-eternal Infant before God's Face, said in tender light, Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace. Now mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; now they have seen the Light of revelation for all peoples and the glory of Thy people, Israel. Now in the very Person of the God-Child, Who is being presented before the Face of God, God and man meet face to face. Such is the inner, mystical significance of the feast of the Lord's Meeting.

The Lord Jesus Christ now appears before the Face of God not only for Himself, but on behalf of us and for us (Heb. 9:24); He entered in before the Face of God as a Forerunner for us (Heb. 6:20); and we must follow in His footsteps; He was manifest as eternal High-Priest, as Prophet and King, only to be the first such among many brothers. As His brethren sanctified by Him, we are all also a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people, a people for His own possession. And Christ the Lord has made us spiritual kings and priests, reconciling us unto God, as first fruits of every tribe and tongue and people and kindred (1 Peter 2:5-10; Rev. 5:9, 14:4). So it is that we are brought, in imitation of our Saviour, to the house of the Lord by our parents on the fortieth day after our birth for the Churching. We are presented in the church before the Face of God that according to the words of the prayer we might appear before God the Creator of all, our Heavenly Father. So it is that we, all the Christians, are according to the words of the Apostle Peter a sacred priesthood, and must needs offer spiritual sacrifices, well-pleasing unto God, through Jesus Christ, Who as a link, joins us to God. As the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy people, a people taken by God for His own possession, we are obliged to proclaim the perfection of our Redeemer, Who has called us forth from the darkness into His wondrous light, and we are obliged to lead a life of virtue in the midst of other peoples and the tribes of other faiths, so that they, seeing our good works, might glorify God, our Heavenly Father (1 Ptr 2:5-12), and that they, following in our footsteps, might, like us, press forward with all their hearts unto meeting the Face of God. Amen.

*Translated from the Russian*

*Editor's Note:* Archbishop Nicanor of Cherson was born Alexander Brovkovich in 1827. He graduated from the Saint Petersburg Spiritual Academy, and was rector of various seminaries, before becoming that of the Kazan Spiritual Academy. He was consecrated as a vicar bishop of the Donsk eparchy, and was later bishop of Ufim, and lastly Archbishop of Cherson and Odessa. He was a well-known spiritual writer in his time. He died in 1890 A.D.

Adapted from

## "THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

*Continuation*

§ 30. The Holy Throne and its Appurtenances, The table which stands in the sanctuary across from the Royal Gates is called the Holy Throne. It is called the Throne, even though it is a table, because it is thereon that the Lord is mystically present, He who is the King, the Governor of the Church. Usually the Throne, or Holy Table, is made of wood, but occasionally it is constructed of marble, or even silver or gold.\* In the Throne, within a special casket, there is a small particle of holy relics. This is done to recall the practice of celebrating the Eucharist in the catacombs during the period of persecution, and the fact that, when the persecutions came to an end, it was celebrated on the tombs of the martyrs. This was to express the thought that the Church is established on the Blood of Christ, and through Him on that of the martyrs (see Rev. 6:9). The Throne is vested in two coverings. The inner one is of linen and is called the "katasarkion" or shroud, and it refers to the burial linens of Jesus Christ. The outer one is usually of brocade and is called the "indition" and it brings to mind the magnificent clothing of the Lord, as King of Glory. On the Throne, one finds the following objects:-

1) The Antimension, a silken cloth with holy relics sewn into it, and on which there is a depiction of the entombment of Jesus Christ, of the four Evangelists and of the instruments of the Saviour's Passion.\*\* The antimension or antimins is folded within another cloth, the "iliton." The iliton recalls the practice of the Christians in the time of persecution of carrying cloths into which they could collect up and hide those things which were used during the Eucharist in the event of a raid by the pagans. However, the use of the antimension and the iliton continued even when the persecution ceased, and they now have a symbolic meaning, representing the burial shrouds of Jesus Christ.

According to ecclesiastical canons, the Throne must be blessed by a hierarch, although it is not always possible for a bishop to do this himself, and it is for that reason that the antimension is always without exception blessed by the hierarch in place of the actual Table. To endorse the fact that it has been blessed, the antimension is signed by the hierarch. The possession of a consecrated antimension, blessed by the bishop, witnesses to the fact that the services in church are being celebrated with the knowledge and approbation of the bishop and thus canonically.

In ancient times, and indeed sometimes even now, there was a canopy over the Throne; this is called the "Kiborion."

2) The Tabernacle, also called the Artophorion, is a container in which particles of the consecrated Gifts are kept for the communion of the sick, and the consecrated Lambs (i.e. portions of bread consecrated at the Liturgy) are kept during Great Lent to be used during the Liturgies of the Presanctified Gifts. In the Russian practice the

Tabernacle is often made in the form of a miniature church, and the box for the Gifts within it is often in the form of a coffin. In ancient times, the Tabernacle was often made in the form of a Dove and suspended above the Holy Table.\*\*\*

3) The Cross and Gospel are always kept on the Holy Table, showing that this is the place of the presence, the very Throne of the King Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross referred to here is the blessing Cross.

§ 31. The Table of Preparation, the Diaconicon, the High Place, the Icons behind the Throne and the Other Appurtenances of the Sanctuary. The Table of Preparation, also called the Prothesis or the Proskomidi, is the second table within the sanctuary, and on it those things necessary for the preparation of the Eucharist are kept. In ancient times, the table of preparation was found outside the sanctuary itself in a separate, special area, usually in an apse to the left side of the sanctuary. To this enclosure, the faithful would bring their offerings (prophora and wine) so that the priest could select the best of them for the celebration of the Mystery of Communion. Usually, the proskomidi is situated in the left (as one looks from in front of the Throne) corner of the sanctuary itself. To the right side of the Throne, balancing the proskomidi, in ancient times there would have been another apse with accommodation for the safekeeping of sacred vessels, vestments and other treasures of the church. As the keeping of these things was the responsibility of the deacon, this area was called the diaconicon. Usually nowadays, these things are simply stored in a cupboard there.

The High Place is the area between the Holy Table and the eastern wall of the sanctuary, often the floor is raised here, and there is seat for the Bishop in the centre and, forming a semicircle, others for the priests.

On the wall behind the Throne, there are usually depictions of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Trinity or of the Mother of God, as well as one of the Communion of the Apostles or the Mystical Supper. Anciently there was an icon of the Mother of God with her hands upraised in supplication, and the Christ Child depicted in an aureole in front of her breast. This is called the Platytera - referring to a hymn which addresses her as more spacious than the heavens, because she contained" God, whereas they cannot. This icon is thus seen above the Holy Throne, because the Mother of God is the Throne of the Most High. In a more modern Russian custom, there is often an icon of the Resurrected Christ in this place.

Besides these things, one also finds a Cross standing behind the Holy Table and a Seven-branched Lampstand, recalling the seven- branched candlestick found in the Old Testament Temple. The Cross is often the church's processional cross.

*To be continued with "The Holy Vessels and Church Plate."*

*Footnotes:*

\* In olden times, the Holy Table might have been of stone, as a depiction of Christ, Who is the Foundation-Stone of our Faith, and as a remembrance of that rock of old from which water came forth that Israel might drink, emphasizing that now we drink not from a rock that pours forth water for us, but from the very Source of Life Eternal we draw forth the life-creating Blood of Christ.

\*\* The word antimension, which means "in place of the Table," derives from the Greek word, "anti" (in place of) and the Latin word, "mensa," (table). Its derivation

is closely bound up with the ancient Christian practice of celebrating the Eucharist on the graves of the martyrs. Even after the persecutions ended, the custom persisted that when churches were consecrated, sacred relics were either deposited under the Holy Table, on in a metal vessel within it, or in one of the boards of the Table's top, specially hollowed out for that purpose. In the seventh and eighth centuries this practice was temporarily relaxed, but in the eighth century at the Seven Œcumenical Council it was synodically endorsed, and in those Greek churches which had been consecrated by a Bishop himself, the sacred relics were within the Holy Table and were not needed in the antimension. When churches were not consecrated by a bishop, then they were sent antimensia consecrated with sacred relics. Thus there were churches which had Holy Tables consecrated with holy relics but had no antimension, and others where the Holy Table had no relics, but they had antimensia. In the Russian Church, antimensia were introduced with the bringing in of the Christian Faith itself and were placed on the Holy Tables which had not been consecrated by bishops. At first, however, like the Greeks of that time, they were not used on those Holy Tables consecrated by the bishop. In the course of time, though, at first in Greece and then in the Russian Church, antimensia were introduced even where the Holy Tables had been blessed by a hierarch, only they were without relics. In the seventeenth century (in 1675), there began the practice of placing antimensia in all churches, even those consecrated by bishops - at first without relics, but later with relics. Also originally, only the Cross was depicted on the antimension, but later, at the end of the seventeenth century they began depicting the entombment of Christ. It is clear that the practice of placing the sacred relics either in the Holy Table itself or in the antimension appeared because of the two ways of consecrating the church, either with or without a bishop, and consequently either without or with an antimension.

\*\*\* The use of the Tabernacle derives from the ancient custom of retaining a portion of the Holy Gifts (Communion) and keeping Them either in private houses or in the church. Those kept in church were contained in a special vessel, shaped like a dove, which was set on high upon a special turret-like structure above the Holy Table, and thus given a special prominence. Gradually, the dove was not placed within this structure but came to be suspended, but with the same purpose in mind. Then the turret-like structures were made smaller, and gradually took on the form of a church, sometimes being a model of the church in which the Gifts were being reserved.

## THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF FATHER GEORGE CHEREMETIEFF

Thoughts on a journey  
*Continuation from last issue*

SCRIPTURE says: "He that believeth on Him shall not be shamed" (Es. 28:16). Here we have no differentiation between the Jew and the Greek, because there is one Lord for everyone and He is rich towards all that call upon Him. "*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32). "Thus faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God." But I ask, did they, the Israelites, really not hear? It was to the contrary: "*Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world*" (Ps. 18:4). And Esaias says: "*I am sought of*

*them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not" (Es. 65:1). And concerning the Israelites it says: "I have stretched out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people" (Es. 65:2; see Romans 10:17-21). And the Lord Himself addressed those sent to Him by the Centurion, saying: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (Matt. 8:11-12).*

So what must our attitude to the Jews be? I again turn to the Apostle Paul: *"I ask then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew.... If the first fruit be holy, the whole is also holy; if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches; but if thou boastest then remember that thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then: The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare thee not Behold therefore the goodness of God: on them which fell severity, and towards thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is strong to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:1-2, 16-23).* Here we can see clearly what our attitude towards the Jews should be.

So what do we observe? Christ said that *"salvation is of the Jews"* (John 4:22). But those who rejected the Messiah, Christ, and chose the manslayer in place of Him, fell away and became those of whom the Evangelist John speaks in his Revelation: *"them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9).*

But let us never forget that these dreadful words might also be referred to those who while calling themselves Christians actually serve the demons and Mammon. To those scribes and Pharisees, who ignored the spirit of the covenant, and adhered only to its letter, the Lord Himself said: *"If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (Jn 8:39), and again: "ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44).*

And again the Lord said: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:34-35).* From this we can see that although belonging to the tribe of Judah helps one to be a spiritual child of Abraham, it does not effect this. And he who falls away from that tribe falls lower than others, because it is said that *"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 13:48).* But replacing these, many have come *"from the East and from the West, from the North and the South" (Luke 13:29), and spiritually have become Jews, children of Abraham, and thus*

have united themselves to the faithful Jews. The Lord said: "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9).

When Christ was at the home of Zacchaeus, the latter said: "*Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham*" (Luke 19:8-9). So, must we indiscriminately push the Jews aside, and proudly stand in their place? No! We reject those Jews, who rejected Christ, but we do not exalt ourselves, because often we ourselves fall. Decidedly and firmly we reject them as being enemies of our Lord and bitter enemies of our people, but the faithful Jews are our brothers. Unfortunately there are not many of them now.

And are all the Christians manifest as spiritual Israelite? Far from it! It is not enough just to be a member of the Christian community. One must constantly cleanse one's heart and bear the spiritual image of Christ therein; one must not be proud; one must love God above all that is in the world, and one's neighbour as oneself, as the Saviour commanded us. And one must prove one's love and faithfulness by one's deeds. And those who call themselves Christians, but inwardly are not such, make themselves hypocrites, and instead of being truly faithful they become worse than the unbelievers. About such ones, the Apostle Paul wrote: "*I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world. But I wrote to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one not even to eat*" (1 Cor. 5:9-11). This is especially dreadful among the clergy. Although Christ forgave all sinners, yet He did not forgive the hypocrites and He cast the traders out of the Temple.

Thus the spiritual Israel comprises the faithful among all peoples, including those Jews who have accepted Orthodoxy. This is because for such peoples Christ is really their King and their Lord.. But for the Israel that has apostatized and for those Christians who have fallen away, their king is the antichrist. All who believe in Christ (not just outwardly, but wholeheartedly), both Jews and Greeks, must be one family, one Church, and they must love the Lord with all their heart, and must love each other.

To be continued with  
*"Thoughts on the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard "* (Matt. 20:1-16)

## BOOK REVIEW

The Russians on Athos by Nicholas  
Fennell,

published Bern: Peter Lang, 2001  
softback, 348 pp; ISBN 3-906766-93-4; US-ISBN 0-8204-5609-8

IT WOULD have been difficult to find anyone better-qualified to write this important study than Nicholas Fennell. His father, John Fennell, was a celebrated historian of Russia and its Church, and his wife is Greek and helped him to translate much of the source material.

The book concentrates on the history of the Russian monastic houses on the Holy Mountain and their monks, from the time of Saint Paisius Velichkovsky in the late eighteenth century to the Russian Revolution. One house, the Prophet Elias Skete, is examined in detail and a few concluding remarks, regrettably sketchy, bring the story up to date.

The account is clearly written and is in no way a purely "academic" study. Indeed, this reviewer's only criticism of it as a publication concerns the eccentric index - if you want to discover what the book says about the role of Emperor Alexander II or Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, you must find "Tsars and Tsaritsa" and "Bishops" respectively.

What then of the contents - the historical events themselves? Firstly, there is much of interest and originality. I certainly did not know about the background to the major confiscations of Athonite properties (and their main sources of income) in Romania, by Prince Cuza, and in Bessarabia and Georgia by the Russian government. The details unearthed make one rather less sympathetic to the "expropriated" than one wants to be. The confiscations also had a wide-ranging result; increased dependence by the Orthodox of the ancient Patriarchates on Russian help, combined with increasing resentment towards Russia and its seemingly irresistible dominance over the Orthodox world.

Another fascinating insight is into the role of the Russian houses (principally one ruling monastery, Saint Panteleimon's, and two large sketes, Saint Andrew's and Prophet Elias) as pilgrimage centres. The descriptions of the Russian pilgrims are wonderful - many came with little or no money, walking most of the way to Odessa, where they were saved from total destitution by the three enormous hostels maintained by the Russian houses. Here they were fed and their documents (usually quite out of order) sorted out. An idea of the scale of these pilgrimages can be gained from the fact that Saint Panteleimon's had a hostel in Constantinople able to house 800 pilgrims and a church in Odessa which could easily hold three thousand.

These facts remind us that the story is not all one of ecclesiastical politics and ethnic rivalries. The Russian and Greek monasteries were at a high spiritual level in the nineteenth century and the huge increase in the number of Russian monks on Athos at the end of the century was due to this and not to any government-sponsored imperialism. Moreover, the monks of different nationalities generally got along well when left alone by outsiders.

Of course, after the Revolution the main source of income for both Greek and Russians was cut off. For the former this was a major hardship, not so much on Athos itself, but for the ancient Patriarchates and for the Holy Land especially. For the Russian monks, however, it was not so much a hardship as a disaster. No more monks came to the once great monastic houses, no more building works were undertaken, no more pilgrims were housed and fed - even to feed the brethren became a problem.

Fennell's book does not detail the story after 1917 except in an anecdotal way. He does, however, describe the most recent event in the history of the Skete of Saint Elias - its forcible take-over by Greek monks in 1992, with the open connivance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and some xenophobic members of the Greek government.

Let us hope that this is not just a tragic end to a great human drama. We are not in any case dealing with merely human history here. With the political changes in eastern Europe there is now a real possibility to repopulate the Russian (which now just means Saint Panteleimon's), Bulgarian and Serbian monasteries and the Romanian Skete of Saint John, and to make the Holy Mountain a true centre for all the Orthodox. This need never again be a threat to the Greek presence, for the Greeks own the great majority of houses and will always comprise the majority of the monks in this sacred spot.

*Contributed by John, M. Harwood of Edmonton.*

## THE COMING MONTH

THE GREAT FEAST which adorns the month of February is that of the *Meeting of the Lord in the Temple* (2nd/15th), and for that reason, our first article in this issue is a homily on that festival. Often, following the Anglican practice, it is referred to in English as the festival of the Presentation. There is nothing essentially wrong with this usage, although, as will be apparent from Archbishop Nicanor's homily, it rather misses one of the deepest significances of the celebration.

Although a minuscule deviation from the practice current in cultures which have been traditionally Orthodox for centuries, it also causes a further confusion, because the feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple (21st November/4th December) is likewise often called her Presentation. In most languages, there is a careful distinction between the titles of the two feasts. The one called *the Meeting* and the other *the Entry*, and this is not without reason. The two feasts do not parallel each other. The Saviour was brought into the Temple in fulfilment of a prescription of the Old Testament law. After the requisite ceremony, He was taken away again. The Church feast dwells on His meeting with the aged Simeon, and the paradox that He, the Ancient of days, appeared as a young Babe and was held in the arms of an aged man, who nonetheless He was holding and before whom He had existed. In the Virgin's feast, her being brought to the Temple was the fulfilment, not a general rule, but of a specific and private promise. She did not leave again with her parents, but remained there throughout her childhood. Although she met Zacharias there, we have little emphasis on this fact, rather our attention is turned to another mystery. The first Temple had held the Ark of the Covenant. This was lost when the Temple was destroyed and the people taken into Babylonian captivity. Eventually a second Temple was built but its consecration was incomplete, because there was no Ark of the Covenant to place within the Holy of Holies. Now, the Ark, not of the Old Testament Covenant, but the Ark that was to contain God in the flesh (which the Old Testament Ark had prefigured) is brought into the holy place. The Temple is completed, it is prepared for its ministry in the incarnate dispensation of our Saviour. Because the Virgin enters the Temple to abide there, - she is not simply presented, - this is expressed in the title of the festival.

There are two tendencies becoming apparent in the English-speaking Orthodox world. The one insists that hardly any Orthodox terms can be translated and that we must needs litter our language with ugly and often clumsy Greekisms or Slavonisms. The other is a very understandable tendency to try to make Orthodoxy as natural as

possible by using terms with which we have a long familiarity, and in attempting to bring more people to Orthodoxy it is one that we should not scorn. But, as in the relatively minor matter of the naming of these celebrations, we have either to always bear in mind the classical expressions in Greek and Slavonic, or to be extremely careful, in our efforts to make our Orthodoxy as compatible as we can to the usages with which we are familiar, lest in doing so we begin to lose our Orthodoxy.

In February this year we also start the period of the Lenten Triodion, although not Great Lent itself. There are four special Sundays, which form a preparation for the fast itself, and this year three of these fall within February. The start of the Lenten Triodion signals not only a liturgical shift but an interior one, which should effect our spiritual disposition. This is particularly brought home to us on the very last day of the Church month, because on the Wednesday (28th February this year) and Friday of the last week before the beginning of Great Lent itself we have lenten-style services with the reading of the Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian.

Among the February saints we have:

*Saint Bucolus of Smyrna* (6th/19th) was the predecessor of the much-more famous Polycarp of Smyrna (Izmir) as Bishop of that city on the West coast of what is now Turkey. St Bucolus was a disciple of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, and was consecrated by him as the first Bishop of Smyrna. When he started his ministry there, there were few Christians in the city but, through the grace of God and by his teaching, Bucolus brought many of the citizens to faith in Christ. He ended his earthly course, dying in peace, but before his end he appointed St Polycarp as his successor.

*Saint Agatho, Pope of Rome* (20th Feb. / 5th March) was a Sicilian and a monk, who became Pope in June 678 A.D. He is particularly remembered for his role in condemning the heresy of Monothelism. This was a state-sponsored idea which it was hoped would bring about a union between the Orthodox Christians of the Empire and the Monophysites, the latter being heretics who believe that in Christ there was only one nature. Their heresy had been condemned at the Fourth Œcumenical Council, but in an attempt to strike a compromise, Monothelism was propounded - the idea that in Christ there were indeed two natures (as the Orthodox believe) but that He had but one will. When this idea had outlived its political usefulness, the Emperor in Constantinople invited Agatho as Pope to condemn it. The West had always been steadfast in resisting an idea which would imply that Christ was either deficient in His Godhead or in His humanity, but before acceding to the Imperial request, Pope St Agatho convened a number of local councils in the West, that his whole Patriarchate might participate in the rejection of this heretical notion. One of these Councils was held, under the presidency of St Theodore of Tarsus the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Hatfield. In September 680 A.D., a Council was held under the Pope's own presidency in Rome. Besides his steadfastness in Orthodoxy, which was to bring benefit to the Universal Church, St Agatho also benefited our own Church here in England in a number of ways. It was to him, as Pope, that St Wilfrid appealed protesting against the plan of St Theodore to subdivide the immense northern diocese (in fact such a division did later occur), and it was Pope St Agatho who sent his cantor, John, from Rome to Wearmouth to help St Benedict Biscop in the introduction of the Roman usages in the monastery there. John was also instructed to report back to Rome on the Orthodoxy of

the English Church of that time, which was, of course, less than a century after the mission of St Augustine, thus very much in its infancy. Thus the good Pope, who was characterized by his cheerful good humour, manifested his paternal care for the Church in our land. After a very short pontificate, St Agatho died on 10th January, 681 and was laid to rest in St Peter's.

*Venerable Titus the Presbyter of the Kievan Caves* (27th Feb. / 12th March) lived in the twelfth century in the renowned Caves Monastery in Kiev. There, among the brethren, he lived in the closest spiritual friendship with the Deacon Evagrius, but by the machinations of the evil one their friendship was turned into hatred of each other. St Titus fell seriously ill, and therefore sent to Fr Evagrius so that, before his death, he could ask his forgiveness and be reconciled with him. However, Evagrius refused to come and be reconciled. The other brethren, knowing the spiritual danger, urged him to do so, and even forcibly brought him to Titus' deathbed. But, even there, he refused to forgive his former friend. Titus begged him with tears to forgive him, but Evagrius became more stubborn and declared that he would not forgive him either in this life or in the age to come. Immediately, he spoke these dreadful words, he fell down dead, and instantaneously Titus recovered fully. For the remaining time of his earthly life, Titus doubled his struggles, and prayed for his friend. He was distinguished by his extraordinary humility, and was granted the gift of wonderworking. His sacred relics repose in the Cave of St Antony.

## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

An Extract from a Recent Letter from Moscow

EVENTS in our Church life have lately been dramatic, even tragic. Poor Vladyka Vitaly! I think that what happened to him is God's chastisement of us, according to our sins. At the same time we (our parish, with Fr. E.K. as Rector) - we tend to distinguish between human failings and inadequate action, and the ecclesial truth, dogmatic and canonical. We therefore remain in obedience to the Synod headed by Metropolitan Laurus. Unfortunately, this is not the case with many (now former) ROCOR people in Russia. Some people who joined our Church seem to have had false preconceptions about it (and the Orthodox Church as a whole) and when reality proved them wrong they preferred to remain with their own ideas rather than with the Church. Lord, keep us from this temptation!

I personally found the results of the last Sobor [bishops' assembly] (apart from the situation with VI.Vitaly) to be reassuring. Our Church, by God's mercy, keeps her path of confession. The need for such confession is still urgent in the Russian Church. The MP Synodal address to our Sobor seems to have been inspired by a spirit of apostasy: "forget the past." As if there be no higher value than mere unity. Our Sobor's response to the MP address was, I think, a good one, loving, polite, but firm and based on principle. The exchange reveal what MP leaders really think: Patriarch Alexis again called the declaration of 1927 "an act of courage." A few weeks time ago I saw a film on TV, produced 2001, called Two Patriarchs (meaning St Tikhon the Confessor, and Sergius). The film was introduced by Metr. Kirill of Smolensk, a second key figure in the MP. In the film Metr. Sergius (Stragorodsky) was shown to be equal to St Tikhon, a true successor of the latter, a most wise hierarch, a great theologian. The film could be viewed as an application for Metr. Sergius' canonisation. The Declaration

of 1927 was called in the film verbatim the most slandered document in history. The act that such films are produced in the MP and demonstrated on public TV shows that our unity might be further away than some people think. There are powerful people in the MP who simply do not wish the restoration of our unity, because that would require of them to reject what they firmly hold, a convenient lie. The words of Fr Seraphim (Rose) of blessed memory, "Persistence in Sergianism is a heresy" (PR#16, 2001, p.6) seem to be sadly vital in today's Russia.

*Reader A.A., Moscow, Russia*

## NEWS SECTION

### ŒCUMENICAL PATRIARCH VISITS IRAN

PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEOS I of Constantinople visited Iran between 11th and 14th January this year, and celebrated in Tehran's Greek Orthodox Church. The largest Christian denomination in this predominantly Islamic country is the Armenian Apostolic Church, and while in Tehran, Patriarch Bartholomeos met with representatives of their communion in Isfahan. Many Christians were forced to leave the country after the 1979 revolution, but the country's leaders have recently signalled a softening of their attitude towards religious minorities and this facilitated the Patriarch's visit.

### ASSISSI DAY OF PRAYER

TO AVOID THE CHARGE of syncretism, His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in inviting delegates from the world religions to a day of prayer at Assissi at the end of January this year, arranged that there would be no common prayers, and that the various "religious groups" would pray in different places according to their own rites. It appears therefore that the Vatican has been more careful in arranging this year's convention, to "pray for God's gift of peace and to condemn violence as a profanation of His name," than they were with the similar event held in the late 1980's. The fact remains, though, that the message proclaimed to a largely uninterested and cynical world is that all religions are of equal worth, with perhaps the subsidiary message that the Pope is himself the head of all religious leaders. Both of these messages are clean contrary to the Gospel, and therefore it is deplorable that the convention was joined by so many representatives of the Orthodox Church, preeminent among them the Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I.

### FOURTH M.P. BISHOP FOR THE BRITISH ISLES

METROPOLITAN ANTONY OF SOUROZH, the ruling hierarch of the Moscow Patriarchate parishes in the British Isles, announced on 30th December the imminent consecration of Father Hilarion Alfeyev). The new bishop was consecrated on the feast of St Basil the Great (1st/14th January) in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Bishop Hilarion of Kerch was born in Moscow on 24th July 1966; he was tonsured a monk in 1987 and two days later ordained hierodeacon. He became a priest two months later. For a period he was secretary of the inter-Christian affairs section of the Patriarchate's department for external affairs. While serving as a suffragan bishop for the diocese, he will be based in Cambridge where he will work with the Institute for

Orthodox Christian Studies. The announcement of the consecration of the new Bishop was accompanied by news that Archbishop Anatoly is retiring on account of his health, although he will remain in Britain primarily as pastor of the parish in Manchester. The Patriarchate Bishops in Britain therefore now number four: Metropolitan Antony of Sourozh, Archbishop Anatoly, Bishop Basil of Sergievo and Bishop Hilarion. They also have approximately two dozen priests and seven deacons. In the mid-seventies, like ROCA they had only one bishop here and even less clergy than the ROCA Richmond diocese. One can attribute their growth to the endeavours and sustained encouragement of Metropolitan Antony.

## GAZA STRIP MOSAICS

ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN PALESTINE have uncovered a damaged fifth-century mosaic at Tal Umm Amer, four miles south of Gaza City. The remains are Christian and include an inscription measuring 35 feet by sixteen with a prayer in Greek. The findings have been made at the site of the monastery of Saint Hilarion the Great, which within the Saint's lifetime grew to comprise four hundred monks. A baptistry has also been found on the site. The monastery, one of the oldest in the world, is thought to have been destroyed by the Persian invasion of the Holy Land in 614 A.D.

## RUSSIAN CREATIONIST MOVEMENTS

"CREATION UPDATE," a quarterly published by the Creation Resources Trust, reports that "Despite decades of state-sponsored, evolution-based atheism, there has been a growing interest in creation in Russia and other countries of eastern Europe since the fall of communism. The evidence for creation is even being presented in Russian state schools! Recently, two new creationist organisations have been formed. 'Shestodnev' ('Six-Day Creation') has been organised under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church, while the 'Society of Creation Science' (SCS) links scientists in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union."

## YOUTH CONFERENCE EVACUATED

ARCHBISHOP HILARION of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand (ROCA) was among those who were evacuated under police escort from a Youth Conference held over the Roman Christmas holiday at a centre south of Sydney. Although under no immediate threat, the conference participants were advised to leave because of the bush fires that had broken out in the area. They were first taken to Helensburgh, the nearest town, where the clergy present served a thanksgiving moleben for their safe deliverance on the steps of the evacuation centre. Helensburgh itself was surrounded by fire and the party was again evacuated to Woolongong. There in the small church of the Dormition another moleben was chanted. Despite the disruption of their conference none of the participants was harmed.

## BROOKWOOD NEWS

### BAPTISM

On Saturday 23rd December / 5th January, the catechumen David Jepson was baptized at Saint Edward's Church. The ceremony took place between Mattins and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy during which David received the Holy Mysteries for

the first time. His sponsor at the font was Christopher Shaw, and during the eight days of his wearing his chrism robe, we celebrated the Divine Liturgy every day so that the newly-illuminated could daily receive the sustenance of the Holy Gifts. On the eighth day, when his robe was removed, the celebration was at St Boniface Mission in Ryde, Isle of Wight, and we understand that this is the first time that American has been heard used in Orthodox services on the island! We ask prayers for him and for his sponsor that they may both remain steadfast in the Faith and in the promises that they have made to God.

### NEW NOVICE

Between the Ninth Hour and Vespers on the evening of Thursday, 4th/11th January, the day of the Synaxis of the Seventy Holy Apostles, Andrew Last, who has been living with us for about eighteen months now and testing himself to take up the monastic life, was clothed as a novice of the Saint Edward Brotherhood. His parents, Christopher and Wendy, who live in Woking attended the service. We ask the prayers of the faithful that he might be granted strength to pursue the course he has taken unto his life's end and to overcome the trials that will undoubtedly now be the lot of the Novice Andrew.

### CHERTSEY

We are compelled to come to the conclusion that the little town of Chertsey is the most hospitable place in Surrey! On the Great Feast of the Theophany, as has become customary over the years, we made our "Procession to Jordan" to Chertsey, to the site of the seventh century monastery founded there by St Erkonwald, to bless the waters. We were joined again by numbers (exceeding our own) of parishioners from the local churches, led by the Vicar, Reverend Tim Hillier. This year, we were invited by Robin and Mary Haigh to hold the blessing on their land at the Abbey Bridge Farm, where they care for numbers of otherwise unwanted animals. Afterwards George and Elizabeth Hobbs opened their house to everyone who had attended the blessing, and they provided us with mugs of hot soup, rolls, butter and cheese, fruit and coffee! In the afternoon, the tower master of the church and his family gave members of the Brotherhood a tour of the church tower, which contains a bell dating back to 1310 A.D (recast in the later fourteenth century) which once hung in the Abbey itself. Chertsey is apparently one of the few places in the country where the curfew is still rung. More importantly, it is a place where we witnessed exceptional hospitality. May the blessing of Abraham be theirs for their kindness towards us.

### VISIT FROM THE FAR EAST

Fr Daniel Toyne, pastor of the Holy Resurrection Parish in Singapore (Ec. Pat.), visited us and stayed at Brookwood for a few days at the end of December. In 1987, Fr Daniel had briefly been a novice in our community, and he has kept in touch. He brought with him an icon of St Edward painted by one of his parishioners, with the inscription in English and in Georgian, which he presented to our church. At Christmas time, we were also given a hand-painted icon of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, by another former parishioner, Mrs Magdalene Howes, who was visiting England from Cyprus.

## PLANNING

Councillor Mark Pritchard was of immense help to us, when he accompanied Irina Hoble (our architect) and Fr Alexis to meet the Woking Borough Council Chief Planning Officer, Chris Fairlamb, and the Senior Planning Officer on our case, Simon Booy, on Monday 14th January. The meeting lasted almost two hours, and Cllr Pritchard spent some extra time with us as well. We have to modify the plans that we had presented, but we have been given various indications of the way forward, and will report to readers as matters proceed.

## CHURCH HEATING

As we have reported in an earlier "Shepherd" the heating system in our church is in need of replacement, and we have been advised to convert from container gas to mains gas. In the past few months, we have been investigating the best way to implement this conversion, and have engaged the necessary contractors. The workmen are due to start laying the gas mains on 11th February, and the meter will be installed on 22nd. Soon thereafter we shall be able to replace the heating system itself and have already paid the deposit on this. We have planned that the new mains could be used for the new Brotherhood house, when it is built, and provision has also been made so that, if we decide that it is more economically to do so, we could replace the old night-store heaters in the old Mortuary building with gas powered heating. Our apologies for any disturbance that the implementation of these improvements might cause those attending church at the Brotherhood.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

His Grace Archbishop Mark will (D.V.) be visiting London from 7th to 13th March, and he hopes to celebrate the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's Church, Brookwood, on Saturday 9th March n.s. The Meeting of the Hierarch will be at 10 a.m. and will be followed by the Hours and Divine Liturgy. That Saturday is the feast of the First and Second Findings of the Precious Head of St John the Baptist, although this year, as it coincides with the Soul Sabbath immediately before Judgment Sunday, according to the typicon the service for the Baptist will be chanted on the Friday. We hope as many of our readers as possible will be able to join us on that Saturday, both to be with and honour the Hierarch and to remember the faithful departed in prayer.

## PRACTICAL TIP

REMEMBER the virtue of quietness in church. The Lord's House is a house of prayer, and noise can be a distraction from prayer for others. Try therefore to move about in church as little as possible, and certainly not at inappropriate moments in the service. Move, when you must, not with exaggerated and attention-grabbing deliberate quietness, but as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Close doors, put things down, etc quietly. Make sure, in these days of synthetic materials, that you (and perhaps especially your children) are wearing things that do not creak, squeak or make other noises whenever you move. If you have children and bring them toys, bring quiet ones, that will comfort the infant and not irritate everyone else in church. Try, in fact, to do everything as quietly and unobtrusively as your possibly can.