

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

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FROM THE FATHERS

"THERE ARE THREE THINGS that especially pertain to the practice of religion, namely: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.... For by prayer we obtain Divine favour, by fasting we extinguish the concupiscences of the flesh, by almsgiving sins are redeemed (see Daniel 4:24), and by all three together the image of God is renewed in us."

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

"AND THE PEOPLE asked him (John the Baptist) saying, *What shall we do then?* For they were stricken with terror, and sought his counsel. *He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.*' (Luke 3:10-11).... From this one learns how greatly the works of mercy profit us, since they, before others, are counselled us as fruit worthy of repentance. Hence Truth Himself said the same: *'Give alms, and behold, all things are clean unto you'* (Luke 11:41). And again He says: *'Give and it shall be given unto you'* (Luke 6:38). Hence also was it written: *'Water quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sin'* (Ecclus. 3:33). Hence again was it written: *'Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against evil'* (Ecclus. 24:4). Hence, finally, the good father admonishes his blameless son, saying: *'If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little'* (Tob.4:9).

Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, 540 - 603 A.D.

"JOHN (the Baptist) is called an angel (angellos / messenger: Mark 1:1) not by community of nature according to the heresy of Origen, but by the dignity of his office; for *angellos* in Greek is in Latin *nuntius* (messenger), by which name that man is rightly called, who was sent by God, that he might bear witness of the light, and announce to the world the Lord coming in the flesh; since it is evident that all who are priests may by their office of preaching the Gospel be called angels, as the Prophet Malachias says, *'The lips of the priest keep knowledge, and they seek the law at his mouth, because he is the Angel of the Lord of hosts'* (Mal. 2:7).

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

"IT IS FRUIT, fruit and fruit alone that the Lord seeks from man, that living tree. Good fruit is a God-loving heart, but bad fruit is a heart filled with self-love. All other things, that a man has and enjoys - status, power, honour, health, wealth, learning - these are no more than the leaves of the tree. *'Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire'* (Matt. 3:10). Even non-Christian peoples rate good works above fine words. So much the more must it be the rule among the followers of Christ. At a certain gathering of Athenians, at which envoys from Sparta were present, one old man was going from bench to bench, trying to find somewhere to sit down. The Athenians mocked at him, and no-one gave him his seat. When the old man drew near the Spartans, they all leapt to their feet and offered him their places. Seeing this, the Athenians expressed their gratitude to the Spartans in

well-rounded phrases. To this the Spartans replied: The Athenians know what is good, but do not do it.' He who does good is like a tree that bears good fruit for its owner. And the well-spring of goodness in man is a good, God-loving heart."

Saint Nicolas Velimirovic, + 1956 A.D.

THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD IN MAN

Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow

1816-1882

MAN'S MOST IMPORTANT PREROGATIVE over the rest of God's creatures consists in the fact that the Creator was pleased to adorn him with His Own image and likeness. *And God said*, we are told by the sacred writer of Genesis, *Let Us make man according to Our image and likeness ... And God made man; according to the image of God He made him; male and female He made them* (Gen. 1:26-27). Concerning this prerogative God Himself later bears witness, saying to Noah: *He who sheds man's blood shall in return have his own blood shed; for in the image of God I have made man* (Gen. 9:6).

And in the New Testament, the Apostle James bears witness, remarking of our tongue: *With it we bless God and the Father, and with it we curse men who have been made after the likeness of God* (James 3:9). The Holy Church has always acknowledged the reality of the image of God in man, following the clear teaching of Holy Scripture. To a certain degree this truth was not unknown even to the heathen*

But in what does the image of God in us consist? "Church teaching," replies Saint Epiphanius, "believes that man is created in general according to the image (of God), but it does not define in what part exactly that which is (created) according to the image is found" (Haeres. LXX, n 2.3 sq). Therefore the fathers and teachers of the Church did not decide this question in identically the same way, although their thoughts do not exclude one another, but rather refer to different aspects of the subject. But if we gather these thoughts together and place them in the light of a right conception of God our Prototype, then what the image of God is in us will be fully defined.

God, by His nature, is purest Spirit, not clothed with any body whatever and not partaking of anything material. And so the image of God must be located not in man's body but in his immaterial soul. This is a thought which a number of Fathers sought to develop: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and later (against the Anthropomorphists) Epiphanius, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine, Theodoret and others.

God, as Spirit, has also the essential properties of a spirit, such as mind and freedom; and by His very nature He is immortal. Therefore, in particular, one can place the image of God, with certain teachers of the Church, in the mind of man; with others in his free will; and with yet others in his indestructible soul and immortality.

God, the Pure Spirit, is one in Essence, but threefold in Persons. In this regard, following certain teachers of the Church, we can find a certain weak image of God in the unity of our soul combined with its trinity of essential powers, however they are named: whether memory, reason and will; or mind, word and spirit; or mind, will and

feeling. "Just as there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit," writes Saint Ambrose for instance, "and yet there are not three gods, but one God having three Persons; so too the soul is mind, the soul is will, the soul is memory; yet there are not three souls in one body, but one soul having three powers (dignitates); and it is precisely in these three powers that our inner man by nature wonderfully reflects the image of God" (De dignit. human., cap II). "Just as God is in three Persons," says Saint Demetrius of Rostov, "so too the human soul is in three powers: mind, word, and spirit. And as the word is from the mind, and as the spirit is from the mind, so too the Son and the Holy Spirit are from the Father. Just as the mind cannot be without word and spirit, so too the Father never was and never can be without the Son and the Holy Spirit. And just as the mind, word and spirit are three different powers of the soul, yet there is one soul and not three souls, so too the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the three persons of God, yet there are not three gods, but one God."

God in relation to all other beings is their Lord, King and Sovereign. From this point of view, with St Chrysostom, St Gregory of Nyssa and others, we can place the image of God in the ruling power and lordship over all the creatures of the earth given to man at his creation. This thought is in harmony with the Creator's own words. He had only just said, *Let Us make man according to Our image and likeness*, when He immediately added, *and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and the beasts, and cattle, and all the earth, and over all the reptiles that creep on the earth* (Gen. 1:26). But evidently the lordship of man over the creatures of the earth is only a consequence and an outward expression of the image of God, which is found in the very soul of man, in his reason, in his freedom, which alone gives us full superiority over all irrational animals. And in a similar sense, according to certain teachers of the Church, a reflection of the image of God can be found even in the human body; because its noble arrangement, majestic appearance and upright bearing clearly express both the properties of the rational soul and the ruling dignity of man in the sphere of all the creatures of the earth.

Consequently, it may be said that not in any one part, or power, or faculty, but in the whole man, more or less, is the image of God reflected.

Is there any distinction between the image and likeness of God in man, or not? The greater part of the the fathers and teachers of the Church replied that there is, and said that the image of God is found in the very nature of our soul, in its reason, in its freedom; while the likeness lies in the proper development and perfection of these powers by man, more particularly in the perfecting of his reason and freewill, or of both together, in virtue and holiness, in the acquisition of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, we receive the image of God from God together with our being, but we acquire the likeness ourselves, having received from God only the possibility of doing so. This opinion concerning the distinction between the image and the likeness of God in man has a foundation also in Holy Scripture. Thus:

Describing the counsel of the Tripersonal God concerning the creation of man, Moses bears witness: *And God said, Let Us make man according to Our image and likeness* (Gen. 1:26). But of the actual creation it is said in the very next *verse*: *And God made man; according to the image of God he made him*. "Why," asks St Gregory of Nyssa, "was what was intended not done? Why is it not said, And God created man

according to the image and likeness of God? Did the Creator's power fail? It is impious to say so. Did He change His intention? It is impious even to think about it... Scripture neither says that his power failed, nor that His intention was unfulfilled. Then what is the reason of the silence? *Let us make man according to Our image and likeness.* The former (the image) we have by creation, but the latter (the likeness) we ourselves perfect by acts of the will. To be in the image of God is natural for us by our first creation, but to become in the likeness of God depends on our will. And what depends on our will exists in us only potentially; but it is obtained by us in actual fact by means of personal activity. Unless the Lord, when intending to create us, had previously said: *Let Us make (man) in Our likeness,* and unless he had given us the potentiality of being in His likeness, we by our own powers could never have been in the likeness of God. But now we have received in creation the potentiality of being like God. Yet in giving us this potentiality, God has left us to be the producers of our likeness to God, so as to provide us with an acceptable reward for our activity, and so that we should not be like the inanimate pictures made by artists."

In certain passages of Scripture it would seem that the image of God is even in fallen man. Thus, God says to Noah after the Flood: *He who sheds man's blood shall in return have his own blood shed; for in the image of God I have made man* (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). And Christians are commanded to *put on the new man who is created to resemble God* (lit. "according to God") *in the righteousness and holiness of the truth* (Eph. 4:24). Surely the former passage refers to the image of God placed in our actual nature, inseparable from it and equally unchangeable, while the latter refers only to the likeness of God or the resemblance of God which depends upon our will, which consequently we can acquire, but can also lose through sin? "The image of God, says St Demetrius of Rostov, is even in the soul of an unbelieving man, but the likeness is only in a virtuous Christian. And when a Christian sins mortally, then only the likeness of God is lost, but not the image. And even if he is condemned to eternal torment, that same image is in him for ever, but there can no longer be any likeness." And St Gregory of Nyssa writes: "In my very creation I received *the image* but by my freewill I became *in the likeness*.... One is given, while the other is left imperfect, so that by perfecting yourself you may become worthy of reward from God. But how do we become *in the likeness*? Through the Gospel. What is Christianity? Resemblance to God, as far as that is possible for human nature. If you have decided to become a Christian, try to become like God, clothed in Christ."

* Footnote: Arist. de anima 1:2; Cicer. de legib. 1,7,8; Ovid Metam. 1,76 sq; Senec. prov. cap I. Cp Lactant. Instit. Divin. il. 10.

METROPOLITAN MACARIUS was a theologian and church historian. After graduating from the Kiev Spiritual Academy he was appointed to the chair of Russian, Ecclesiastical and Civil History. In 1842, he was transferred to the Saint Petersburg Academy and lectured in Theology. In 1851 he was consecrated Bishop of Vinnitsk, transferred to Tambov in 1857, and then to Kharkov, and in 1879 was elevated to be Metropolitan of Moscow. He wrote a number of illuminating works on history and theology, the most important of which are: "A History of the Kievan Spiritual Academy," "Introduction to Theology" and "Dogmatic Theology" (from which the present extract was taken) and "History of the Russian Church" (in 13 volumes). His "Dogmatic Theology" won for him the reputation of a theologian of the first order. Besides these major works, he also wrote numerous essays and articles, particularly about the history of the schism of the followers of the Old Rite, and some 200 sermons of his survive,

(information from the "Polnyj pravoslavnyj bogoslovskij enciklopedicheskij slovar'," published Saint Petersburg, 1913; reprinted by Variorum Reprints, London 1971.)

O BAPTIST, thou camest forth as a messenger from a barren womb, and from thy very swaddling clothes thou didst go to dwell in the wilderness. Thou wast made the seal of all the prophets; for Him Whom they had seen in many forms and foretold in dark sayings, thou was counted worthy to baptise in the Jordan. From heaven thou didst hear the voice of the Father testifying to His Son, and thou didst see the Spirit in the form of a dove descending with the Father's words upon Him Who was baptised. O thou who art higher than all the prophets, cease not to intercede for us who celebrate in faith thy memorial.

*Glory Verse from the Lauds of the Synaxis
of St John the Baptist, 7th January*

From
"THE HOUSE OF GOD
AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov
Continuation

§ 58. The Supplicatory Litany. This consists of a series of petitions, which each end: "Let us ask of the Lord." To this, the response is "Grant this, O Lord." It reads as follows:-

* Let us complete our (evening / morning) prayer unto the Lord. "Complete" here means to supplement or to make full and complete, not simply to finish.

* Help us, save us; have mercy on us and keep us, O God, by Thy Grace.

* That the whole evening / day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord. We ask that this particular evening or day may be spent by us in an advisable way, in a holy, peaceful way, and without our sinning. Naturally we must not only ask that the Lord grant this, but must try to live in accordance with the words of our prayer.

* An Angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

* Pardon and remission of our sins and offenses, let us ask of the Lord. Sins here refers to our more serious transgressions, and offenses means our smaller misdemeanours.

* Things good and profitable for our souls, and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord. Although this litany is primarily concerned with interior things, here we ask for peace between all peoples and throughout the whole world, but we should observe that it is intimately linked to that which is "good and profitable for our souls." From this we should realise that we cannot engineer peace in the world through "peace initiatives," summits, conferences and the like, but that rather it comes as the fruit of our perfecting ourselves spiritually.

* That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord. As with the petition above that the whole evening or day may be

perfect, this petition lays on us a responsibility to struggle to live in peace and repentance, while recognising that the achievement of this blessing is a gift from the Lord.

* A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and a good defence before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us ask. We ask the Lord that our demise may be Christian, that is, with confession and the reception of the Holy Mysteries; that it may be painless, blameless - (that is not in a drunken or drugged stupor, or while engaged in some sinful activity, or through suicide) - and peaceful. This last does not mean simply that we drift away peacefully, but that we are of *peace* - that we are reconciled with those around us, and do not die while at enmity with anyone.

§ 59. The Little Litany. Actually this is simply a shortened version of the Great Litany and it consists only of the following three petitions:-

* Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord.

* Help us, save us; have mercy on us and keep us, O God, by Thy Grace.

* Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, exceedingly blessed and glorious Lady, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.

Its repetition throughout the Divine services serves the practical purpose of dividing off the various parts of the service, and on a deeper level, it reminds us of the need continually to pray and beseech the Lord's mercy, and the aid of the Theotokos and of the saints.

Often the petitions from the Great, Threefold, Little and Supplicatory Litanies are joined with others for some special purpose, for instance at a funeral or during memorial services for the dead, at the blessing of waters, at the supplicatory services held at the beginning of the school year, or the New Year. These special litanies with their additional modified petitions are found in special services books.

§60. The Litanies for the Faithful Departed. There are, in fact three of these. The first is the Great, and runs as follows:-

* In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

* For the peace from above, and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

* For the remission of sins of those who have fallen asleep in blessed memory, let us pray to the Lord.

* For the ever-memorable servants / handmaids of God,... names ... for their rest, peace, and blessed memory, let us pray to the Lord.

* That they may be forgiven their every transgression, both voluntary and involuntary, let us pray to the Lord.

* That they may stand uncondemned before the dread Judgment Seat of the Lord of glory, let us pray to the Lord.

* For those who lament and grieve, awaiting the consolation of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

* That they may be delivered from all pain, sorrow and sighing, and that He settle them where the light of God's countenance shineth, let us pray to the Lord.

* That the Lord our God assign their souls to a place of light, a place of green pasture, a place of repose, where all the righteous abide, let us pray to the Lord.

* That they may be assigned to the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, let us pray to the Lord.

For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us and keep us. O God, by Thy Grace.

Having asked for them the mercies of God, the kingdom of heaven, and the remission of sins, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life unto Christ our God.

In present-day practice, this Great Litany which is appointed to be intoned at the beginning of the Memorial Service (Pannikhida) is very often omitted and rarely heard.

The Little Litany for the Departed, and the Threefold one consist of petitions based on those in the Great Litany and reiterate the same thoughts. The only distinction between them is that the Little Litany begins with the petition, "Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord," and to all the petitions except one the response is "Lord, have mercy." Whereas the Threefold Litany begins with the petition, "Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee hearken and have mercy." To each of the petitions on this litany, except one, we chant the triple "Lord, have mercy." In both cases the one exceptional petition calls for the response, "Grant this, O Lord." Both the Little Litany for the departed and the Triple one are used in the Memorial Service and in the funeral.

...To be continued with "The Exclamations."

Translator's Note: In the above section, as in previous and subsequent ones, we have adapted Fr Antonov's work to accord with contemporary practice, sometimes abridging what he says, and sometimes adding to his text for greater clarity.

THE COMING MONTH

JANUARY opens with a feast, that of the the Lord's Circumcision, which coincides with the memorial of Saint Basil the Great, and so on that day, the Liturgy of St Basil is celebrated. The Circumcision is a festival which is very largely forgotten in the modern West, perhaps because Christianity here has lost its Jewish moorings. For the Orthodox, though, it falls in the middle of the "Holy Days," between Christmas and Theophany, and it has great significance. Circumcision was a requirement of the Old Testament law and a visible sign of the covenant between God and His chosen people. It was also the precursor of the Mystery of Holy Baptism, which sets the peoples of the New Testament Church apart from the nations, making them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for His own possession." And here we see an important difference between the Old and New dispensations. Of necessity in the Old dispensation only the males were circumcised, but now both men and women are

baptised. Now the feast of the Circumcision, besides falling on the eighth day after the Nativity, on which day it actually happened.

comes as a precursor of the festival of the Saviour's Baptism. The fact that it falls on the eighth day is also significant. Throughout Scripture and throughout the Church's Tradition, this day has represented the life of the age to come. So this feast points us to that life, and it assures us of the resurrection of the body, reminding us that in this life we are not quite whole that we have to await completeness, wholeness, in the life of the age to come. It is also the day on which Christ first shed His blood, and therefore reminds us of His passion and the love which He had for us in giving us His Body and Blood to partake of in the Eucharist. And it is the day on which He was named, given the name which was revealed to Joseph before He was born (Matt. 1:21), the name which means Saviour, the "name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). So this feast proclaims the Lordship of the Saviour, while showing Him being obedient to the Law that He had promulgated, just as He would also be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. It is then a beautiful feast on which to begin the month, and one that should be more honoured rather than being forgotten.

The Great Feast of the Theophany, the Baptism of Our Lord, falls this year on a Sunday, and so the normal Sunday service is dispensed with. Usually the day before the Theophany is kept like that before the Nativity as a strict fast day, with the reading of the Royal Hours and the Liturgy appended to Vespers. This year, as it falls on a Saturday, we cannot keep the day as a strict fast, and so oil and wine are permitted. Furthermore, the Royal Hours are read not on this day, but on the Friday.

On the day of the feast itself, we hope as usual to go to Chertsey and bless the waters on the site of the monastery founded by St Erkenwald in the seventh century, and already we have been approached by people there and by the local vicar asking us to confirm that, so that, as has become their custom in recent years, they may join us. Would that the Orthodox Christians were always so keen to attend the celebrations of the Church, and planned weeks ahead! This year, we will be able to take the icon of St Erkenwald with us.

The Theophany is often referred to as the Festival of Light or the Illumination. There are two reasons for this: first, the Saviour's Baptism in the Jordan was the event when, as the troparion says, "the worship of the Trinity was made manifest, for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee (Christ), calling Thee His beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the certainty of the word." Secondly, the Saviour's Baptism was the inauguration of our own baptism, when each one of us spiritually receives illumination.

On the last Sunday of the month, it being the Sunday nearest the day of the martyrdom of St Vladimir, the Metropolitan of Kiev in 1918, we have the celebration of All the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who bore witness under the seventy years of Soviet oppression in that country. Because of this commemoration, the feast of St John Chrysostom, properly appointed on that day, is shifted back to 25th of the month and joined to that of St Gregory the Theologian. On the 30th January / 12th

February we have the feast of all three of the Great Hierarchs. It is also the day of the commemoration of the blessed fool-for-Christ's-sake, Pelagia Ivanovna, whom we always remember here.

BOOK REVIEW

MOUNT ATHOS Renewal in Paradise

By Graham Speake

Published by Yale University Press, New Haven and London,
ISBN 0 300 093535; Hardback, 295 pages, £25.00

This beautifully produced book, full of pictures of the monasteries and sketes, of the Athonite fathers, their churches and services, and with many reproductions in colour and in black and white of the holy icons, will undoubtedly become a classic.

Those who live within the Orthodox 'scene' though, might wonder why yet another book on Athos. There are shelves full of them. Those of us who have never visited the Mountain know almost every corner of it because of this. Nonetheless this book is to be welcomed. To the present reader it was the best introduction to the Holy Mountain that he had yet seen, and I am sure that, as it becomes more widely known, many others will endorse that assessment.

This is not to say that one cannot find faults. One can always do that! I would draw attention to three weaknesses in the work, although I would stress that in doing so I would not want to over-emphasise any of them.

The first to catch one's attention is that the author has rather a penchant for purple prose, although as the book progresses, and he gets into his stride, this happily becomes less and less evident.

Secondly, and perhaps he is being wise in this regard, he tells us very little about the spiritual life of the Mountain or of the fathers there. One would have enjoyed more anecdotes from the lives of the fathers, at least giving us a glimpse of their interior life.

More seriously, on several points it is apparent that the author finds it hard to understand the mentality of the fathers. This is not to be wondered at, with a writer who is relatively young in the Faith, and of course it is perfectly proper that he should express his misgivings, but at times he seems too ready to rubbish the views of fathers who, whatever their failings, represent a tradition stretching back a thousand years, and who have dedicated themselves to the monastic life in a way that few of us in the comfortable West would even care to contemplate, let alone undertake.

A question which he brings up on several occasions, and which clearly worries him is the Athonite practice of baptising converts from the Western Christian confessions. That this worries Graham Speake is not at all surprising, when the general practice of the churches of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, to which the Athonite monasteries are attached, is to receive such converts by chrismation or even by confession. What is rather worrying is that he seems to have made little attempt to understand the fathers' rationale in this regard, and it is clear that he does not

understand the theological basis for the practice. Despite his misgivings in this regard, he does give a rather full description of an adult baptism according to Athosite practice.

Another custom that seems to irk him is that of not permitting non-Orthodox to attend services, enter the church or sometimes join the fathers at the same meal table (not practices that we have adopted here, I might add). Again one can understand that such strictness confuses him, but, perhaps with a little too much self-opinion, he states that such practices do nothing to promote the virtues of Orthodoxy, and at one point he even calls the practice "nonsense" (pg 258), even though it might be expected that, had he reflected for a moment, he might have understood that what seemed to him nonsense was indeed be wisdom.

Speake does not skirt the present church-political questions of recent days: the non-commemorators, the zealot fathers, the forcible expulsion of the Russian brotherhood from Prophet Elias Skete, the crude attempts to Hellenise the Mountain. However, the book "proclaims" very loudly that it was written "from Oxford," and having drawn our attention to these questions, he invariably seems to sidestep issues and never permits even a whiff of criticism of the patriarchal administration to hang in the air. Perhaps, he is trying to avoid the sin of Ham (Genesis 9:22) and one hopes that he is, but the suspicion still lingers that he is being politic rather than sensitive.

Undoubtedly, we should end with an emphatic re-affirmation of the fact that it is an excellent introduction to Athos, and we might add that it was a jolly good read.

S.F.A.

NEWS SECTION

CHURCH HISTORICAL CONFERENCE IN MOSCOW

BETWEEN 13th and 16th November, 2002, a conference, devoted to questions of twentieth century Russian Orthodox Church history, was held in the Synodal Library of the Moscow Patriarchate (Andreev Monastery, Moscow). The previous year, a similar conference was held in Sentendra, Hungary. With the blessing of their respective hierarchs, clergymen of both the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad participated and read lectures, some 25 in all. A report from Moscow states: "In an atmosphere of relative freedom of expressing its position, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of (*sic*) Russia, in the examined period [1930-1948 - *ed.*], formulated a theological evaluation of the anti-Christian essence of communist ideology." Later the unascribed report goes on: "The importance of the comprehensive study of the witness of the Church under godless conditions was noted, especially the struggle of the New Martyrs and witnesses. This goal becomes more attainable in accordance with the growing accessibility of research material and other archival documents. The achievements of the ROCOR were emphasised in its preservation of the traditions of Russian ecclesiastical piety and of Orthodox holy items and sites." It ends: "The continuation of these conferences was seen as desirable in the aim of better understanding between the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church."

KOSOVO'S CALVARY CONTINUES

THE WAR IN KOSOVO ended in June 1999, but the destruction of Christian churches and holy places continues. On the night between 16th and 17th November, the Orthodox cathedral in Djuakovac was seriously damaged by explosives planted by Albanian terrorists, and on the same night the Church of St Basil of Ostrog in Ljubovo was levelled to the ground. On 27th November the Monastery of Sopocani was fired upon, and the next day it was reported that hardly a grave cross still stands in the Serbian cemetery at Visoki Decani. The graveyard is about a mile from the Monastery, but only 100 metres from the KFOR checkpoint. At the same period several Serbian people were brutally attacked by Albanian extremists. The Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church has issued a communique condemning these acts of barbarism. They stated: "The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church is deeply saddened by this latest barbaric act of Albanian terrorists, and even more deeply disappointed in the international community which enables under its administration and rule at the beginning of the third Christian millennium the merciless destruction of monuments of spirituality and culture of a people in the very heart of Europe." The head of the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo, Michael Steiner, responded by declaring: "We are all united in condemning these acts," but it seems that their condemnation is too ineffectual to bring an end to the brutal and continued attempts to wipe out any remembrance of Christian Kosovo.

CONFLICT AT ESPHIGMENO

THE SACRED MONASTERY of Esphigmenou, one of the twenty ruling monasteries on the Holy Mountain Athos, has for thirty years been at the forefront of the non-commemorators movement on the Mountain.

These are fathers who refuse to commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople in their Divine Services. The Esphigmenou fathers stopped commemorating in 1964, in protest against the ecumenical activities of the then Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, and particularly against his meeting with the Pope. By 1970, eleven of the twenty monasteries had ceased to commemorate, but with the death of Athenagoras and the conciliatory tone adopted by his successor, Patriarch Demetrios, from 1972 onwards ten of these eleven monasteries started commemorating again, leaving Esphigmenou isolated. In 1972, with aid from the "junta" administration in Greece, the monastery was besieged by militiamen and coast guards, by land and sea, for four months. The monks responded by hanging back flags inscribed "Orthodoxy or death!" from their walls, but did not surrender. The Esphigmenou fathers remained steadfast in their protest against the Patriarchate's ecumenical policies, but were careful not to provoke conflicts. Thus the situation has continued for thirty years. More recently various pressures have been brought to bear upon them. Visitors allowed to visit the monastery were limited, or visitors were allowed to visit Esphigmenou on a special permit but barred from then visiting other monasteries. The fathers were denied tax-free gasoline, and then their bank accounts were frozen. The Greek state then stopped paying the compensation owed the monastery from the expropriation of its estates outside Athos. To maintain a lifeline, the monks bought a speed-boat so that they could sally forth from the monastery and obtain provisions and supplies. They are

now fearful that this will be stopped. Recently legal officials have been sent to the monastery summoning each of the monks, who number 117, to answer a list of some eighty charges. The community has responded by stating that the accusations are vague and insubstantial. The Greek newspaper, *Ethnos*, published a long account of the conflict on 2nd December, 2002, ending: "What persistent rumours state is that a new group of the Monastery of Esphigmenou will be created, composed of monks from other monasteries, and that a new abbot will be established, who now is a member of the Holy Community Committee. This new group, with a new seal of the Monastery, will be temporarily established in the Russian Skete of the Prophet Elias, and will possess all privileges and supports. In this way two Monasteries of Esphigmenou will be created with an ultimate goal to evict all zealots from the Monastery in future." The translation of this newspaper article has been posted on the web, and it ends with an appeal from the monastery for moral support, that the fathers there may continue "without hindrance, to pursue their spiritual life and philanthropy towards all people." Readers are urged to send letters of support for the Monastery the following:-

Minister of Foreign Affairs, G. Papandreou e-mail; dialogue@mfa.gr; or fax; +30 210 368 1433; Civil administration of Mountain Athos, fax; +30 210 368 2313 Holy Community fax number +30 23770 23315

The present Abbot of Esphigmenou, Father Methodius, said: "We have to protect Orthodoxy from the Orthodox Œcumenical Patriarchate and its approaches toward other Christians."

It is interesting to note that the "replacement community" for the monastery is probably to be formed at the former Russian Skete of the Prophet Elias, from whence the Russian fathers, also non-commemorators, were forcibly evicted by the militia in May 1992.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE was recently reprinted from the National Catholic Reporter (22/11/02) in the Fellowship of St Alban & St Sergius Newsletter (No 51), bears passing on again:-

The Palestinian Christian is an endangered species. When the modern state of Israel was established there were about 400,000 of us. Two years ago the number was down to 80,000. Now it's down to 60,000. At that rate, in a few years there will be none of us left.

Palestinian Christians within Israel fare little better. On the face of it, their number has grown by 20,000 since 1991. But this is misleading, for the census classification 'Christian' includes some 20,000 recent non-Arab migrants from the former Soviet Union. So why are Palestinian Christians abandoning their homeland? We have lost hope, that's why. We are treated as non-people. Few outside the Middle East even know we exist, and those who do, conveniently forget.

I refer, of course, to the American religious right. They see the modern Israel as a harbinger of the Second Coming, at which time Christians will go to paradise, and all others (presumably including Jews) to hell. To this end they lend military and moral

support to Israel. Even by the double-dealing standards of international diplomacy, this is a breathtakingly cynical bargain. It is hard to know who is using whom more: the Christian right for offering secular power in the expectation that the Jewish state will be destroyed by a greater spiritual one, or the Israeli right for accepting their offer. What we do know is that both sides are abusing the Palestinians. Apparently we don't enter into anyone's calculations.

The views of the Israeli right are well known: they want us gone. Less well known are the views of the American religious right. Senator James Inhofe, R-Okla., said "God appeared to Abraham and said: "I am giving you this land," the West Bank. This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true.' House Majority leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, was even more forthright: I'm content to have Israel grab the entire West Bank. I happen to believe that the Palestinians should leave.'

There is a phrase for this: ethnic cleansing. Why do American Christians stand by while their leaders advocate the expulsion of fellow Christians? Could it be that they do not know that the Holy Land has been a home to Christians since, well, since Christ? Do not think that I am asking for special treatment for Christians. Ethnic cleansing is evil whoever does it and to whomever it is done. Palestinian Christians - Maronite Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, Armenians, Baptists, Copts and Assyrians - have been rubbing shoulders with each other and with other religions - Muslims, Jews, Druze and most recently Baha'is - for centuries. We want to do so for centuries more. But we can't if we are driven out by despair.

What we seek is support: material, moral, political and spiritual. As Palestinians, we grieve for what we have lost, and few people (the Ashkenazi Jews are one) have lost more than us. But grief can be assuaged by the fellowship of friends.

FRIENDS OF MOUNT ATHOS RECEPTION & CONFERENCE

ON HIS NAMEDAY (12th December), Dr Spiro J. Latsis kindly permitted his home in Cleveland Row to be the venue of a reception for the Friends of Mount Athos. Their Graces, Bishops Kallistos of Diokleia, Basil of Sergievo, and Theodoritos of Nazianzos were present.

H.R.H. The Prince of Wales was guest of honour and gave a short but illuminating address on the significance of the Holy Mountain, spiritually, culturally and environmentally.

The Friends are arranging a conference, entitled Mount Athos, the Sacred Bridge, to be held at Madingley Hall, Cambridge, between 28th February and 2nd March, 2003. Their flyer explains that "there will be a framework of Orthodox church services." The total cost for three-day conference will be £140, or £80 for non-residential participants. Those interested should contact the organisers through Jeremy Black, Proffitts House, Millers Lane, Hornton, Oxon OX15 6BS as soon as possible.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

ORTHODOX AID FUND: For 2002, the totals given to various ecclesiastical, humanitarian and environmental charities from our Brotherhood's Orthodox Aid Fund were:- £3,622.74 (£3,314.69 in 2001), and US\$1,072 (as compared with US\$1,009.50 in 2001). [Thus approximately £4,330 in total this year.] These gifts were made possible by the generosity of our parishioners and the readers of "The Shepherd," and we would like to thank everyone who contributed. May the blessing of the Lord be upon you all.

NEW BOOKLET PUBLISHED: Through the efforts of Reader Gabriel and Helena Lawani, "Concerning Prayer" - translated by Mrs Valentina Merritt from a Russian language pamphlet first published by the Prophet Elias Skete on Athos, has been published in booklet form. The translation was serialised in "The Shepherd" in 2000, and thus will be known to many of our readers. It has now been put together as a 42 page booklet, and the production costs were kindly donated by Mr Edward Jones of Tongwynlais in memory of his father, Islwyn.

VISIT FROM MOLDOVA: On the feast of St Spiridon and St Herman of Alaska, the Divine Liturgy at Brookwood was attended by Archpriest Nikolai Florinsky of the Russian Church in Kishenev, who later spoke with parishioners and joined us for breakfast at the Brotherhood.

FUNERAL: On St Andrew's day, Friday 30th November / 13th December, the funeral service for Natalya Freeland was chanted at Saint Edward's Church and she was laid to rest in our cemetery. May her rest be with the Saints.

PRACTICAL TIP

ALWAYS REMEMBER, that in your church commitment
the less that you do, the harder it is to do.