

Best wishes AD.

EASTERN CHURCHES NEWS - LETTER

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*The General Committee does not hold itself responsible for every
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CHRONICLE AND NEWS

AT HOME

At a meeting of the General Committee in March, it was agreed that the Festival this year should be held on September 29th, Michaelmas Day, at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Notting Hill. Details of this service will be given later, as also the speakers at the Meeting afterwards. As is known to the members of the Association, our custom is to alternate an Orthodox Holy Liturgy one year with an Anglican Solemn Eucharist the next. St. John's, Notting Hill is easily reached from most parts of London, and has been lately reconstructed and redecorated, making a worthy place for our united worship.

At the same Committee meeting prayers were offered for the repose of the soul of both the Primate of All Greece, Spiridon, and also the Patriarch of Jerusalem Timotheos, who have lately entered into their rest. Along with them, we would ask our readers to remember before God the heroic soul of our old and tried friend Bishop Nicolai

Velomirovich, sometime Bishop of Ochrida, and of Bishop Irenei sometime of Dalmatia, both of whom died recently in the United States of America. An appreciation of Bishop Nicolai appears in this number of the Newsletter by his friend Bishop Buxton, late of Gibraltar.

It was reported also to the Committee that the projected Pilgrimage and Conference to Athens this year has been postponed, a decision reached both by our friends in Athens and ourselves, with great regret.

We have the very happy news, first made known by telegram to the congregation of the Greek Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom, Bayswater, on Sunday, April 15th of the consecration of the Very Reverend Father James Virvos as Assistant Bishop to the Metropolitan of Thyateira, our

~~Anglican~~ President, on ~~April 22nd~~ ^{May 13th}. We beg respectfully to send our warmest congratulations to the Bishop elect and our heartfelt prayers for him in his new dignities and responsibility. Those of us who have been responsible for the work of the Association know our debt to Father James and his ready help in every possible way. It is not exaggerating to say that without him we could hardly have been able to carry on our task.

ABROAD

FRANCE: It is of general interest to know the numbers of Orthodox and Uniats in France, where especially in Paris there is so important a centre of the Orthodox Diaspora. We learn from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Journal of Alexandria that 300,000 Eastern Orthodox live in France, of whom 150,000 are under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Churches and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 100,000 are Armenian Gregorians, 40,000 are Ukrainian Uniats, and 10,000 belong to other bodies.

SWEDEN: The Metropolitan of Moscow, we learn from the "Press Service of the Norwegian Institute for Inter-Church Relations" No. 2/56, 1956, visited Sweden in a private capacity in March, and stayed for seven days in the capital, Oslo. As it was a private visit and also sponsored by the leftist "Fight for Peace" movement, permission to preach in the Cathedral of Oslo was refused as well as the use of the University for a public meeting, until the title of the Metropolitan's lecture was changed to "The Russian Orthodox Church today." At a press conference the Metropolitan stressed that the Church in the Soviet Union is "completely free and independent" even if its activity was confined to the service and the sermon. A major emphasis of the sermons

is the fight against atheism and materialism. The Church, he said, should not engage in political activity, and if pastors were interned, it was not because of their religious but because of their political activity. This statement was quickly challenged by a Swede, himself at one time a Communist, and who has spent thirteen years in a Soviet prison. He asked how the Church could be silent in the face of injustice and cruelty?

BISHOP NICOLAI

Bishop Nicolai was—among the Serbs—a man of destiny, and a prophet of Heaven and of Hell.

Many a statesman of his nation quailed before his judgments; simple villagers offered him love and reverence as their father-in-God.

Of his life and labours for the Serbs and the Serbian Church, his own people will tell. We saw him from outside his native environment, and we know him as a notable figure in Christendom. To us Anglicans he was always the loyal friend, the brotherly (frank, outspoken) critic; but primarily the exponent of Orthodoxy and Philokalia.

Just as there were many sides to his character, so there were many and varied activities in his public career. Whenever the interests of justice seemed to be threatened or the welfare of his Church or diocese at stake, he would shake himself free of his 'Metropole' and the books he so greatly loved, and hurl himself into the mêlée, in the traditional rôle of bishops in the Near East.

I mention below one or two of those matters concerning which Nicolai emerged into public and national affairs, during the period of my visits to Yugoslavia.

Bishop Nicolai and the Roman Catholic Church

Bishop Nicolai had no quarrel with the religious loyalties of the Croats and Slovenes, both of which were Roman Catholics by tradition. But he was drawn, i.e. compelled, by his conscience to resist the political claims of the Roman Church at the capital Belgrade and in Orthodox territory, as well as its proselytising activity among the Serbs.

During the years 1933-39, these claims and this proselytism were pressed forward by the very powerful personality of Fr. Koroshetz, a Slovene priest who became Minister of the Interior in the Belgrade Government. With the Roman Catholic hierarchy behind him Fr. Koroshetz gained considerable prestige by rousing public opinion in Yugoslavia

on the spread of Communism in the country. This in turn prepared the way for another development: the proposal for a Concordat between Yugoslavia and the Vatican, which would secure new privileges to the Roman hierarchy and clergy. Bishop Nicolai became the spearhead of the opposition to this proposal. With Bishop Dosithei and Bishop Irinei of Dalmatia resistance was organised which at least a postponement of the proposal. Not long after the war of '39 broke out, with its sequel of the murder of Bishop Dosithei and the imprisonment of Bishops Nicolai and Irinei.

Bishop Nicolai and Bulgaria

Bishop Nicolai played a leading part also in another campaign, which brought about more neighbourly relations with Bulgaria.

From the time of the Balkan Wars and the First World War, there was deep-rooted suspicions and enmities existing between the Balkan peoples, in particular over the Macedonian problem. It was Bishop Nicolai, when Bishop at Ochrid, who lent his powerful support to King Alexander in a new effort to restore good relations. The King took the lead by embarking on his yacht for visits to the Bulgarian ports in the Black Sea, and by friendly approaches to King Boris. Later, Bishop Nicolai visited Archbishop Stephane at Sofia and sought to bring Church influence to bear upon the leaders of the people on both sides. As a result in September 1936 the Archbishop of Sofia with six other Bulgarian delegates came to Belgrade and were welcomed at the (then new) Patriarchate buildings. Thence Bishop Nicolai accompanied the delegation to Southern Serbia and, a great achievement, arranged for Archbishop Stephane to preach in various churches in the disputed territory.

Let us hope that a worthy biography of this remarkable figure will be published.

H. J. BUXTON, Bishop

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE NEAR EAST

(from a correspondent)

The question that is being asked most frequently and persistently today in matters affecting the Near and Middle East, as well as the former sovereignty of the Turkish empire is: Why must religion and politics be so inevitably and inextricably mixed up, and the spheres of Church and State

as western Europe understands them, be so confused? Indeed it is regarded by most of us as a fault that it should be so, since we seem to have learnt by our religious and political development in the last four hundred years that there exists now a right and justifiable distinction between the two.

To attempt to understand the Eastern European standpoint pre-supposes an appreciation of its history since the Turkish conquest. It has to be remembered that in those parts of the world, a man is known primarily by his religion rather than by his nationality. The settlement made by Mahomet the Conqueror in the fifteenth century—and no doubt earlier in those countries of the Balkans that fell under the Turkish rule—was by religious profession rather than by countries: a man was a Moslem or a Christian or a Jew, and his status in the empire was conditioned by that. Further, in the case of Christians, they were definitely under the delegated care of their religious leaders, and in the case of the Orthodox, under the Ecumenical Throne and Patriarch. This deeply embedded way of thought and practice colours still the whole outlook of these people who have either gained their freedom under their religious leaders, such as the Hellenes of the Greek Kingdom, and the Balkan States who are now independent. One has only to read the splendid national epics of the Greeks and the Slavs who have won their right to live their own life to see that again and again it was the Church, through her bishops and clergy who not only fostered and guarded the Christian character of a people, but were foremost in fighting for independence, in a forthright way that seems strange and alien to our western minds. Yet of course our own Middle Age provided many examples of this, as it did of ecclesiastical statesmen. When the hour struck for the struggle for freedom, it was the religious leaders of the people who came forward, who led, who guided and pointed the way to victory. This has never been forgotten.

In a sense that still applies today. If a people under alien rule has no other leader, no other voice to interpret its needs and to fight for independence, it is natural for it to turn to the Church. This is above all true when the large majority of such an entity is homogeneous in religious belief, tradition and loyalty, and where the Church is truly representative. We in this country have almost forgotten what it is to be homogeneous in this way, and no church tradition, even that of the Church of England can any longer claim to be wholly representative, however salutary and

important her influence and advice and guidance is in the counsels of the nation.

This mainly historical note is not intended to be an apology for this or that particular manifestation past or present of the expression of a people's will to freedom; it is rather an attempt to put the problem in its setting. It is surely one of the hardest tasks emotionally and intellectually to understand people of a different religious and historical background. Yet without the effort to do so tragic mistakes have been made and are likely to be made. For an Association such as ours, it is a clear duty to try to understand these matters from a Christian point of view, as Christians desiring to come together and appreciate one another's standpoint, and to judge, if it is our duty to judge, not from the easy position of our own prejudices and inadequate knowledge, but to sympathise and do all in our power to help in the tragic circumstances that arise through human weaknesses and the stress of deep-rooted and not ignoble passions.

AD LIMINA

Rome Visited

Today, to visit Rome, Athens, Paris, London, is to see with our very own eyes, to be in the physical presence of what is already familiar. From pictures, films, also those brightly coloured visions in our own imagination, we come to the tangible and real. In these days, too, travel by air means nearly always glimpses from a great height of important sites before arrival: so it was with Rome. After a fleeting sight of Mont Blanc at two in the morning, through a rift in the clouds, we flew over the Tyrrhenian Sea and coming to the mainland of the Italian peninsula saw the Coliseo glide by and the Forum before circling to Ciampino airport.

This short article is concerned somewhat, but not exclusively, with the links between the Old Rome and the New, Constantinople, or what is left of the Queen City after its many spoliations, of which the wanton destruction of last September is not the least. I am reminded of a late Latin couplet, which seems epigrammatically to sum up one's feelings in the ancient inhabited sites of the world:

"Learn then the power of chance: what seems
immovable decays;

It is what moves and flows that every stays."

That is indeed true of both cities. The natural glories of Constantinople, the bright confluence of the Bosphorus, the Marmora and the Golden Horn, the unrivalled beauty of earth and sky and sea, the golden air and richness of Rome, these are the things that remain because they are ever renewed.

At one time, and indeed up to thirty years ago, it was considered right to decry everything Byzantine in relation to classical tradition and in particular to the elder City. Dimidiate, barbarian, oriental and debased were the epithets used to describe the art and civilisation of Byzantium and its wide area of influence. This was a strange reversal of older traditions, when Rome in the earlier centuries of the Christian era, soon to be sacked and pillaged by the barbarians, overcrowded already by the fourth century, began to give place in beauty and splendour to the new capital on the Bosphorus, that link between East and West. Under Constantine and his successors, ancient and noble families of Rome were persuaded to be transplanted to Constantinople, and the vast accumulation of the treasures of art of the old city, were heavily drawn upon to beautify the palaces and public places of the new. As well as this, it is clear that the art forms, both in architecture, fresco, mosaic and sculpture became the models of the beginnings of such things for Europe as she came out of her Dark Age.

Most of these beautiful things have now disappeared. Their battered remains inhabit museums and are to be found in great private collections. But it is now an unchallenged and melancholy fact that the Constantinople of the fourth to the tenth and eleventh centuries was the glorious and legendary centre of the world, adorned with the accumulation of the heritage of a thousand years. Most of that disappeared in the Fourth Crusade and the sack of 1204. The wonders of the Kremlin at Moscow, of St. Mark's, Venice, of Norman Sicily, and the echoes of Byzantine splendour in the mediaeval Moghul courts of the East, given us broken lights on the Eastern Capital in the days of its high renown.

Modern Rome is in many ways an unfruitful place for Byzantine comparisons. The earlier Christian city is heavily overlaid by mediaeval and even more so, baroque transformations. It is strange however that classical Rome, in spite of its weight of historical glory, fails to dominate the modern city as classical Athens overshadows, or rather illuminates at every turn the new city that lies at the foot of the Acropolis. It is of course mainly a question of levels. But the modern propping up of the disinterred and broken

bones of the Forum in the Terza Roma of the fascist era has not enhanced the sleeping dignity of the earlier classical remains. One knows too that there has been a long history of vandalism, a steady destruction of the greater and smaller classical and imperial buildings for their masonry and marbles, not least during the two hundred years of the building of the Basilica of St. Peter. Yet the links between the two capitals are there. In the first place it is to be seen in the great shrines of the Roman people. The most ancient and venerated are still not statues but ikons. To take an outstanding example, the picture of the Deipara "Salus Populi Romani" at the centre of the magnificence of the Borghese Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore is the same ikon that was carried in the streets during the plague in the days of St. Gregory the Great in the 6th century. Generally speaking, until the days of baroque, the conservatism of Rome kept to pictures and frescoes (as in the wayside shrines of Northern Italy and the Ticino to this day), and statues were rather used for outside and architectural decoration than inside for a focus of devotion. The severe and dignified churches of Santa Sabina on the Aventine, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, San Giorgio in Velabro, San Clemente, all of them substantially not later than the early Middle Age are without images. The terms in which Iconoclasm is a danger to the faith of the Incarnation was readily understood in Rome, and Italy became an asylum for the persecuted clergy and monks of the East.

What among the glittering treasures of the Sacristy and Treasury of St. Peter's is more glorious than the gold and jewelled cross sent by the Emperor Justin II, the successor of the great Justinian? Or the dalmatic said to be of Charlemagne, embroidered and studded with gems at Constantinople? These things stand out with a light and beauty of their own. But it is perhaps the great relics of Rome that speak most clearly of the happy time of Una Sancta throughout the Christian world, of the ancient union between the two capitals. It has been said that their presence makes Rome unique in Christendom, that for the simple devout of Rome, for the pilgrim, to see and venerate so many of the objects directly connected with the story of our salvation, the doors and staircase of Pilate's palace in Jerusalem, the great relics of the Passion, the houses of Clement and Pudens, is to transform Rome into the very place where year by year in the Church's seasons, these mysteries are enacted in her inner life. One can't help thinking that that was also and most strikingly true of

Constantinople. The multitude of churches, the unnumbered monasteries and shrines of the imperial city, the area round Sancta Sophia and the immense area of the Sacred Palace, all, in the days of palmy splendour, spoke of a Christianity relived from the earliest days in the recurring Mysteries of the Church as enacted in her great places of worship and above all in the Great Church of Christ, the Holy Wisdom.

In Rome today much remains of the links between the two cities. She has the body of St. John Chrysostom in the Capella del Coro in St. Peter's and of St. Gregory Nazienzen; and could we have seen the Constantinian Basilica of St. Peter's, destroyed to make room for the present building, the remains of which are to be seen in the Crypts of St. Peter's, we would have been surrounded by memorials and treasures of Constantinople, for I am told that the Basilica was the titular Church of the Ecumenical Patriarch before the Schism. One has a glimpse of the power and prestige of the Archbishop of Constantinople in the height of his glory, who had for his cathedral the unsurpassable Church of the Holy Wisdom on the Bosphorus, and as his titular church in Rome, the Basilica of St. Peter with its precious treasure of the Tomb of the Apostle at its heart.

I fear the foregoing notes are poor enough, reflecting little of the actual joy and fulfilment of those sunny weeks in Rome. As soon as we got settled in at the Casa Canonica, we made the opportunity to cross the Ponte Margherita out of the Piazza del Popolo that was a stone's throw away, and made our first visit to the Vatican City. On that perfect June afternoon the light flooded the Basilica, and all my fears that the greatest church in Christendom would prove a disappointment were triumphantly dispelled. I will not try your patience by recounting what must be the reactions of millions of pilgrims, but I remember with gratitude and joy the tender beauty of Michael Angelo's Pietà in its chapel on the right as you enter, the exquisite memorial by Canova to the Stuarts, and the glow of golden light that is always behind the Cathedra Petri; the wonderful proportions of the enormous building that offers its splendours to the beholder without crushing his mind or spirit by its size. We were there again on St. Peter's Day, but rich as were the scarlet and gold hangings, the many glittering chandeliers and the overwhelming press of people both outside in the Piazza and within the Basilica had not the attraction of its everyday quiet. The singing was not good, and the loud speakers blaring and vulgar. But it was the crowds that were endlessly fascinating. Here were pilgrims from the ends of the earth,

mixing with the Roman families and local holiday-makers, on their tribunes and galleries, and thronging the aisles of the Basilica. Not least impressive was the great bronze statue of St. Peter in his festal tiara and jewelled cope.

Of all the experiences of those weeks, and they crowd in the mind with shifting colour and endless variation, two stand out. The first was a long drive to the Alban Hills, to Castel Gandolfo, Albano, Genzano, Rocca di Papa and the nearby villages, the Lakes and the distant view of the reclaimed Pontine marshes, now rich arable land. In the evening dinner in Rome by the Fountain in the Piazza Navona, and about midnight, being taken for a final view of the Capitol, the Forum and the Coliseo under the discreet flood-lighting of Rome. The other was of a more individual character. We were invited to Ostia Antika by the Curator, the widow of the famous Signor Canza to whom is due mainly the success of the excavations of that interesting commercial city at the port of Rome. After seeing the small but selected and important museum, the main temples and the theatre, we were taken to an excavated hostelry and wine-shop. The marble counter where the host stood and gave out the food, the Private and Public Bar as it were, even the bronze hooks for hanging clothes were all there in their places. We sat in the little paved garden behind the inn under the laurels and ilex and vines, looking out to the bright sun on the Roman stone pines. At such a hostelry, in such a garden St. Augustine and his dying mother stayed at this Ostia, when in the inimitable account in the "Confessions," the tumult of the flesh was stilled, and the images of earth and sea, and they two touched by a flash of thought the Eternal Wisdom.

The books written on Rome form a library, and they continue to be written; but, as well as Marion Crawford's Roman novels, we have a classic of our own in English in Shorthouse's "John Ingelsant." There is nothing to surpass even in the romantic poets, his descriptions of the uncompleted 17th century Piazza and Basilica of St. Peter, of San Giovanni in Laterano on a famous Ash Wednesday, of a Conclave before a Papal election, of his part in the papal ceremonies in St. Peter's. It is a strange book and a great one, that should be read both before and after a visit to the thresholds of the Apostles and Roma Immortalis.

AUSTIN OAKLEY

THE WATERS OF MARAH

The Waters of Marah: the present state of the Greek Church, by Peter Hammond. Published by Rockliff, London 1956.

21/-

To the Englishman the term 'a foreigner' carries a sense of 'an outsider,' at best perhaps with a hint of apology, but often something worse. To the Greek 'O Xenos' is the guest, the visitor from a strange country beyond mountain or sea, who must be made to feel at home. It is this open hearted welcome and eager hospitality which casts an irresistible spell over the Englishman the moment he sets foot on the rugged soil of Greece.

Mr. Peter Hammond is no exception here, and it is one of the outstanding merits of *The Waters of Marah* that this sense of enchantment is shared with the reader and makes his journey through the book itself a vivid communication of the author's own experience. Under cover of this happy festive mood, Mr. Hammond is able to convey a great deal of factual information about the Church of Greece. He touches lightly on its history and general ethos, explores some of the characteristic features of parish and monastic life, and brings the picture of the Greek Church up to date by a description of the contemporary evangelistic and educational movements and enterprises.

The author is a keen observer, and his understanding and sympathy for Orthodoxy enable him to give an accurate and lively account of the Greek Church. The book is particularly to be welcomed for there is, as a matter of fact, no other which brings to the English reader the material offered here. It is attractively produced and illustrated, and the guinea spent on acquiring it will be well repaid both to the armchair traveller and to the English Christian who, prompted by kinship in the same Lord of the Church, seeks friendship with his Orthodox brethren.

The Waters of Marah will strike many at first as a strange title. But those who know the history of Greece and the intimacy between the Church and the life of her people, will recognise in it the sign of the Cross under whose shadow so much of Greek history has been forged, and in whose victory hope is ever resilient.

HELLE GEORGIADIS

INTER-CHURCH TRAVEL

We have received a pamphlet issued by the Youth Travel Club with special reference to inter-church travel. This organisation is run on a non-profit-making basis with the object of facilitating friendly relations between the peoples of various countries. The Inter-Church Travel Branch (Hon. Secretary: the Reverend A. E. Payton, 47-49 Lime Street, Liverpool 1) is working in co-operation with Inter-Church Aid. Should any of our readers be interested, and ask for arrangements to be made for visits to Orthodox countries, we feel certain that they will meet with advice and help. 1954 was the first year of operations on any scale and was apparently a most successful one, visits being arranged to countries which included Holland, Germany, Norway, France and Switzerland.

THE ANGLICAN AND EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES ASSOCIATION, which was founded in 1864, exists to unite members of the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches for the following objects:

To promote mutual knowledge, sympathy and intercourse.

To encourage the study of Eastern Christendom.

to pray and work for the restoration of the visible unity of the Church.

The Presidents of the Association are the Lord Bishop of London and the Metropolitan Athenagoras of Thyateira.

The normal annual subscription is 10/-, but none will be excluded from membership solely on account of inability to pay this amount, while it is hoped that those who can afford to pay more will do so. All members are entitled to receive the *Eastern Churches News-letter*, which is published quarterly.

Please note that until further notice, all correspondence, subscriptions, etc., should be addressed to the Reverend Austin Oakley, 63 Ladbroke Grove, London, W.11.