

EASTERN CHURCHES NEWS - LETTER

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Anglican and Eastern Churches Association*

*The General Committee does not hold itself responsible for every
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THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL

As announced in the last News-letter, the Association's Annual Festival (the 90th) will be held on Michaelmas Day, September 29th at St. John's Church, Notting Hill. The Solemn Eucharist will be celebrated at 12.0 midday, and be followed, as is our custom, with refreshments and a meeting of members at St. John's Parish Hall, Clarendon Road, W.11 immediately after the Eucharist. The main speaker at the Meeting will be the Revd. Canon H. M. Waddams, General Secretary of the Archbishop's Council for Foreign Relations. This will precede the Annual General Meeting, and a meeting of the General Committee. Notices of the Festival will be sent to members in London and nearby districts. These notices will give further details, which have not yet been confirmed.

St. John's, Notting Hill, which is actually on the top of Notting Hill in Ladbrooke Grove, is easily reached by the Central Underground to Notting Hill Gate or Holland Park, and also by a number of buses. It is hoped that our members from the South Coast areas will be able to come, as they did last year to St. Sava's Serbian Church in the same neighbourhood.

Canon Waddams has been making a series of journeys to the Near East and was also a member of the Anglican

Delegation to the Russian Church under the leadership of the Archbishop of York, which took place recently. He will have much to tell us of interest to our work. The orthodox clergy who hope to attend will be singing a Trisagion or Panychyda for the repose of the souls of late Patriarch of Jerusalem, Bishop Nicholai Velmirovitch and other Orthodox leaders who have passed their rest during the past year. The General Committee will be glad if clerical members of the Association will make known the date and details of the Festival to their people.

At Home:

NEWS

The Consecration of the Very Reverend James Virvos to the Episcopate.

The Very Reverend the Provost of the Greek Cathedral in Bayswater was consecrated to the bishopric of Apameia by Archbishop Athenagoras assisted by his suffragans, in the presence of a great number of Orthodox clergy, of the Primate of All England, and many of his Anglican friends, both clerical and lay. It was an outstanding event, both historically as well as ecclesiastically. This was the first Orthodox consecration to the episcopate on English soil, and the bishop-elect is one of the best-known figures among the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in this country: one who has for very many years now gained the respect and affection of so many by his understanding of our church problems and national life.

The preliminaries of the Rite took place as the service of Orthros (Morning Prayer) was drawing to a close. The bishop-elect then made his canonical vows: reciting the Nicene Creed and the declarations of Faith and allegiance to the Ecumenical Throne and to the Archbishop of Thyateira.

After a blessing by the Archbishop, the Divine Liturgy began. After the Little Entrance the bishop-elect was brought out from the sanctuary to the dias, and presented by two priests to the assembled bishops. He delivered an address to the Archbishop, to which the Archbishop replied. The two assisting bishops then took the bishop-elect by the hands and led him round the Holy Table which he kissed at each corner. The actual consecration then took place, the archbishop leaving his seat by the Holy Doors and coming to the altar. He and the assisting bishop laid their hands with prayer upon the Book of the Holy Gospels which was

placed on the head of the candidate. The consecration being completed the new bishop was brought to the Holy Doors and invested with the episcopal insignia, the priestly phenolion and stole being removed. For those who were present, this was a dramatic moment, for as the sakkos, omophorion and enkolpion were put on the new bishop, and lastly the jewelled crown, each act was accompanied by the cry of "Axios" (He is worthy), both by the choir and the assembled congregation.

The Divine Liturgy then continued uninterruptedly to the end. After the service the invited guests attending a luncheon, at which the new Bishop spoke with great aptness and feeling, and the Archbishop of Canterbury himself made one of his inimitable speeches, which justly interpreted the feelings of all who were present.

The visit to this country of the Archimandrite Salibi of the Metropolis of Beirut.

The Association, along with the Ministry of Information and the Archbishop's Council for Foreign Relations, was the host of the Very Reverend Archmandrite Salibi of the Metropolis of Beirut in the Patriarchate of Antioch from May 31st to June 15th.

The Archimandrite's programme was a full one, including visits to St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Windsor and Oxford. In his second week, he was received by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, went up to York Minster, where he was the guest of the Dean, and from there visited the House of Resurrection, Mirfield. Returning to London he was taken round Broadcasting House by the Director of Religious Broadcasting, was received at St. Katherine's Foundation by Fr. Groser, and paid a short visit to St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, attending a Diocesan Missionary Festival Service in the Cathedral. On the Eve of Orthodox Ascension Day, he was the guest at a small dinner at the Reform Club given by our Association, at which the host was the Chairman of Committee, and after attending the Divine Liturgy at the Greek Cathedral, dined with Canon Waddams at the Athenaeum, leaving for Syria next morning.

This very full programme gave the Archmandrite in his short visit a comprehensive view of the life of the Church in this country. Speaking both English and French, as well as his native Arabic, he was able to take advantage of his varied contacts, while those of us who had the privilege of meeting him found him both interesting and communicative. We are grateful to have been able to take our part in this visit.

Visit to Stamford and Bourne by Fr. Oakley on behalf of the Association.

The South Lincolnshire Clergy Fellowship invited Fr. Oakley to preach at their Sung Eucharist at Bourne Abbey Church and to address the members of a meeting in the afternoon of July 11th. Their subject for study was the life and history of the Orthodox Church, and while the title of the sermon was "Prayer and the Reunion of the Church," the speaker treated in the afternoon four great turning points in the history of the Church of the East. A number of questions were asked, of which the present tragic situation in Cyprus was inevitably one. The beauty of Stamford Town with its six great mediaeval churches, its almshouses and handsome public buildings, especially those of the eighteenth century, is a revelation to the visitor, while Bourne is a fine monastic building, once of the Augustinian Canons, with splendid Norman work in the nave. Fr. Oakley was the guest of the vicar of St. Mary's Stamford, Canon Hoskins, who is a member of the Association.

IN MEMORIAM

CANON J. A. DOUGLAS, D.D.

The death of Canon Douglas at the advanced age of 87 makes another gap in the ranks of those whose names are familiar to an older generation. Not only was Canon Douglas the oldest member of the Association in years of membership, but those who knew him realised his greatness. He was cast in a larger mould than we are accustomed to today: in his likes and dislikes, in his largeness of spirit and vision, and in his unique gift of perception and encouragement of young men who for long years became successive members of his "Kindergarten," and who in many ways of life have become eminent ecclesiastical and lay. There can have been few churchmen in the last half-century who not only have known those who directed affairs in Church and State, but were known by them—and this in a cosmopolitan manner.

Our particular interest as an Association is the Council for Foreign Church Relations that Canon Douglas was mainly responsible for creating, and into the fashioning of which he poured his great knowledge and energy. Much of the work of liaison with the Orthodox world was once the direct responsibility of our Association: that has now been taken over to some extent by the Archbishop's Council and its

General Secretary. But the work of the Council is much wider than Orthodoxy, and that its relations are so far-reaching is again due to the vision of Canon Douglas.

To those of us who knew him more personally, there was another kindly and affectionate side. Nor must it be forgotten that in his earlier days, he was long a busy and successful parish priest both in Peckham and also later in his City Church. His many important papers and letters will not be open to general use until 1970. At his own request, and in his humility, he made the request that there should be no public memorial service for him after his passing. May he rest in peace, and light perpetual shine on him.

AUSTIN OAKLEY

A SUMMER IN A LEVANTINE MONASTERY

I

This paper was written during the last war, and the bulk of it appeared in the Kelham Quarterly. Its main interest however is not particularly dated, although it was written in a haven of quiet in the very middle of war and strife. What is of more recent interest is that two of the churches spoken of in the second part of the article have since suffered alienation and ruin, the Chapel of the Panagia Kamriotissa on Halki, and, in the riots of last year, the Church of St. Mary of the Mongols near the Phanar in Istanbul. The latter is, I am informed, not entirely destroyed, but is capable of restoration.
A.O.

You come to the monastery, called St. George of the Precipice, along a road of cypresses, while on the left behind an ancient wall the rocks run steeply into the bright crisp sea. The cobbles along the road were first laid, in ancient classical fashion, in the seventeenth century, when doubtless the slow-growing trees were also planted.

The approach from the landing-stage is quiet enough, but when you turn up by the cypresses and see far ahead the wide arch of the monastery gate open to the first court with the marble angel that has one wing broken off, it is another kind of peace—the peace that has settled down all these centuries after the bells have ceased ringing, and the liturgy is over, and the people have gone.

Through the first court, where the parish priest of the island lives now, for the monastery is little but a name these days, you come by a door to the cool narthex of the church, with a lamp by the ikon of St. George, its patron, and through the windows of the church you see the light shining on the high pulpit and the Venetian cut-glass candelabra and the bright colours on the marble ikonostasis. If it is evening time,

you will see the faint glow of the lamp that hangs up in the roof over the rood. Beyond once again, is the second court, with sleeping patriarchs in their carved tombs against the wall, and the high windows of the patriarchal apartments. Within are cool passages and a wide stair leading to the spacious reception-room hung with portraits of eighteenth and nineteenth century prelates, and the linen-covered chairs and divans round the walls—that invariable touch of the monasteries of the Levant.

Here then is quiet, crystal quiet, and still nightly the glow of the city lies steady on the horizon. There is no sound but the wind through the pine forests, and the tideless clapping of the waves against the high creamy island rocks.

There are certain places from which peace never goes. Down by the Seven Towers in Istanbul is the shell of another monastery, as famous as ours is obscure, the Studion. Nothing survives of it but the courtyard and the fountain, a splendid lofty entrance of engaged Corinthian columns, and the empty roofless nave and sanctuary of the basilica. But here Christian history grew. From here went out monks in the ninth and tenth centuries, when the Studion was already venerable, to help found the monasteries of mount Athos. Here was a centre of strength against the iconoclasts, here lived more than one emperor, the splendid majesty of the purple laid aside for the monastic life, and in one case for the humble post of porter at the gate. Here lived the sleepless ones, interceding in companies day and night for a thousand years. Today, in solitude, profanation and dereliction, the stones and the broken rafters in the walls still silently cry out; the peace of that holy place will remain when every they are gone.

D. Johnson hated solitude: 'The solitary mortal is certainly luxurious, probably superstitious, and possibly mad.' And yet quiet and peace tend to go with solitude, although to sense full flavour of peaceful quiet, it must be a becalmed island in an ocean of discord. Experience leads me to think that the atmosphere of the Studion (and St. George's) has little to do with solitariness, but rather with a world that is still spiritually very much alive, the life of which has found its consummation and peace in the divine will. And on a lower level, I have found that the solitariness and emptiness of the wilds of Africa, say the sand-dunes by the Indian ocean in remote Tongaland, is depressing if not terrifying, whereas the empty coast-line of Tenos or the naked brown outlines of some name-less islet of the Aegean is like a welcome from a friend and most beautiful when no one else is there. This latter is

in all probability pure subjectivism, but it also has its roots in the sense that these places once shared an intense and beautiful life, of which they remain the unchanging background.

Be that as it may, there is still plenty of life at the monastery. In the first court, in a house meticulously kept by two old ladies, lives the parish priest. Any morning passing by the house you can hear his radio turned on, usually to Athens, but nowadays to the Greek programmes from London. He has a very fine parish church in the middle of the village, with a Roman tombstone let into the wall outside. Within is much magnificence of silver ikons, silver lamps, and hanging candelabra. He himself has the right to wear the pectoral cross and the gnevel of the arch-priest. For some years he was a monk on mount Athos. His parlour is delightful, very small, almost circular, looking through barred windows on to the sea. Many times I went in to pay a visit at the end of the day and take the customary coffee and syrupy jam, while the evening breeze rustled the poplars outside and three or four cats slept round the doorstep and the goats were being given their evening meal.

Then slowly the other centres of life began to sort themselves. The church was the main one. Every morning it would be opened for me to go and say my offices. The orthodox church is not normally open outside times of divine service. The narthex always is, with the ikon of the church on its stand, and usually there are windows which give access by sight to the *naos*. While the doors were open, others would come in—to light a taper or to burn incense before the ikons. Almost weekly there was a holy liturgy. Then everything woke up. The bells began to sound, people to arrive, the many lamps with their floating oil wicks were lighted, and since the curse of electric light had not yet reached this far, many candles performed their original fitting and beautiful service.

The power of entering into the spirit of the divine liturgy of the orthodox church comes for the western churchman by a hard novitiate of growing familiarity with the unfolding of its structure, and with the incomparable richness of its language. For a priest I do not think that it can be fully savoured until he knows something of the secret complexity and integrity of the rite as it is performed within the sanctuary. Nor is it necessary to jump to conclusion that praise of the Oriental rite means a depreciation of our own methods and interpretations. That which both interpret is the *magnum mysterium* of our common faith. But in that

the original rite comes out of a far older, more primitive period of the church's life, and further in that the Christian religion is originally oriental, of this near East, it is reasonable that the orthodox liturgy should bear the marks of being nearer the fountain, both in abundance and in purity. Nevertheless I believe that our public liturgical worship has not yet reached in the English church any fixed unbreakable mould, and that there is a future for its literal re-orientation.

AUSTIN OAKLEY

(to be concluded)

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 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 all correspondence, subscriptions, etc., should be addressed to the Reverend Austin Oakley 63 Ladbroke Grove, London, W.11.