

# EASTERN CHURCHES NEWS - LETTER

*A quarterly publication of the  
Anglican and Eastern Churches Association*

*The General Committee does not hold itself responsible for every  
expression of opinion in the News-Letter*

No. 7

DECEMBER 1956

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## THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL, 1956

All who were present at the Festival of the Association on September 29th, Michaelmas Day, were greatly encouraged by its events. The most notable of these was the presence of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who celebrated the Solemn Eucharist for us at the altar of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Notting Hill. The day was a brilliant and sunny one. His Grace was accompanied by Dr. Jay, his senior Chaplain. After the Creed and a short address from the Chairman of Committee, he came to the chancel steps and spoke to those present. He said that it was not only the duty of his office as Archbishop, but his personal feeling and desire to encourage the close and friendly relations between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches. Nothing, he assured us, in the present political situation should be allowed to hurt or diminish the degree of unity in Our Lord which had already been effected between us. He commended to our prayers in the Eucharist those under persecution and exile who looked to us for comfort and support.

The diocese of London was represented by the Bishop of Kensington, the diocese of Gibraltar by the Commissary Canon Cocup, who attended Bishop Buxton. The Rural Dean of Kensington, Prebendary Eley, was also present, and a number of members of our Committee. The Orthodox Churches were represented by the Bishop of Apameia and

clergy of the Greek Cathedral in Bayswater, by Bishop Mathieu of the Polish Church, the Prot priest M. Nikolich of the Serbian Church, and by representatives of both the Moscow Patriarchate and of the Russian Diaspora. His Grace Mar Josif, uncle of the Assyrian Patriarch, also honoured us with his presence. Archbishop Athenagoras, the Orthodox President of the Association was unavoidably absent on the Continent, and apologies for absence were also received from the Bishop of Gibraltar, the Bishop in Jerusalem, and Bishop Roberts, Secretary of the S.P.G., all vice-presidents.

The Annual General Meeting was held immediately after the Eucharist in the Parish Hall, where after refreshments kindly provided by Greek and English ladies, Canon H. M. Waddams, General Secretary of the Archbishop's Council for Foreign Relations, spoke with his accustomed verve and personal knowledge of the challenge of the present situation in the Near and Middle East in relation to the Orthodox and ourselves.

The Annual General Meeting was presided over by Bishop Buxton. An account of the work of the Association during the past year was given, and a letter from the Treasurer was read, which made it clear that our financial situation was solvent and slowly improving. The Revd. H. R. Stringer was unanimously elected as General Secretary, and expressed his willingness to serve. He comes to the Secretaryship after long knowledge of the working of the Association, both as Assistant Secretary for some years, and during the last year as Acting Secretary. We may be sure that the affairs of the Association are in good hands under his direction. He is vicar of a busy parish in Paddington, but our Secretaries have almost without exception had to combine their work with parochial responsibilities in the Metropolis. The good wishes of all of us go to him in his work.

We thank God for a good Festival, and take heart in these difficult times.

### SOME MEDITERRANEAN FACTS

*(from a correspondent)*

The Mediterranean has in the last few months become the focus of all kinds of problems and difficulties. The mounting of the invasion of Port Said was only the last of a series of events of far-reaching importance. In these events Cyprus has been playing a central part. It is a small island

but it is a place of importance to more than one nation.

It is not for this Newsletter to try to deal with political issues of great complication, but the Association is naturally closely bound up in interest and concern with affairs which deeply involve the Greek Orthodox Churches in that area. Whatever the political complications we believe strongly that the Christian bonds which bind Orthodox and Anglican Christians together are stronger than any temporary divisions of interest or policy. But that does not mean that we should not seek to understand them as best we can, and it is the peculiar duty of this Association, which has many decades of close relations with Orthodox people, to interpret them as best it can to the British people whose background and outlook are so different.

It is with the hope of adding a little to this interpretation that these few lines are written. There is no attempt here to express any political judgement on the Cyprus situation in the sense of either defending or attacking the policies of Her Majesty's Government in the island or with regard to its future. But of one thing all may be assured, namely, that unless the facts are properly known and understood it will be much more difficult to find a lasting settlement, for without knowledge of the facts a lasting settlement could only be the result of a lucky guess.

Some of the facts with which British people ought to be familiar are facts of psychology. And here it is that one must reckon with the Greek spirit. It is of no real use arguing that Cyprus has never been Greek in a technical or legal sense. This may or may not be true, but it makes no difference whatever to the fact that 80% of the people of Cyprus think themselves to be Greek. They speak Greek and think in a Greek way and that is the basic fact about their outlook. No plans which do not take account of such facts as these are likely to succeed, though this does not of course mean that all demands based on Greek claims should necessarily be met.

Nor should the views of the Greeks in Greece be taken to be identical with those published in the Greek press or uttered on the Greek radio. Both kinds of organ in Greece are ridiculously, indeed shamefully unpleasant and misleading about the British in Cyprus. Many Greeks do not like this, and we may be thankful that very many Greeks, perhaps most of them, are deeply friendly to Britain. But they think all the same that the Cypriots ought to be united to Greece if that is their desire. They feel hurt with the British for frustrating this desire, especially in view of the fact that

hitherto the British have always encouraged them to absorb Greek speaking territories and islands in the area, such as the Dodecanese. Again it is not necessary to believe that the Greeks are right in everything they want, but it is necessary to understand their feeling.

During the last war the British took a leading part in encouraging the Greeks to rebel against the foreigners who had control of their land. The British Government trained fighters in the maquis of Greece, and helped them in every way. The Greeks do not equate the British with the Germans, but they find it difficult to understand why one standard applies to them and another to their brother Cypriots. As a result they regard EOKA members, not as wicked murderers, but as national fighters for the freedom of their country. This is a fact which has to be reckoned within in the international complications which follow from the present unhappy position.

The part of the Church in the affair has to be seen in the light of the history of the Orthodox Church of Greece. It was the Church which provided the leaders of the movement which led to the independence of Greece from the Ottoman Empire. Humanly speaking, without the Church there would be no kingdom of Greece today. In a national crisis the Church leaders are expected to fill the part of national leaders and to do the work for which other leaders are not available. Thus the political activities of Archbishop Makarios are not considered improper in any way: on the contrary the Archbishop of Cyprus would be considered as in some way failing in his duty if he did not take the lead in the national struggle.

It must again be stated that this does not mean that the Greeks are right in their views: they may indeed be quite wrong, though this is hardly a matter for complaint from British politicians. What is important is that the facts should be understood and taken into account in trying to find a settlement and in encouraging better understanding between the people involved.

## ANGLICAN AND EASTERN CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

(Irish Branch)

The Annual Meeting of the Irish Branch of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association was held in the Library of the Church of Ireland Training College, by kind permission of the Principal, on November 19th.

In the unavoidable absence of the Lord Archbishop of Armagh, President of the Branch, the Chair was taken by the Lord Bishop of Derry, one of the Vice-Presidents. Many members of the Orthodox Churches were present.

In his report the Hon. Secretary (The Rev. A. E. Stokes, Powerscourt Rectory, Enniskerry) referred to the continuing concern felt by members of the Association at the clouds still overshadowing the many lands in which Orthodoxy finds its home, and he mentioned that the Church of Ireland, through the World Council of Churches, had sent £211 to the Oecumenical Patriarch for the restoration of Churches damaged in last year's riots in Constantinople.

He also referred to the appearance of the Rev. Peter Hammond's book "The Waters of Marah" (Rockliff 21/-), describing the present state of the Greek Church.

The Financial Report was presented by the Hon. Treasurer, Canon J. W. Armstrong, Christ Church Rectory, Leeson Park, Dublin. The adoption of the reports and the re-election of the Committee was proposed by the Very Rev. the Archimandrite Panteleimon Rodopoulos from Athens, who is at present doing a postgraduate course of study at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. In the course of his speech the Archimandrite spoke of the position and nature of the Sacraments in the Orthodox Church, while stressing that much evangelistic work is done, especially among the young. He drew attention to the symbolic element in the Liturgy mentioning that the Church is the Ark of Salvation in which is continued Christ's work as Prophet, Priest and King.

The adoption of the report was seconded by Canon W. E. G. O. Vandeleur who described the recent consecration in London of Bishop James Virvos of Apameia which he attended. He mentioned especially the great shout of "Axios, axios" with which the bishop elect was greeted. He also spoke of the late Canon J. A. Douglas, and the work he did in the Association.

Letters of good wishes to the meeting were read from the Bishop of Apameia and from the Rev. Austin Oakley, Chairman of the General Committee of the Association.

On the morning after the meeting, in the Chapel of the Community of St. John, the Archimandrite celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Many Orthodox resident in Dublin partook of the Sacrament, and the Anglicans present joined with them in the sharing of the unconsecrated bread, the "Antidoron" as a token of fellowship.

The Archimandrite subsequently gave the Sacrament to some infirm Orthodox folk in "The Haven" in Drumcondra.

## A SUMMER IN A LEVANTINE MONASTERY

### II

*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 Kamariotissa 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 capable of restoration.*

A.O.

In our own court-yard lives the sole survival of the religious life, a nun from a Palestinian convent, who is in general charge; for this is a monastery of the Jerusalem patriarchate. There is a degree of freedom and naturalness in the dedicated woman of Orthodoxy that is very refreshing. It may be the result of those far-off days when half the population lived in monasteries. In Greek Imperial times there were nearly four hundred monastic houses on the European side of the Bosphorus alone, to say nothing of the multitude in the city proper. The slopes of Thracian Olympus were peopled with monks, another Athos. These Propontic islands were all monastic, belonging to the monasteries, and to this day at least one exists on each, on this island quite a constellation. The theological college of the Orthodox Church here was and still is a monastery, famous for centuries, before it became a college, for its magnificent library and the learning of its superiors. I used to go to its beautiful seventeenth century chapel for the Sunday Liturgy, usually into the sanctuary itself. Once again, it is the simplicity of the life and ordering of the church that impresses one, for more than once I found there at his devotions and alone, except for the officiating priest, His All-Holiness the Oecumenical Patriarch himself, who usually comes to his apartments at the theological college for his summer vacation from the Phanar. After the Liturgy he would sit beneath the great marble pillars of the entrance to the college that high up, overlooks the beauty and quiet of the islands in the blue Mediterranean sea, to drink coffee and talk.

Set between two low hills at the other side of the island is another monastic building, now after many adventures an orphanage. Here on the Feast of the Falling-asleep of the Panagia I was present in a chapel dating from the fourteenth

century. Near it is the tomb of Sir Edward Barton, English ambassador in the time of Elizabeth, who died at the monastery in 1599 at the surprising age of thirty. On the feast the benefactors of the church are prayed for. The list is headed by John Palaiologos Emperor, and Maria Comnena his wife. Truly God is the God of the living, not of the dead, for they built the two churches that once stood here, and Maria herself beautified the chapel that remains. This, and the church of St. Mary of the Mongols in the Phanar quarter, overlooking the Golden Horn are the only surviving pre-conquest churches still in use, and in which the Holy Liturgy and offices of the church have never ceased. In their humility and poverty they stand for the countless superb churches and shrines, the accumulated riches of the most splendid Christian state the world has yet known. As such their symbolic spiritual meaning is surely unique.

In August the monastery was thrown into a pleasant state of mild excitement by the news that the oecumenical patriarch was paying us a private visit. I think that my frequent appearance in church had at first given cause for comment, not all of it favourable, for the Greek islander is very conservative. But when it was explained that the visitor was an Anglican and not a Roman Catholic, all was well. The patriarch's visit, the first of its kind to foreigners, thawed what reserve remained. On the day itself the church was thrown open, the gates set wide, and the garden stripped of its flowers. In due time the patriarch arrived with his attendants, and after venerating the ikons in the church mounted the stairs to our apartments.

The summer was fleeting and broken this year, and as September drew on, the brilliant days that shone green and gold through the trees into the shady rooms, the bathing from the rocks in the little cove, the peaceful afternoons when the sun glowed on the courtyard and on the sea far below, the quiet evenings when as I returned from a friend's house to hear the news, the cypresses on the drive made a recurrent pattern against the bright stars and the radiance of the moon lay on the still waters — all these were blown away with rain and fierce winds. Then on the last Sunday while we were in the city for the day's services, came the dread rumour of a great fire in the Phanar quarter. I was greeted with the news in the evening on return to the monastery. The state apartments of the Phanar had been burnt down, but without loss of life, and the church and treasury had been spared.

Next morning I paid a visit of condolence. The sight was

a painful and tragic one. Nothing remained of the main buildings but mounds of smoking rubble, twisted iron, and charred wood within the high calcined retaining wall. For nearly three hundred and fifty years the patriarchate has occupied this site, the fourth since the conquest, adapting a convent for nuns that was formerly here. In the palace the Holy Synod met; in the great throne-room with its portraits of the patriarchs (two by El Greco) the patriarch received his guests of honour. Here the Archbishop of Canterbury was received on his historic visit in 1939. Here were completed the great ceremonies of Easter by the second vespers of the feast, when the patriarch was vested in the midst of his metropolitans and went down in procession to the church. All that is vanished now, and nothing remains of the hoarded treasures of so many centuries. But a fierce wind blowing directly across the Golden Horn drove the flames up the steep hill behind the Phanar, and in so doing saved the church, the library, and the treasury on the one side, and the patriarch's private apartments on the other. So the life of the Phanar has been able to go on without a break. The disaster has rallied the Greek population of the city round its spiritual head. All that Sunday thousands of the faithful passed the smoking ruins of their palace with deep sorrow and unashamed tears.

So ended this year's sojourn that had admitted me into so many intimacies of an ancient people and a very gracious way of life that lingers in this quiet corner of the Levant.

*Constantinople 1941*

AUSTIN OAKLEY

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#### BISHOP NIKOLAI APPEAL

We enclose a leaflet concerning the above appeal, and earnestly commend this cause to the generosity of all members.

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**Please note that all correspondence, subscriptions, etc., should be addressed to the Reverend H. R. Stringer, 25 Talbot Road, W.2.**