

# EASTERN CHURCHES NEWS - LETTER

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

*The General Committee does not hold itself responsible for every  
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No. 10 & 11.

DECEMBER 1957

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## CONTENTS:

1. Orthodoxy in the Far North. The Revd. J. R. Satterthwaite.
2. General News.
  - Annual Festival of the Association, Oct. 19th, 1957.
  - Annual Festival of the Irish Branch.
  - Consecration of Bishop Anthony of Sergievo.
  - Lambeth Conference 1958.
  - An Orthodox Church in Uganda.
3. Reviews of Books.
  - "The Great Canon of S. Andrew of Crete."  
Translated by D. J. Chitty.
  - "The Baptism of Art." W. Weidle.
4. Secretary's Announcements.

## ORTHODOXY IN THE FAR NORTH

The Finnish Orthodox Church which before 1939 could claim membership of at least 10% of the entire population of the Country has now no more than 80,000 members — a mere 2% of the whole. Yet it would be a great mistake to think that the little Church which has been reduced so drastically by the trials and sufferings of war should be considered ineffective or a thing of the past. In the Orthodox Church as everywhere in Finland there is immense courage and vitality and a determination to overcome hardships.

Although Finland today is predominantly a Lutheran Country, the Finnish Orthodox Church is still by law the Second Established State Church, and the Orthodox Archbishop as well as the Lutheran Archbishop is appointed by the President of the Republic. Orthodoxy moreover can claim historically to be the original form of Christianity introduced into Finland. Greek and Russian monks were making missionary journeys into the Eastern regions of the land at the beginning of the 11th Century and the monastery of Valamo (on an island in Lake Ladoga) was founded by St. Sergius during the same century. His successor, St. Herman, who was a noted ascetic, was possibly of Karelian origin himself.

Because of its geographical position between " East and West " the history of Finland has been far from a quiet one and Karelia on the eastern border, where the population has been predominantly Orthodox, has suffered more devastation from wars than any other part of the Country. But throughout centuries of strife Orthodox people have always clung to their faith, even during the Reformation when the " western " Christian accepted the new Lutheran Confession. More recently they have had to resist not only the onslaughts of proselytism but also jibes from their fellow Countrymen in periods of tension under Tzarist Suzerainty.

Today the Finnish Orthodox Church can be said to be entirely " Finnish " although it was not until 1892 that Finland was separated from the Russian diocese of St. Petersberg. The end of the 19th Century also saw great activity in the publication of the Liturgy and other works in the Finnish language as Old Slavonic was still the official Church language. Finally in 1918 after the Russian Revolution and the founding of the Finnish Republic the Finnish Orthodox Church declared its autonomy. Great strides were made in the period between the wars in establishing the Church as a National Church. In 1918 not only was the Liturgy authorized to be said in Finnish and the Gregorian calendar adopted

but also a Finnish Seminary was opened by the Government. In 1923 the present Archbishop Herman, who was then an Archpriest in Estonia, was consecrated as Bishop of Karelia by Patriarch Meletios IV in Constantinople, who had recognised the autonomy of the Finnish Church.

Today there are 2 dioceses in Finland: the diocese of Karelia with the Archbishop's seat temporarily at Kuopio, and the new diocese of Helsinki. When Finland was invaded in 1939 the Orthodox Church faced another period of bitter trial and suffering. When the fighting was ended in 1944 it was the Karelian section of Finland which had to be ceded to the U.S.S.R. Thus the Finnish Orthodox Church lost over 90% of her property and more than 2/3rds of her members became either displaced persons or refugees.

Now the work of restoration and rebuilding goes ahead, but with the displacement of the population there are great pastoral difficulties. The Church has less than 40 priests for the entire country. Of the 25 parishes only 13 of them have a proper church whilst the rest have to use temporary buildings, schoolrooms and the like. During 1957 3 new chapels and one more new church were dedicated and 2 more chapels are to be dedicated early this year.

There is a vigorous Youth Movement (Federation of Orthodox Youth) which was begun in the war and has now almost 2,000 enrolled members over the age of 15. The programmes of the Clubs consist most of serious study — the like of which would be difficult to imagine in an ordinary English parish. Each year the Federation celebrates its anniversary on Lady Day by holding a big rally and in Summer there is also a great Youth Camp, part of which has the character of a retreat. There are also many new Sunday Schools and the teachers in these are often drawn from the Fraternity of S.S. Sergius and Herman — an organisation chiefly concerned with Home Missions. Every year each parish is obliged to muster all youths aged 16 for a catechism school which lasts 3 weeks.

The most important event of 1957 was the visit to Finland in May by the Metropolitan Nikolai from Moscow, who came to offer the "hand of peace." At the end of June a delegation of the Finnish Orthodox Church under Bishop Paul (Assistant Bishop of Helsinki) returned a visit to Moscow. As a result official relations have at last been resumed between the two churches, although the Finnish Church has remained under the jurisdiction of Constantinople.

J.R.S.

## GENERAL NEWS

### THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL:

Our annual festival took place this year on Saturday, Oct. 19th, in the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom, Bayswater. As we have learnt to expect, the Association was warmly welcomed at the Greek Cathedral by our Orthodox President Archbishop Athenagoras, who himself celebrated the Divine Liturgy, assisted by the clergy of the Cathedral, in the presence of the Bishop of London, and a large congregation. Bishop Buxton, one of our Vice-Presidents was also present, and a number of Orthodox and Anglican clergy. The beautiful and moving music of the choir made the Divine Liturgy a very splendid one. After the Liturgy there were refreshments, and a film of "Greece in Spring," by the kindness of the Greek Information Office, delighted all that saw it with pictures of a land that is perhaps the most beautiful of all the Near East in its brief and luxuriant flowering. We were also shown a film of the Yugoslav Exhibition at the Tate Gallery that was held last year. At the Annual Meeting that followed, at which Prebendary Gage Brown took the chair, the Treasurer of the Association gave us the good news of a substantial legacy lately left by Miss Skelton, which will enable us to continue and extend our work, particularly in view of whatever we may be able to do during the coming Lambeth Conference, and also help us to provide the Secretary with much needed help in office work. Our thanks are due especially to the Bishop of London, who found time to be with us as our new President at the Liturgy and to our hosts at the Greek Cathedral.

### THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF THE IRISH BRANCH OF THE ASSOCIATION:

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, Dublin, by kind permission of the Principal, on November 18th.

The Chair was taken by the President of the Association, His Grace the Archbishop of Armagh, C.H., D.D., and among those who were present was the Bishop of Derry. The attendance included many members of the Orthodox Churches.

In his report the Hon. Secretary (the Rev. A. E. Stokes, Powerscourt Rectory, Enniskerry) mentioned that the most important single event this year in the relations between

Anglicanism and Orthodoxy was the erection of the Anglican Archbishopric in Jerusalem. He also noted that at the Lambeth Conference a group of Bishops under the Bishop of Oxford are to study relationships between Anglicans and Orthodox.

The Financial Report was presented by the Hon. Treasurer (Canon J. W. Armstrong, Christ Church Rectory, Dartmouth Road, Leeson Park, Dublin) who reported a Balance in hand of £20 os. 8d. He appealed for Subscriptions for a Fund to provide religious facilities at the new Hostel for Orthodox Refugees at St. Andrew's, Rathgar.

The adoption of the Reports and the re-election of the Committee was proposed by the Very Rev. Archimandrite Anthony Bloom, the Vicar of the Russian Orthodox Church of Our Lady and All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, London. He spoke of the revival of Monasticism in the churches today, even among the Reformed Churches of France and Switzerland, and he posed the question as to whether monasticism has an essential meaning in the Church.

He pointed out that in the Holy Scripture the Kingdom of God is usually expressed in terms of the Marriage Feast. Love attains its highest quality when each exists for the other. The Bride forsakes all to follow the Bridegroom, for we must love with a love that is akin to death. Monasticism means forsaking and disowning. A given individual as a member of Christ's body leaves all things that are perfectly legitimate, because God on earth is still a wanderer. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Some choose the mystery of marriage, others choose Christ's pilgrimage.

Monasticism IS contrary to earthly things, because we live in a world which has become disharmonious.

The Archimandrite referred to the threefold vow of the monk, poverty, chastity and obedience, but stressed that underlying them is the vow of Stability, which is an affirmation of the fact that God is to be found wherever you may be, for we must go deep to find him.

The adoption of the Report was seconded by the Rev. W. I. O. McDonald, who pointed out that the Irish Church can receive a good deal from Orthodoxy. He mentioned the personal evangelical note in the religion of the Orthodox. Referring to the Archimandrite's speech, he mentioned that the monastic ideal, by giving us the alternative vocation, can give us a deeper understanding of the vocation to marriage.

The Archbishop in thanking the Archimandrite for his visit stressed the importance of the Anglican and Eastern

Churches Association. "We live among an overwhelming majority who have succeeded in completely eradicating from people's minds the existence of the great Orthodox Church in the East. It is necessary to remember that something much more ancient than the Roman Church, in its present form, exists, with a continuity that cannot be spoken of by the Roman Church."

The Archbishop appealed to people to study the Eastern Orthodox Church, and drew to their attention the Rev. C. B. Moss' book on the Second Council of Nicaea. He also mentioned two talks on the Orthodox Church given recently on the B.B.C. third programme by the Rev. P. Hammond.

Among those who apologised for their absence from the meeting were the Archbishop of Dublin, the Regius Professor of Divinity, Professor W. B. Stanford, and the Dean of Ferns.

Earlier on the day of the meeting the Archimandrite had celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Chapel of the Community of St. John. At this service there was a large attendance, both of Anglicans and Orthodox, both Greek and Russian.

On St. Andrew's Day, the Archimandrite is to be consecrated a Bishop by the Russian Archbishop in Paris, assisted by the Greek Bishop in London, Bishop James Virvos of Apameia. At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting the Bishop-elect asked members of the Association to remember him in their prayers on that occasion.

#### THE CONSECRATION OF BISHOP ANTHONY OF SERGIEVO:

Within the last year we in London here have had the unique opportunity of being present at the first two consecrations of Orthodox Bishops in this country. Last autumn the Provost of the Greek Cathedral was consecrated Bishop of Apameia, and suffragan to the Exarch in Europe of the Oecumenical Patriarchate. Those who witnessed that ceremony, in the presence of the Primate of All England and a great number of Orthodox hierarchs, are not likely to forget the solemnity of the occasion, an account of which appeared in the Newsletter last year. On October 19th, Father Anthony Bloom, the parish priest of the parish in London of the Moscow Patriarchate, was consecrated in the Church of Our Lady and All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, by the Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Paris, Archbishop

Nicholas, and Bishop James of Apameia. The Archbishop of Canterbury was represented by the Bishop of Fulham, and the Bishop of London by the Bishop of Kensington. The "Sobor" of attendant clergy numbered ten, and the very handsome Church, lent to the Russian congregation by the Diocese of London was full. The long and magnificent rite was followed by a small reception by the newly consecrated Bishop, held in his house in Ennismore Gardens. The last Newsletter gave some account of Fr. Anthony's work here, and his work for reunion between Eastern and Western Christians. A special feature of this consecration was the use of microphones, which made it possible for those outside the Holy Bema to hear almost every word of the Rite, as well as of the Liturgy within which it took place. We offer our felicitations to the new Bishop, who is a member of our Committee, and all that the work of his high office implies.

#### THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE OF 1958:

The Lambeth Conference will open early in July of 1958. We hope that we shall be able as an Association to hold a Reception for the Orthodox delegates to the Conference, and those who are interested in our work of liaison. The date of this will be announced in the next Newsletter, and the character of the Reception expects to be similar to that held before the last Lambeth Conference, when our two Presidents welcomed their guests and friends at the Old Hall, Lincoln's Inn.

#### AN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN UGANDA:

(By kind permission of "Syndesmos," September 1957.)

In the depth of the African continent, in Central Africa, lies my distant homeland. It is very likely that many people in Greece are not even aware of its existence. Nevertheless it is a land of vitality and of considerable potentialities. Furthermore its men of learning hold Greece and Orthodox Christianity in the highest esteem.

As proof of this we have on the one hand the fact that in Uganda there exists an Orthodox Church which was not established by missionaries, and on the other hand the fact that there is at this very moment a group of Baganda students matriculating at the University of Athens. These students are guests of the Theological Boarding House sponsored by the Apostolic Diaconate of the Church of Greece.

These facts clearly express the feeling of admiration and love which my compatriots have for Orthodoxy and for the superb Hellenic spirit.

Uganda is a land of approximately 243,410 square kilometres in area. Its population, according to a recent census, is about five million. Its capital is Kampala, and it is a British Protectorate. Two-thirds of the inhabitants are Christians. They are mainly Protestants and Catholics, because it was they who undertook, through missionaries and by various other political means, the task of teaching and establishing Christianity in that land.

If the circumstances in which Christianity entered Uganda are indeed strange and arouse one's curiosity, then the manner in which the first Orthodox church was established there is truly remarkable. The history of the former is well known. In this article we shall examine how Orthodoxy, in her turn, entered Uganda.

Orthodoxy became known in my country considerably later, and in a unique and wonderful manner. Under the influence of the Christian spirit the country began a slow but steady cultivation of learning and advance in education. This, of course, was done in English, and with the passing of time many of the natives acquired a rather comprehensive general education. Amongst these was Rauben Sebanja, a man of exceptional capabilities. Amongst other things that he had studied was the history of the Christian Church, and there he saw, much to his surprise, that Protestantism and Roman Catholicism were basically schismatic churches. He began to investigate and study with added zeal. Of special interest to him was an article entitled "Orthodoxy" in one of the English dictionaries. His enthusiasm as a result of his studies was indeed great. Like another Archimedes he ran out into the streets shouting "I have found, I have found!"\* "I am no longer a Protestant," he continued, "but an Orthodox!"

This event, on the one hand because of its unusual character and on the other hand because of the exceptional personality of the man, created a considerable stir. The white missionaries advised the natives to pay no attention to what this man had to say. In spite of the various reactions Rauben Sebanja, who had in the meantime taken the name of Spartas on account of his great admiration for the ancient Spartan civilisation, created an Orthodox nucleus. It was absolutely essential, however, in the circumstances, to estab-

\* Eureka! Eureka!

lish contact with the Orthodox Church before they could organise themselves officially.

At last, after many attempts, they were able to contact Bishop Daniel William Alexander, who was at that time on tour in Tanganyika. The Bishop came to Uganda officially in 1932, and when he had taught them he ordained, on May 22nd, two priests, two deacons, and four readers from among the natives. Of these Rauben Sebanja, or the Reverend Father Spartas, the founder of the Orthodox movement in our country, was given the title of Vicar General of the Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika African Catholic Orthodox Church. He still bears this title today. Thus in 1932 the first Orthodox Church in Central Africa was founded. This Church was destined to encounter many more obstacles and difficulties.

The first great tribulation that this Church experienced was that of discovering that Bishop Alexander, who had catechised the natives of Uganda, was not himself a member of the true Orthodox Church. One of the Greek immigrant citizens of Uganda, Mr. Vrachos, one day invited the Bishop to baptise his young sons. Much to his surprise he realised that the sacrament of baptism as celebrated by the Bishop differed greatly from the rite with which he was familiar. Not long afterwards it was definitely confirmed that Bishop Alexander was a Uniate.

This was indeed a great blow for the newly established Church. However they did not loose their hope and zeal on account of it. On the recommendation of this same Mr. Vrachos they invited the Reverend Father Nicodemus Sarichas, an archimandrite of the Greek Orthodox Church who was at the time in Kenya, to visit them. He came very willingly, and visited the new community for the first time on June 13th, 1933. He was the first Greek Orthodox priest ever to come into contact with the Orthodox Church of Uganda. His influence and presence were undoubtedly most beneficial and constructive. Among the many things which he told the community was the fact that their Church would be under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

In 1942 His Eminence Nicholas, Metropolitan of Axum, paid the first official visit to our country. He was the first Archbishop to visit Uganda. Ten years later, in 1952, Uganda, and other countries of Central Africa, were visited by His Beatitude Christopher, Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa. It was at this time that His Beatitude expressed the wish that in addition to any material aid that might be offered to our Church, students from Uganda should be sent

to Greece, to study Orthodoxy at first hand. Our presence here is proof that this was effected.

Today the jurisdiction of our Church of Uganda extends throughout Central Africa, comprising Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika. It is noteworthy that Orthodox activity in Kenya has recently been considerable. It is not at all unusual, in some areas, to find Orthodox churches every hundred yards.

There are at present about 20,000 Orthodox Christians in Uganda. This number could undoubtedly be much greater if there was an organised Orthodox Mission in these areas, because many Africans in Central Africa love Orthodoxy very much. Unfortunately however the people there have been abandoned, for there are only two priests for the whole of Uganda. The Vicar General, the Reverend Father Spartas, is over 65 years old. The Vice-Vicar, the Reverend Obadiah, is also of the same age. Both are genuine missionaries, doing everything in their power, but it is insufficient.

It is necessary, therefore, for the Orthodox Church throughout the world to come to the assistance of such a sacred and important undertaking. The results of a well organised Orthodox mission in these remote areas of Africa would be indeed startling. It is an indubitable fact that new horizons and a bright future await Orthodoxy in these lands; it is only necessary for her to realise this fully. We are ready and willing to do anything and everything for the sake of Christ and His Glory.

Theodore Nankyamas.

(Member of the African Orthodox Church of Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika, and student at the Theological Faculty of the University of Greece.)

#### REVIEWS

**THE GREAT CANON.** A poem of Saint Andrew of Crete. Recited during some of the Lenten Offices of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Translated by D. J. Chitty and published by the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. London 1957. 3/6.

As the translator of this welcome Poem explains in his introduction, the Great Canon is sung in its entirety during Mattins of the Fifth Thursday in Lent, and in four parts at Compline on the first four days of Lent.

Written in the latter half of the seventh century by a monk of the Great Lavra of S. Sabbas in the Judaeen

Wilderness, known as St. Andrew of Crete, this great liturgical composition marks a new type of hymnody in the Orthodox Church. The older type of "starkly Scriptural and ascetic ideal of the monastic office" gave way to the Kontakion, originally a farcing by Troparia of the Scriptural Canticles from the Song of Moses to the Magnificat and Benedictus. In time, the Troparia, with a short sentence before each began to be used by themselves, and to form an independent Poem. Such is the character of this "Great Canon."

It is a very lovely compendium of the economy of our salvation throughout the gamat of the Old and New Testament. The translation flows with ease, and apart from its liturgical value, it is capable of devotional use. There are one or two linguistic solecisms, but the task of a translator of a composition of this length should allow of some license.

It is to be hoped that this liturgical work will take its place beside the great Akathist Hymn, with which many of us are familiar. We need to learn to interpret the Bible by the Bible itself in the light of the supreme revelation of Our Lord. A.O.

THE BAPTISM OF ART. Wladimir Weidlé. Dacre Press, Westminster. 3/6.

These "Notes on the Religion of the Catacomb Paintings" is written by the Professor of the History of Christian Art at the Russian Theological Academy in Paris, and is of interest and importance quite beyond its size. It is also well-illustrated.

Until comparatively recently, with few exceptions, the worship and prayer of Christians of the first three centuries was taken for granted to be rudimentary of later and more developed forms. It has come as a surprise to accepted opinions that it had its own content and form, differing widely from what followed. This is illustrated not only in early Christian literature, but in the art forms, both funerary, as in the Catacombs, but also in the few precious examples of domestic chapel art, that have been discovered of late years, not only on the Euphrates at Dura-Europus but here in this country. But it is with the Catacombs that this study is primarily concerned.

It is pointed out that Christian art of these early times still uses the ordinary forms of Greco-Roman art common to the ancient world. It is the particular quality of the Christian use of it that is important. It is of no high quality, indeed it

has the modest character of great humility, and is strictly practical and allusive. Professor Weidlé calls it felicitously "signitive." The barest outline of a figure or a sketched-in scene is intended to recall to the mind of the beholder the great Mystery of his redemption and new life. One ventures to add to this, the strong element of a secret language, known only to the initiate. For one of the outstanding contributions of this study is its insistence on the over-ruling part played in the early centuries of life in the Christian Church of the Rites of Initiation by which the convert was made a Christian, baptism, chrismation and eucharist. But more than that, before a sacramental system was stereotyped, the great "sacramentum," Baptism, which overshadowed and gave tone to the rest. The great eucharist, the indelible and unrepeatable occasion, was that which followed, after anointing, the baptism of the neophyte. Indeed it may be said that every weekly Eucharist partook of the character of the baptismal eucharist, the synaxis taking the place of the primal baptism and chrismation. This at least is the recurring theme of the catacomb scenes. The later separation of the sacraments is still in germ; and this is amply corroborated by the contemporary literature.

By the "Baptism of Art" the author would have us understand that the humble, mortified art of the early centuries, which indeed can hardly be termed art at all, was the sending down deep into the spiritual life of the church of those roots that appeared as the subsequent age-long flowering of Christian creative art which began with the age of Constantine and the Peace of the Church. "What was accomplished, in those years of self-denial and concentration on the baptismal mystery, was the veritable baptism of art." A.O.

#### SECRETARY'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. SUBSCRIPTIONS. Many members have not paid their subscriptions for some considerable time. Nevertheless the News Letter has been sent to them, and we are reluctant to delete their names from our list. To all whom it may concern, please let us your subscription as soon as you can, and so help us to maintain our work.

2. LOCAL MEETINGS. The Association is willing to provide speakers on Eastern Christendom for both large and small groups of people — of parishes or societies. For information apply to the General Secretary.

3. NEWS LETTER. By an unfortunate oversight, we

are completely 'out' of No. 5 of the News Letter — for May 1956. If any members still have this copy, and have no special further use for it, would they kindly send it to the Secretary?

THE ANGLICAN AND EASTERN 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 H. R. Stringer, St. Stephen's Vicarage, 25, Talbot Road, London, W.2.