

EASTERN CHURCHES

News Letter

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

No. 61 SEPTEMBER 1971

PRICE 15p TO NON-MEMBERS

CONTENTS

Editorial

A Visit to Rumania

Christians in Iran

The Church of Russia

News and Causerie

*No responsibility can be accepted either by the General Committee or by the Editor
for the views expressed by contributors*

**THE ANGLICAN AND EASTERN CHURCHES
ASSOCIATION**

founded in 1864

Orthodox Patron:

The Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I

Anglican Patron:

The Archbishop of Canterbury

Anglican President:

The Bishop of London

Orthodox President:

Archbishop Athenagoras of Thyateira

Chairman of Committee:

The Revd. H. R. T. BRANDRETH, O.G.S.

General Secretary:

The Revd. P. J. MASON,
The Rectory, Stoke Newington Church Street, London N16 9ES

Treasurer:

Editor of News-Letter:

The Revd. HAROLD EMBLETON, R.N.

ANNUAL FESTIVAL 1971

SATURDAY, 16TH OCTOBER 1971

The Divine Liturgy

will be celebrated in the Greek Cathedral, Moscow Road,
London, W.2.
at 11.30 o'clock

H. E. Archbishop Athenagoras of Thyateira & Great Britain will
preside.

Buffet Lunch

will be provided for those who order it in advance from the General
Secretary: price 35p.

Afternoon Meeting

at 2.00 p.m.

Speaker:

The Most Revd. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

The Annual General Meeting

will take place immediately after the Afternoon Meeting

EDITORIAL

On the day that this issue was going to the printer, the news of John Ullmer's death reached me; and in the absence of a proper obituary notice, which will appear in our next number, it falls to me to pay tribute to his memory.

John served the Association well; and I, for one, owe him an enormous debt of gratitude: he never ignored any appeal for assistance, and was always instant in his response when asked for advice. He will not easily be replaced as Treasurer; but his memory, as a friend and as a devoted servant of the Association, will outlive his generation.

"Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon him."

* * *

The forthcoming 25th centenary celebrations in Iran (Persia) give us an opportunity to consider the tiny Christian minority in that country—not least the Assyrians, that most persecuted of Churches, under their Patriarch, Mar Ishai Shimun XXIII.

Dr. Mascall's account of his visit to Romania this year reminds us of a Church which has made, and continues to make, so great a contribution to the cause of Orthodox/Anglican relations. The Patriarch Justinian is one of the truly great figures in the Christian Church today; and Fr. Vintila Popescu, whose recent death we record, was a worthy representative of his Church. We should thank God for the Romanian Church's contributions in the ecumenical field; and we should pray earnestly for them, in the peculiar circumstances which their nation's unique course will impose upon them.

* * *

Finally, the Editor thanks all those who send him news and information, as well as those who offer their (usually constructive!) criticisms; and he is very grateful, too, for the encouragement of many kind words—the latest being from Dr. Robert Stephanopoulos, Director of the Inter-Church Relations Office of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of N. and S. America.

RUMANIA REVISITED

When, at the invitation of the Patriarch Justinian and with the encouragement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, I was asked to visit Rumania this spring to give lectures in the Theological Institute of Bucharest and Sibiu, I accepted with eagerness. My only previous visit was in 1937, when Fr. Christopher Waddams and I, having spent most of our summer holiday in Austria and Hungary, concluded it with eight crowded days in Bucharest, Chisinau and Cernauti. Many things, including the Second World War, have happened since then. With the incorporation of Bessarabia and the Bukvina into the Soviet Union Chisinau and Cernauti are no longer under the Rumanian flag, and Rumania itself, which in 1937, under King Carol II, had only just emerged from the quasi-Fascist regime of the Iron Guard, has become the Socialist Republic of Rumania with an avowedly communist basis. I was therefore prepared, after thirty-three years, to find many changes, and indeed I did. Not only is the country provided with a steadily increasing number of first-class roads—in 1937 even the main roads were deep in dust in summer and mud in winter—but in town and village alike houses and apartment blocks are being built in vast quantities and industrial expansion is evident on every side. The impression one receives is of a hard-working and prosperous community, almost entirely free from the disputes and frustrations which so depressingly greeted me on my return to England. Much no doubt remains to be done in Rumania as elsewhere, but much has been and is being done.

To a visitor the Rumanian Church—which is, of course, one of the autonomous national churches which together make up the Holy Orthodox Church of the East—presents many surprises. It is the only part of the Orthodox Church whose culture and language are, as the name of the country implies, derived from Rome and from Latinity; much of Rumania is the ancient Dacia. I was told that in consequence, Rumanian theology treads a middle path between the intellectualism of the Greeks and the mysticism of the Slavs; not being able to read Rumanian I cannot pass judgment on this claim. Then, the Rumanian Church appears to be the only Christian body in the world today in which the number of ordinands has not fallen in the last few years but has spectacularly increased; monasteries and convents too are abundant and well filled. Finally it is astonishing in a communist country to find that the Church is not only tolerated but is accepted as one of the great—indeed the greatest—historical institutions of the nation; at Curtea de Arges the former royal palace is now a flourishing seminary for late vocations to the priesthood. Much of this is no doubt to be attributed to the skill and tact of the present Patriarch Justinian, who is indeed a most impressive person. Formerly a married parish priest, he

became a monk after the death of his wife and was elected to the Patriarchate in 1948.

As the primary purpose of my visit was theological I decided to present, both at Bucharest and at Sibiu, three of the chapters of my book *The Christian Universe* as examples of contemporary Anglican theological thought. These had been translated into Rumanian by Fr. Lucian Gafton, the Rumanian priest in London, and were read for me by professors in the two institutes. They were followed by discussions with the professors and students and appeared to be appreciated. I myself certainly found the discussions most profitable.

It is almost impossible to describe the lavishness of the hospitality and the constant attention which I received. At Bucharest I was given the guest suite in the patriarchal palace; at Sibiu I stayed in the metropolitanate and was entertained by the Metropolitan-Archbishop himself. Two English-speaking members of the Foreign Relations department of the Patriarchate, Fr. Bria and Mr. Remus Rus, accompanied me everywhere in Bucharest and I had several meetings with the Patriarch's auxiliaries, Bishops Antim Nica and Antonie Plamadeala. The latter was consecrated in November 1970 and is the youngest of the Rumanian bishops; he studied for his doctorate with the Jesuits at Heythrop College and is coming to London for his final examination this summer—a remarkable example of ecumenism!

The day after my arrival was the Feast of the Annunciation and I attended a splendid liturgy celebrated by the Patriarch in his cathedral. During the next few days I was taken to see the Church's publishing and printing works and the factories of church vestments and other requisites. On the Saturday afternoon I was taken by Bishop Antonie to the monastery of Cernica, which I had seen on my previous visit; it is situated in a lovely position some miles from the capital and is a very popular place for week-end outings as well as being a centre of spiritual direction. It contains the relics of the recently canonised abbot St. Calinic. Among its more aged monks is Bishop Tit Simearea whom I met when he visited England before the war and who came to evensong at St. Andrew's Stockwell where I was then a deacon.

On the Sunday I said mass in the Anglican Church and then travelled by train overnight to Sibiu with Dr. Chitescu, one of the lay professors at Bucharest. At Sibiu we were met by the Director of the Theological Institute there, Fr. Todoran, and were taken to the Metropolitanate for a welcome bath and breakfast. Sibiu, in Transylvania, is the former Hermannstadt and shows many traces of its former German-Austrian dominance. In contrast to Walachia, where the houses are almost invariably open to view and even the smallest have delightful verandahs, the houses in Transylvania have high walls with wide, and almost always closed,

gateways. The Metropolitan, Nicolae Mladin, is young and vigorous. On the Wednesday morning he took me to the Lenten Liturgy of the Presanctified in his cathedral; it lasted a good two hours and the singing of the choir was superb. At the end I was asked to say a few words, which I did with the aid of an interpreter. Even more impressive was the evening service the same day, in which the large cathedral choir in the gallery was supplemented by over two hundred students in the body of the church, producing an effect both unforgettable and indescribable. There was a very large congregation and the devotion with which they stood or knelt, apparently unconscious of the passage of time, was quite remarkable and put the poor Western visitor to shame.

One afternoon the Metropolitan took me in his car to the monastery to which he himself had belonged, an exquisite place under the Carpathians, the monastery of Brancoveanu at Simbata de Sus. One of its specialities is the painting of icons on glass and I was given a very beautiful example of this work. Another day I was taken to the village of Rasinari, the former residence of the Metropolitans; it has two churches, one glowing with ancient frescos, the other resplendent with modern work in the neo-Byzantine style which has fortunately superseded the sentimental style of the nineteenth century.

From Sibiu I was driven through the valley of the Olt, which cuts through the Carpathians and provides the most lovely mountain scenery. Our destination was the town of Rimnicul Vulcea, whose bishop, like the Patriarch, a widower, is the father of the Rumanian priest in London, Fr Lucian Gafton. Bishop Josef is a magnificent white-bearded figure of seventy-five, full of vigour and enthusiasm. On the way to Rimnic we stopped at the monastery of Cozia, half-way along the valley. It overhangs the river, thus furnishing a most wonderful view; its chief work is the running of a hospital for diseases of the liver and kidneys.

From Rimnic I was driven to Curtea de Arges, one of the early capitals of Walachia. The church was built in the early sixteenth century by Prince Neagoe Basarab and contains the graves of a number of princes. Architecturally it is a perfect gem, not very large but perfectly proportioned, ornamented with a variety of different harmonising carvings and with the most elaborate and ingeniously disposed columns. Of equal interest is the older royal church some distance away, which had become ruinous but is now being restored; the director of the restoration showed us, covered with a glass sheet, the open tomb containing the vested and crowned skeleton of one of the early princes. Altogether Curtea de Arges is a delightful town which has preserved its ancient atmosphere quite remarkably.

At Curtea de Arges I was met by Bishop Antonie, who had motored from Bucharest that morning. On the way back he took me to see three most interesting places. The first was Tirgoviste, another

of the ancient capitals, where there are ruins of a great castle with cavernous dungeons, now converted into a museum. The second was Dealu, a monastery far up in the hills, which has been made into a home for ailing monks and priests; the third was Viforita, which has been made into a similar home for nuns and priests' widows. Both these institutions are due to the initiative of the present Patriarch. They are staffed by nuns who are qualified nurses, and I was most impressed by the admirable arrangements in both. The rooms were well heated and cheerfully furnished, with such modern conveniences as television. It was moving to hear the quavering voices of the old men greeting the bishop with the same melodies that, a few hours earlier, I had heard from the powerful voices of over a hundred seminarians at Arges.

We arrived at Bucharest late on Saturday night. The following day Bishop Antonie took me to the convent of Tiganesti some miles outside the city. This was his first visit since his consecration and he celebrated the Liturgy there for the community. The added ceremonial for a bishop and the long slow hymns of the monastic rite stretched out the Liturgy for more than three hours, but I can honestly say that after the first hour I was almost unconscious of the flow of time as the other-worldly atmosphere of the service took hold of me. There were two sermons, one by the nuns' chaplain after the Gospel and the other by the Bishop after the end of the Liturgy. The Bishop concluded his discourse with some kind words about me, to which I made, I hope, an appropriate reply. After lunch and a brief, but very welcome siesta, we went to the monastery of Caldarusani several miles away.

In some respects Caldarusani struck me as the most beautiful of the monasteries which I visited. The atmosphere of peace was extraordinarily intense; it must be a wonderful place for a retreat. Like Cernica it is by the side of a lake, and indeed a very large lake, which almost encircles it and is, I was told, replete with fish—an important amenity for a monastery. The museum contains treasures that are almost priceless. Altogether, Caldarusani formed a perfect climax to my tour. The following afternoon, after a morning's shopping and a final visit to Bishop Antonie, I returned to England from Octopeni airport in a Trident Three of B.E.A.

This article must, I fear, read rather like a catalogue, but even as a catalogue it is incomplete. I have, for example, said nothing about the fascinating Village Museum in Bucharest, where there are assembled peasants' houses from every part of the country. The most vivid and memorable impressions which I received would require for their description a more subtle and evocative pen than mine. The exquisite beauty of much of the countryside and of the villages and monasteries which nestle among the trees and in the folds of the hills, the delightful and unrestrained welcome which I received from

everyone from the Patriarch downwards, in episcopal palaces, monasteries and the homes of married parish priests alike, the evidence which I saw of the practical efficiency with which the Orthodox Church is tackling the pastoral problems of the new housing areas which are springing up on the outskirts of the rapidly expanding industrial cities—all these gave the impression of a church which, while firmly rooted in the past and in the history of the people which it serves, is deeply conscious of the needs and challenges of the modern world and, in spite of its enclosed geographical situation, is eager to meet Christians from other countries and sincerely concerned with Christendom as a whole. Two things in particular impressed me greatly. The first is the way in which the Rumanian monasteries and convents are catering for the active and contemplative aspects of the religious life, without any sense of conflict between them; partly, no doubt, this is due to the fact that, in the Orthodox Church, there is not the differentiation of religious communities and orders to which we are accustomed in the West, each with its particular object and ethos, but simply one tradition of the religious life which is infinitely adaptable to the gifts and vocation of each individual. The second is the astonishing way (though perhaps it ought not to astonish us!) in which the Rumanian Church, like other Orthodox churches, combines great splendour and dignity in its worship with complete naturalness and informality on the part of all taking part in it; this is not entirely absent in the West but it does not come at all easily to English people. In the Orthodox Church, perhaps more than anywhere else in Christendom, one has the sense of the family of God meeting in their Father's house to celebrate the fact of their redemption and even in the long Lenten services the note of joy dominates everything else.

My contacts with the Eastern Orthodox Church go back over forty years, to the winter of 1927 when I went to an Anglo-Russian student conference at St. Albans. More recently, since the developments that have followed Vatican II, my ecumenical interests have expanded into other fields. It was therefore both profitable and delightful to be given this fresh opportunity of rekindling my concern with the Holy Orthodox Church of the East, and I am grateful to all who made it possible.

E. L. Mascall

(This article has been reprinted with permission from the *Graham Street Quarterly*.)

OBITUARY

FATHER VINTILA POPESCU

The Right Reverend Bishop John Satterthwaite, Anglican Bishop of Fulham and Gibraltar, pays the following tribute to Father Vintila Popescu, who died in Romania on 30th July, 1971.

Friends in England of Father Vintila Popescu have learned with regret of his death in Romania on 30th July after a long illness.

Immediately on hearing the news, the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Dr. Michael Ramsey, sent a telegram of condolence to Mrs. Popescu, his English-born widow. When, in December 1964, Father Popescu was sent to England to re-found a Romanian Orthodox Parish here, he was appointed also the personal representative of His Beatitude Patriarch Justinian to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

I first met Father Popescu in 1959 during my own first visit to the Romanian Orthodox Church, when he quickly became not only my guide and interpreter but also my friend. In 1962 Father Popescu returned to England on his first visit for 25 years, when in 1937 he had attended the Anglican "Life and Work" Conference in Oxford. During the previous year he had become known to the hierarchy of the Anglican Church when he interpreted at the very successful Anglo-Romanian Orthodox talks in Bucharest in 1936. The agreement reached between the two Churches then was republished in Bucharest on the eve of the visit to England in June 1966 of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

In 1956, after a twenty-year break, Father Popescu had resumed his contacts with the Anglican Church when in that year he was in attendance when my predecessor Thomas Craske, Bishop of Gibraltar, called on Patriarch Justinian in Bucharest.

For many years previously Father Popescu had been a Professor of Theology at the Institute of Theology in Bucharest, after teaching in the Seminary in Arad. He was ordained priest in November 1964, prior to his arrival in London the following month to re-found the Romanian Orthodox Parish in England.

In June 1965 he accompanied the Archbishop of Canterbury on his visit to Romania at the invitation of the Patriarch and, during the Patriarch's visit to England the following year, Father Popescu was in prominent attendance.

During his five years in England, before his return to Romania on 2nd August 1969, Father Popescu worked devotedly to build up the Romanian Orthodox Parish of St. George and faithfully served his parishioners. He enthusiastically took part in the developing ecumenical contacts both with the Anglican Church and other Churches.

He founded and edited an excellently produced Parish Journal, "Altarul". It was through his initiative, and with the approval of both the Patriarch of Romania and the Primate of All England that in the Anglican Church of St. Dunstan-in-the-West in the City of London, which the Bishop of London had placed at the disposal of the Romanian Orthodox Church, first to him and then to his successor, Father Lucian Gafton, that today there exists a unique symbol of Anglican/Orthodox relations: this is the placing side by side in the same Church of the Reserved Sacrament, consecrated according to the rites respectively of the Orthodox Church and the Church of England. It is also during Father Popescu's term of office in London that there was erected in the same Anglican-Romanian Church of St. Dunstan, the iconostasis from the Romanian Orthodox Monastery of St. Antim in Bucharest, sent by Patriarch Justinian as a gift to the Romanian Orthodox Parish in London.

To his English friends, not least to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Father Popescu was known affectionately as "Father Pop." It is with affection that we remember him and his widow in our prayers and it is with affection that we shall continue to remember him for what he was as a person, and what he did, both in the service of his own Orthodox Church and in the service of Romanian Orthodox/Anglican relations. May he rest in peace.

John,
Bishop of Fulham and Gibraltar

IRAN'S CHURCHES LIGHT 2500 CANDLES

In October Iran, the husky continuation of the once vaster Persian Empire, begins the celebration of its 2,500th birth year. It is natural that the Christian communions should have a lively part. Individually and through the Interchurch Centenary Committee they will initiate lecture series, films, broadcasts and commemorative services.

Although they constitute less than 1% of the population of this officially Muslim country, the 204,000 Christians feel identified with its entire 25 centuries of history. Its founder was Cyrus, whom Isaiah 45 hailed as the Lord's Anointed and Ezra 6 honored for his broad-gauge religious outlook. Esther became queen—and Daniel had his visions—at its winter palace in Shushan. And biblical theology owes such concepts as paradise, Satan and the heaven-sent son of Man to Persian sources.

Bishop Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, chairman, indicates that the Interchurch Centenary Committee also plans to emphasize New Testament ties. After all, the Wise Men who came to Jesus' manger were presumably from Iran. And the Parthians, Medes and Elamites who heard the Disciples at Pentecost would today call themselves Iranians.

Paul Seto, director of Armaghan Institute here, points out that the committee (of which he is the secretary) includes at least two bodies whose traditions date back to New Testament times: the Ancient Church of the East and the Armenian Apostolic.

THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF THE EAST

This church, which claimed Persian kings among its members in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, had 25 bishops as far back as the second century. Some authorities believe that the ruins of the Matmari church in Rezaieh are from apostolic times.

Eusebius, "Father of Church History", credited Saints Addai and Thomas as the first to evangelize among the Parthians. Addai he identified with the Thaddaeus of Matt. 10:3. Thomas was, of course, the "Doubter" who became the first to confess Christ's divinity (John 20:28).

The subsequent Ancient Church of the East, which sprang up in territory alternately controlled by Assyria and Persia, is also called Assyrian. Because it was enlarged by a fifth century influx of the followers of Nestorius (who stressed the manhood of Jesus), it is popularly known as "Nestorian". At its zenith it established vigorous missions in Arabia, India, China, Siberia, Mongolia, Korea and Japan.

Of its present 160,000 members, over 140,000 live outside Iran. Their strength in the western United States led their Patriarch, Mar Ishai Shimun XXIII, to make San Francisco his headquarters. Bishop Khenanya Mar Dinkha bears a major portion of the administrative responsibility for those still in Iran.

They use neither paintings nor sculpture as aids to worship. Their only symbol of faith is a cross above the simple altar. Laymen share in leading the worship which is conducted in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. At communion, children—as members of the household of faith—may take the bread, but the wine is reserved for full communicants.

Their ancient concentration of strength was in the northwestern country around Rezaiyeh, which claims the second oldest church building in use in Iran. Today, however, in the 54 villages near the Turkish and Russian borders there are barely 3,000 scattered constituents with but three priests to minister to their needs.

The 7-10,000 in Teheran maintain a school and recently built a new church for their Mar Givargis congregation. One Assyrian, Wilson Bet-Mansour, serves in the national parliament.

THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Embracing over three-quarters of Iran's Christians, the Armenian Orthodox Church traces its origins to the missionary endeavors of Apostles Thaddaeus and Bartholomew and calls itself "Apostolic".

Its most historic settlements are in Azerbaijan Province, once part of the Kingdom of Armenia (the rest of which now lies in Turkish and Russian territory). The 45 congregations in that area claim 15,000 members. Of these, 6,000 are in and around Tabriz, seat of the archdiocese and site of the Armenian historical museum. The St. Thaddaeus Monastery near the Turkish border claims the grave of that apostle and is the focus of a large annual pilgrimage. Nearer the Russian border is St. Stephen's Monastery founded in 64 A.D.

Julfa on the Aras (Araks or Arazes) River in Azerbaijan was a major center of Armenian Christians until 1606, when Shah Abbas moved 40,000 of them south to Isfahan. He needed craftsmen and merchants to build his fantastically beautiful new winter capital. There are still 5,000 of their descendants in the 13 churches in the New Julfa section of Isfahan, and 26,000 communicants in the Archdiocese of Julfa-Isfahan. All Saints Cathedral is one of three churches in the world in which the interior walls are completely covered with religious paintings. Bishop Karekin Sarkissian was recently assigned there. Education-minded, he will doubtless strengthen its several schools and may even re-establish its theological seminary.

Isfahan University's new Department of Armenian Studies, where Father Manjikian and Prof. Davidian hold forth, broadens the Iranian appreciation of the Armenian tradition, as does the fine museum next to the cathedral.

Most of Iran's Armenians have joined the migration to the booming capital city of Teheran with its 6-lane boulevards and light-studded office buildings. The Teheran Archdiocese under Archbishop Ardak Manoukian claims 110,000 members and 24 schools. Its small but beautiful St. Mary's Church on Qavam-ol-Soltaneh Avenue is serving as a cathedral until the impressively larger structure is completed—presumably in time for a major ecumenical observance of the 25th centenary in October. Services here are well attended and children participate significantly. The choral music is magnificent.

The Armenians of Iran maintain a dispensary in Teheran, hospitals in New Julfa and Feridan and an orphanage at New Julfa.

CATHOLICS

The Archdiocese of Isfahan, founded in 1632, ministers to the 5,000 Latin-rite Catholics, most of them foreigners. They have not, so far, become involved in the Interchurch Centenary Committee. But the 18,000 Chaldean Catholics and the 3,000 Armenian Catholics

have. The Chaldeans, though they maintain the rites of the Assyrian Church, left that body in 1552 to unite with Rome. Iraq is their main stronghold and their Patriarch, Mar Paulos II Chekho, lives in Baghdad. In Iran, three archbishops operate out of Ahwas, Rexaieh and Teheran. They maintain eight schools and two small seminaries.

Like them, the Armenian Catholics are Uniats. They observe the Armenian Orthodox liturgy but are answerable to the Pope. Most of them live in Teheran, where they have two schools and where Bishop Leonce Tchantayan has his headquarters.

Catholics have three orphanages and three dispensaries in Iran and are building a new hospital in Teheran.

THE EASTERN ORTHODOX

Greek and Russian Orthodox in Iran number about 1,200 between them. Many of the 450 Orthodox Russians in Teheran, Pahlavi and Qazvin are stateless refugees from the Bolshevik revolution and are thus ineligible for social security. They are helped by the World Council of Churches and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Their vigorous, ecumenically-minded Archimandrite Victorin looks to the Russian Church in Exile (headquartered in New York) rather than to Moscow for policy leadership.

The little Greek Orthodox church on Roosevelt Avenue, Teheran, is Greek classical on the outside, Byzantine inside. Archimandrite Pangratos Georgopoulos, being the only Greek priest in Iran, is also responsible for the little congregation in Abadan. He is answerable to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

ANGLICANS AND EVANGELICALS

Some 2,000 Anglicans (half of them foreigners) belong to the churches in Abadan, Bushehr, Isfahan, Kerman, Shiraz, Teheran and Yazd. Their bishop, Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, has already been mentioned for his ecumenical leadership. His *Design of My World* and other writings are highly respected. Like him, a large proportion of the membership are converts from Islam. A few are of Hebrew background.

Their high-quality educational, medical and evangelistic work dates back to the early 18th century. In Isfahan they operate four schools (one for the blind), a 100-bed hospital, a bookstore, two youth hostels and, nearby, a remarkable farm training blind boys in agriculture. They also have a new Diocesan Centre and a vocational school for girls in Teheran and a hospital in Shiraz.

The Diocese of Iran is part of the Episcopal Church of the Middle East with headquarters in Jerusalem.

EVANGELICALS

By agreement, the Episcopalians concentrate in the south, the Presbyterians (Reformed) in the north—with work in Hamadan, Kermanshah, Meshed, Rasht, Rezaieh, Tabriz and Teheran. With the backing of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregational) they established their "Mission to the Nestorians" in 1832. Their intent was to stimulate a revival within the Assyrian Church, but the result was a new body, now called the Evangelical Church of Iran, with 55% Assyrians and 21% Armenians among its present 3,000 members.

It has six schools, a nursing school in Meshed, and Armaghan Institute. Since the advent of women's suffrage in 1963 the Iran Bethel Girls' School has been transformed methodically into Damavand College. The foreign consortium oil companies have given \$200,000, and the national oil interests \$65,000, in matching contributions. The Shah has pledged land for a larger campus once the title is cleared. His wife gives strong endorsement to its curriculum which, under President Frances Grey, Dean Mary Thompson and an interfaith board of trustees, interweaves Iranian, English and world cultures with an appreciation for both the Bible and the Koran.

Following Presbyterian custom, the Evangelical Church of Iran was originally divided into geographical presbyteries. Practical considerations, however, have made a division by language—Assyrian, Persian and Armenian—more natural.

The Assyrian Evangelicals in Teheran are flourishing, with new members migrating from Rezaieh and Tabriz. Persian Evangelicals have congregations in Hamadam, Meshed and Resht. The preacher in the 600-member Teheran church is Mehdi Abhari, a Bangalore Seminary graduate who earns his bread as an official in the government's Development Plan. The Armenian Evangelicals get help from French and Swiss Calvinists. They have an imaginative camp programme and are on good terms with Armenian Catholics and Armenian Orthodox.

Cooperating but independent is the German Evangelische Gemeinde whose 400 members have a new church on Ghavam Street, Teheran. The English-speaking Community Church of Teheran has been regularly led by Presbyterian ministers.

ECUMENICAL COOPERATION

The Interchurch Centenary Committee is only one manifestation of a healthy spirit of Christian cooperation. There is also the Church Council of Iran, primarily Anglican and Presbyterian with unofficial Catholic participation. Its major projects include literature development, youth programmes, a correspondence course and "Radio Voice of the Gospel". Also enjoying Catholic and Protestant support is the Bible society.

Especially heartening are spontaneous expressions of local ecumenicity. In Abadan and Shiraz, Catholics and Protestants worship in the same building. In Tabriz an Armenian, Bebkhan Haratunian, is business manager of the Presbyterian-related Christian Hospital. In New Julfa the Armenian Orthodox visitors' map shows all the non-Armenian and non-Orthodox churches.

Anglicans and Lutherans alternate in taking responsibility for the Christophel School for the Blind in Teheran. Around Rezaieh, Protestants, Chaldeans and Nestorians have the best of relationships. The Southern Baptists (USA) support a staff member at the Presbyterian Armaghan Institute.

This enterprise is especially heartening for its good relations with the Muslim faculty of Theology at Teheran University. Its Muslim-Christian theological library strives "to be an instrument of God's reconciling and redemptive purpose in its relationships with men of divers faiths . . . in the university milieu". And the religious tolerance of present-day Iran creates an atmosphere in which this and other institutions may foster interfaith understanding and goodwill.

L. Humphrey Walz
Minister of Public Relations,
United Presbyterian Synod of New York

THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HELD AT MOSCOW 30th MAY - 2nd JUNE 1971

The immediate purpose of this *Sobor* of the Russian Church was to elect a Patriarch of Moscow and all the Russias, in succession to the late Patriarch Alexei who died last year. Eight metropolitans, 31 archbishops, 33 bishops, 84 other clergy and monks, and 78 laymen took part in the Council, which was attended also by 74 visitors from abroad.

Before the actual election of the Metropolitan Pimen to the Patriarchal Throne (the voting was unanimous), various reports were made to it, dealing comprehensively with historical questions. The Editor is most grateful to the Moscow Patriarchate for sending to him, so promptly, a full account of the proceedings—and equally to Mr. Richard F. Avery who read and translated this mass of documentation, so expeditiously, on behalf of all his fellow-members of the A. & E.C.A.

Two of the important papers read in Council are appended below. H.E.

THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH HELD AT MOSCOW
30TH MAY - 2ND JUNE 1971

The life and activity of the Russian Orthodox Church by Metropolitan Pimen, subsequently elected Patriarch of Moscow & All Russia.

In this preliminary address, Metropolitan Pimen emphasised that the summoning of this Local Council was an outstanding event in the life of the Church. But at the same time it was a witness to the Church's normal and regular course of life. He proceeded to give a detailed analysis of the life and activity of the Church during the years 1945-1971. At the present moment, the Church possessed four Patriarchal Exarchates, in the Ukraine, Western Europe, Central Europe, and Central & South America; 76 dioceses and 11 Vicariates; a Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem, parishes in Hungary and Finland, a series of parishes in the U.S.A. and Canada; representatives of the Russian Church at the Patriarchates of Antioch and Damascus, at the World Council of Churches at Geneva, and at the Christian Peace Conference in Prague, religious houses in Beirut, Belgrade, Sofia; and a series of separate parishes in various parts of the world.

The episcopate of the Russian Orthodox Church consists to-day of 72 Archpriests: i.e., 8 Metropolitans, 29 Archbishops and 35 Bishops. The list of dioceses is a measure of the size of the territory over which its family is spread and of its multinational nature.

All ruling Bishops in turn take part in the work of the Holy Synod. Their efforts are constantly directed to the guidance of the faithful in their dioceses and they are endowed with great authority. The Parish Clergy exercise spiritual power in parish life. The faithful see in their Priest their spiritual father and pastor. The clergy and laity are united in parish life by the spirit of the Faith and the desire to preserve the purity of Orthodoxy and to practise the precepts of the Gospel in their lives.

The Russian Church possesses both monasteries (for men) and convents (for women).

Two Theological Academies in Moscow and Leningrad and three Theological Seminaries—Odessa, Leningrad and Moscow—carry out the theological training of the parish clergy and of future candidates for positions among the higher clergy, future professors and teachers. During the period under review, there passed out from the Theological Colleges 50 bishops, 13 doctors of theology, 53 masters of theology, dozens of teachers and thousands of parish clergy. There passed through the Theological Colleges

many sent from local Orthodox Churches, and also from the Non-Chalcedonian Churches, to gain or perfect their theological knowledge.

The publications section of the Holy Synod publishes every month the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, every year Church calendars, a periodical entitled Theological Studies and collections of sermons. During the period, there were two Russian editions of the Bible and the New Testament with Psalms. Service books and other works are printed. The periodical publications of the Russian Orthodox Church appear also in Kiev, Berlin, Budapest, Paris and New York.

The Board of Finance of the Moscow Patriarchate provides the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church with all necessary church furnishings, which are made in the workshops of the Patriarchate in Moscow. The Board also organises the work of repairing and restoring old churches, monasteries and other ecclesiastical buildings.

Since 1948 there has existed in the Holy Synod a pensions committee for the material welfare of clergy and church workers who have retired because of age or ill health.

Metropolitan Pimen expressed his certainty that after the Council the Russian Orthodox Church would continue to develop under favourable conditions.

Speaking of inter-orthodox relations, Metropolitan Pimen mentioned as the most important acts of the Holy Synod the granting of Autocephaly to the Polish Orthodox Church in 1948, to the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia in 1951, to the Orthodox Church in America in 1970 and also in the same year the granting of Autonomy to the Orthodox Church in Japan. The Russian Orthodox Church by its inter-Orthodox contacts was able to strengthen the unity and the growth of cooperation and brotherly relations between all local Orthodox Churches. The Russian Orthodox Church saw great significance in the Pan-Orthodox Conferences, where inter-Orthodox questions of greatest importance were discussed.

The Metropolitan assured the Council that the aim of the Russian Orthodox Church would remain in the future the steady development of fraternal relations and of unity with other Orthodox Churches.

Further, Metropolitan Pimen touched on the patriotic activities of the Bishops, clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church and remarked that the Church had always lived for the interest of the nation. "Citizens of our Fatherland who are believers value highly the beneficial activities of the Soviet Government, directed towards the many-sided progress of our Socialist society, and also its foreign policy, directed towards the establishing of a lasting and just peace and cooperation between all peoples."

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement, by Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad & Novgorod.

In this address, the Metropolitan gave a review of the history of the mutual relations of the Orthodox Russian peoples with Christians of other confessions, from the 11th century to the present day. The Russian Orthodox Church felt no violent religious intolerance towards Western Christianity, with which the Russian Orthodox Church had always endeavoured to preserve friendly relations. The names of many Russian Church personalities of past centuries witnessed to this, permeated as they were with the loftiest ecumenism and desire for unity in the bond of peace and love.

Reviewing relations with the Roman Catholic Church, the Metropolitan emphasised the great significance of the Pontificate of Pope John XXIII (1958-63), during which period there had been a notable revival of contacts between the two Churches. The Metropolitan outlined the extent of these contacts, from 1962 to the present day. He then reviewed the relations of the Russian Orthodox Church with the ancient Eastern Non-Chalcedonian Churches—Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian and Malabar.

Individual passages were devoted to the history and present state of relations with the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches, the Protestant Churches and Confessions—Lutheran, Evangelical, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist, etc.—both existing already in Russian territory and also abroad.

He also referred to the fraternal contacts of the Russian Orthodox Church with national, continental and world ecumenical Christian and Confessional Councils.

Reviewing the Russian Church's relations with the World Council of Churches, the Metropolitan described the road travelled by the Russian Orthodox Church in its relations with the World Council, the entry of the Russian Orthodox into the Council and its activities after entry.

In conclusion the Metropolitan stated that in its ecumenical activities the Russian Orthodox Church had for the 26 years since the Local Council held in 1945 tenaciously maintained its best traditions, based on its many centuries of inner life and its mutual relations with Christians of other Confessions. The immutability of the main lines of this activity were determined by the utter and uncompromising devotion of the Church to the synodical principles of Ecumenical Orthodoxy, with a clear knowledge of its moral duty—to do all in its power to ease for other Christians the approach to the long-desired unity of faith promised by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Metropolitan expressed the hope that the Local Council would give a new impulse to the development and strengthening of

the fraternal relations of the Moscow Patriarchate with Christians of other Confessions.

The Metropolitan further elucidated the question of the annulment of the anathemas on the Old Russian Rites and those adhering to them. The schism of the Old Believers had occurred 300 years ago in the Russian Orthodox Church as a result of the reforms of Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow, in correcting Church service books and altering church rites, which he did in order to achieve conformity in practices between the Russian and Greek Churches. The Council of Moscow of 1656 laid an anathema on those using the custom of the "two-fingered" sign of the cross, and prescribed the "three-fingered" sign for all Russian Orthodox. The Great Council of Moscow of 1667 did the same, laying an anathema on the Old Believers, based on the view that the Old Russian Church rites were heretical.

Over the course of the years, representatives of the Old Believers and the Russian Orthodox Church had made repeated attempts at a mutual approach, but the problem of the anathemas remained a stumbling block. The problem was considered in 1929 at a session of the Holy Patriarchal Synod under the chairmanship of Metropolitan Sergei, the Patriarchal Locum Tenens (later Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia). The Synod at that time decided on recognition of the Old Russian rites as valid for salvation.

At the present time good relations had developed between the Old Believers and the Orthodox. With a right understanding of the difference between a dogma and a rite, the Russian Orthodox Church should now consider and finally resolve in a positive way the question of raising the anathemas on the Old Rites and those using them. (The anathemas were later officially raised and all barriers between the Old Believers and the Orthodox declared null and void, which decision was embodied in an official Act.)

* * *

(Translated by R. F. Avery, Esq.)

AIMS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Association exists to unite members of the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches for the following objects:

- (a) The principal object for which the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association is established is the advancement of the Christian religion, in particular by means of teaching the members of the Anglican Church and those of the Eastern Orthodox Church the doctrine, worship and way of life of the other.
- (b) The Association exists also to unite members of the two Communion in prayer and work in achieving the principal object, with a view to promotion of visible unity between them.

SOME METHODS OF HELPING THE WORK

1. By joining the Association and getting others to join.
2. By arranging for a meeting in the neighbourhood, when a lecture may be given on the Eastern Churches and Reunion, and the objects of the Association explained.
3. By asking the Parochial Authorities to promise a Sunday collection every year either in the service or afterwards at the doors.
4. By uniting in local centres for the study of Eastern Christendom, and for Intercession for Reunion.

Lectures – with or without visual aids – can be arranged by writing to the General Secretary.

SUBSCRIPTION

The minimum annual subscription is £1, but none will be excluded 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 receive the *Eastern Churches News Letter* which is published quarterly.