

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

"THE DEMONS, who have access to our souls during our waking hours, have access also during sleep. And during sleep they tempt us to sin by mixing their fantasy with our fantasy. Also when they observe in us a regard for dreams, they try to increase our interest in dreams. Then, by arousing greater attention to these ravings, they gradually lead us to put our trust in them. Such trust is always accompanied by conceit, and conceit makes our mental view of ourselves false, whence all our activity becomes unsound. This is just what the demons want. To those who are advanced in this self-opinionated state, the demons begin to appear in the form of angels of light, in the form of martyrs and saints, even in the form of the Mother of God and of Christ Himself. They applaud the way these dupes are living, promise them heavenly crowns, and in this way they lead them to the height of self-opinion and pride. This height is at the same time the abyss of perdition. We need to know beyond a shadow of doubt that in our present state, while still unrenewed by grace, we are unfit to see dreams other than those concocted for our harm by the guile of the demons. As during our waking state thoughts and fancies constantly and unceasingly arise within us from our fallen nature or are brought about by demons, so during sleep we see only dreams due to the action of our fallen nature or the action of demons. Just as our consolation during our waking state springs from compunction born of the realization of our sins, remembrance of death and God's judgment (only these thoughts arise in us from the grace of God planted in us by Holy Baptism and are brought to us by God's Angels in proportion to our repentance), so too during sleep, very rarely, in extreme need. Angels of God picture or represent to us our end, or the torment of hell, or the threatening judgment at death and beyond the grave. From such dreams we come to the fear of God, to compunction, to weeping over ourselves. But such dreams are given extremely rarely to an ascetic or even to a flagrant and outrageous sinner by the inscrutable providence of God. They are given extremely rarely not on account of the stinginess of Divine grace - no! It is because all that happens to us outside the general run leads us to pride and self-opinion, and undermines our humility which is so essential for our salvation. The will of God, the fulfilment of which is man's salvation, is expressed in Holy Scripture so clearly, so forcibly and in such detail, that to assist the salvation of men by breaking the ordinary course of things is quite superfluous and unnecessary."

Saint Ignatius of the Caucasus, 1807-1867 A.D.

THE PIECE below was first published, unattributed, in "The Orthodox Word" (September - October, 1976; The Brotherhood of St Herman of Alaska, Platina, California). Read now, quarter of a century later, in many ways it seems curiously dated. It is clear that it was written very much from a Russian Church Abroad standpoint, and one cannot avoid the conclusion that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (called here the Church Outside Russia) has in the last fifteen years or so rather lost the primacy of her position among traditionalist Orthodox. Then, under the leadership of the Ever-memorable Metropolitan Philaret and with the publication of his wise Sorrowful Epistles, she was at the apogee of her influence within the Orthodox world. Since then her compass seems to have become more restricted and, rather than attracting traditionalists from various cultural backgrounds into her bosom, she has suffered a series of schisms from her. Our writer was also obviously expecting a further polarization: with the traditionalist movement growing and consolidating, and the "ecumenist" wing becoming ever more liberal. Subsequent history has largely proved him wrong. Things have not worked quite like that. The traditionalist movement has rather fragmented and been prey to unhealthy extremisms. The official jurisdictions have pulled back a little from their reformist course, and particularly with their release from the Soviet enslavement of their administrations many of them are showing small signs of a return to a traditionalist position. The very fact that our author's prognostications now appear somewhat off-course is instructive for us - we should be wary of peering into the future. But none of this in any way invalidates the soundness of the traditionalist position within Orthodoxy. We hope that for some of our readers, for whom the picture a quarter of a century ago is an unknown world, "The Royal Path" will be instructive and will help to broaden their perspective. But we are drawing it to readers' attention now primarily because of its three fundamental points: that Orthodox traditionalism is not an extremist standpoint, but rather the true mean of Orthodoxy; that in our struggle for this mean we must avoid extremism ("pharisaic self-satisfaction, exclusivism and distrust"); and that the struggle is fundamentally a spiritual one. These lessons, as the aftermath of the latest split from ROCA has demonstrated, are as sound and necessary today as they were in the nineteen-seventies.

THE ROYAL PATH

TRUE ORTHODOXY IN AN AGE OF APOSTASY

As the Fathers say, the extremes from both sides are equally harmful.... (We must) go on the royal path, avoiding the extremes on both sides.

St John Cassian, Conference II

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS live today in one of the great critical times in the history of Christ's Church. The enemy of man's salvation, the devil, attacks on all fronts and strives by all means not merely to divert believers from the path of salvation shown by the Church, but even to conquer the Church of Christ itself, despite the Saviour's promise (Matt. 16:18), and to convert the very Body of Christ into an "ecumenical" organization preparing for the coming of his own chosen one, Antichrist, the great world-ruler of the last days.

Of course, we know that this attempt of Satan will fail; the Church will be the Bride of Christ even to the end of the world and will meet Christ the Bridegroom at His Second Coming pure and undefiled by adulterous union with the apostasy of this age. But the great question of our times for all Orthodox Christians to face is a momentous one: the Church will remain, but how many of us will still be in it, having withstood the devil's mighty attempts to draw us away from it?

Our times are much like those of St Mark of Ephesus in the 15th century, when it seemed that the Church was about to be dissolved into the impious Union with the Latins. Nay, our times are even worse and more dangerous than those times; for then the Union was an act imposed by force from without, while now the Orthodox people have been long prepared for the approaching "ecumenical" merger of all churches and religions by decades of laxness, indifference, worldliness, and indulgence in the ruinous falsehood that "nothing really separates us" from all others who call themselves Christians. The Orthodox Church survived the false Union of Florence, and even knew a time of outward prosperity and inward spiritual flourishing after that; but after the new false Union, now being pursued with ever-increasing momentum, will Orthodoxy exist at all save in the catacombs and the desert?

During the past ten years or more [*this article was published in 1976 -ed.*], under the disastrous "ecumenical;" course pursued by Patriarch Athenagoras [*died 1972*] and his successor, the Orthodox Churches have already come perilously close to total shipwreck. The newest "ecumenical" statement of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, "The Thyateira Confession" [*fortunately this document seems now largely to have been forgotten - ed.*], is already sufficient evidence of how far the Orthodox conscience has been lost by the Local Church that once was first among the Orthodox Churches in the confession of Christ's truth; this dismal document only shows how close the hierarchs of Constantinople have now come to being absorbed into the heterodox "Christianity" of the West, even before the formal Union which is still being prepared.

THE ROOTS of today's ecumenism in the Orthodox Churches go back to the renovationism and modernism of certain hierarchs in the 1920's. In the Russian Church, these currents produced, first, the "Living Church" movement which, with the help of the Communist regime, tried to overthrow Patriarch [St]Tikhon and "reform" the Church in a radically Protestant manner, and then - as a more "conservative" successor to the "Living Church" - the Sergianist church organization (the Moscow Patriarchate), which emphasized at first the political side of reconciliation with Communist ideology and aims (in accordance with the infamous "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927), and only in recent decades has ventured once again into the realm of ecclesiastical renovationism with its active participation in the ecumenical movement. In the Greek Church the situation has been similar: the renovationist "Pan-Orthodox Council" of 1923, with its Protestant reforms inspired by Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis of sorry memory, proved to be too radical for the Orthodox world to accept, and the renovationists had to be satisfied with imposing a calendar reform on several of the non-Slavic Churches.

Large movements of protest opposed the reformers in both the Russian and Greek Churches, producing deep divisions which exist until now in the Orthodox world. In the Russian Church, Sergianism was decisively rejected by very many of the bishops

and faithful, led by Metropolitan [St] Joseph of Petrograd; this "Josephite" movement later became organized to some extent and became known as the "True Orthodox Church." The history of this illegal "Catacomb" Church of Russia is, to this day, veiled in secrecy, but in the past few years a number of startling evidences of its present-day activities have come to light, leading to stern repressive measures on the part of the Soviet government. The name of its present chief hierarch (Metropolitan Theodosius) has become known, as has that of one of its ten or more bishops (Bishop Seraphim). In the Diaspora, the Russian Church Outside Russia committed itself from the very beginning of Sergianism in 1927 to a firm anti-Sergianist position, and on numerous occasions it has expressed its solidarity with the True Orthodox Church in Russia, while refusing all communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. Its uncompromisingness and staunch traditionalism in this and other matters were not to the taste of several of the Russian hierarchs of Western Europe and America, who were more receptive to the "reform" currents in 20th century Orthodoxy, and they separated themselves at various times from the Russian Church Outside Russia, thus creating the present "jurisdictional" differences of the Russian Diaspora.

In Greece the movement of protest, by a similar Orthodox instinct, likewise took the name of "True Orthodox Christians." From the beginning in 1924 (when the calendar reform was introduced), this movement has been especially strong among the simple monks, priests and laymen of Greece; the first bishop to leave the State Church of Greece and join the movement was Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Fiorina, and today it continues its fully independent life and organisation, comprising about one-fourth of all the Orthodox Christians of Greece, and perhaps one-half or more of all the monks and nuns. Although popularly known as the "old calendarists," the True Orthodox Christians of Greece stand for a staunch traditionalism in Orthodox life and thought in general, viewing the calendar question merely as a first stage and a touchstone of modernism and reformism.

As the "ecumenical" cancer eats more and more away at the remaining sound organs of the Orthodox Churches today, an increasing sympathy is being shown by the most sensitive members of the "official" Orthodox jurisdictions for the cause and the representatives of the anti-ecumenist, anti-reformist Churches of Russia, Greece, and the Diaspora. Some, seeing the "official" jurisdictions as now irrevocably set on a course of anti-orthodoxy, are abandoning them as sinking ships and joining the ranks of the True Orthodox Christians; others, still hoping for the restoration of an Orthodox course in world Orthodoxy, think it enough for now to express sympathy for the True Orthodox Christians or to protest boldly against the "reformist" mentality in the official jurisdictions. The ten years of anti-ecumenist epistles of Metropolitan Philaret, Chief Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia, have struck a responsive chord within a number of Orthodox Churches, even if the "official" response to them has been largely silence or hostility.

Today, more than at any other time in the 50-year struggle to preserve the Orthodox tradition in an age of apostasy, the voice of true and uncompromising Orthodoxy *could* be heard throughout the world, and have a profound effect on the future course of the Orthodox Churches. Probably, indeed, it is already too late to prevent the renovationist "Eighth Ecumenical Council" and the "ecumenical" Union which lies behind it; but perhaps one or more of the Local Churches may yet be

persuaded to step back from this ruinous path which will lead to the final liquidation (as Orthodox) of those jurisdictions that follow it to the end; and in any case, individuals and whole communities can certainly be saved from this path, not to mention those of the heterodox who may still find their way into the saving enclosure of the true Church of Christ.

IT IS OF CRITICAL importance, therefore, that this voice be actually one of *true*, that is *patristic* Orthodoxy. Unfortunately, it sometimes happens, especially in the heat of controversy, that basically sound Orthodox positions are exaggerated on one side, and misunderstood on the other, and thus an entirely misleading impression is created in some minds that the cause of true Orthodoxy today is a kind of "extremism," a sort of "right-wing reaction" to the prevailing "left-wing" course now being followed by the leaders of "official" Orthodox Churches. Such a political view of the struggle for true Orthodoxy today is entirely false. This struggle, on the contrary, has taken the form, among its best representatives today - whether in Russia, Greece, or the Diaspora - of a return to the patristic path of *moderation*, a *mean* between extremes; this is what the Holy Fathers call the ROYAL PATH.

The teaching of this "royal path" is set forth, for example, in the tenth of St. Abba Dorotheus' *Spiritual Instructions*, where he quotes especially the Book of Deuteronomy: *Ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, but go by the royal path* (Deut. 5:32; 17:11), and St Basil the Great: "Upright of heart is he whose thought does not turn away either to excess or to lack, but is directed only to the mean of virtue." But perhaps this teaching is most clearly expressed by the great Orthodox Father of the 5th century, St John Cassian, who was faced with a task not unlike our own Orthodox task today: to present the pure teaching of the Eastern Fathers to Western peoples who were spiritually immature and did not yet understand the depth and subtlety of the Eastern spiritual doctrine and were therefore inclined to go to extremes, either of laxness or over-strictness, in applying it to life. St Cassian sets forth the Orthodox doctrine of the *royal path* in his Conference on "sober-mindedness" (or "discretion") - the Conference praised by St John of the Ladder (Step 4:1-5) for its "beautiful and sublime philosophy":-

"With all our strength and with all our effort we must strive by humility to acquire for ourselves the good-gift of sober-mindedness, which can preserve us unharmed by excess from both sides. For, as the Fathers say, the extremes from both sides are equally harmful - both excess of fasting and filling the belly, excess of vigil and excessive sleep, and other excesses." Sober-mindedness "teaches a man to go on the royal path, avoiding the extremes on both sides: on the right side it does not allow him to be deceived by excessive abstinence, on the left side to be drawn into carelessness and relaxation." And the temptation on the "right side" is even more dangerous than that on the "left": "Excessive abstinence is more harmful than satiating oneself; because, with the cooperation of repentance, one may go over from the latter to a correct understanding, but from the former one cannot" (i.e., because pride over one's "virtue" stands in the way of the repentant humility that could save one). (*Conferences, II, chs 16,2,17*).

Applying this teaching to our own situation, we may say that the "royal path" of true Orthodoxy today is a mean that lies between the extremes of ecumenism and reformism on the one side, and a "zeal not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2) on

the other. True Orthodoxy does not go "in step with the times" on the one hand, nor does it make "strictness" or "correctness" or "canonicity"(good in themselves) an excuse for pharisaic self-satisfaction, exclusivism, and distrust, on the other. This true Orthodox moderation is not to be confused with mere luke-warmness or indifference, or with any kind of compromise between political extremes. The spirit of "reform" is so much in the air today that anyone whose views are moulded by the "spirit of the times" will regard true Orthodox moderation as close to "fanaticism," but anyone who looks at the question more deeply and applies the patristic standard will find the royal path to be far from any kind of extremism. Perhaps no teacher in our own days provides such an example of sound and fervent Orthodox moderation as the late Archbishop Averky of Jordanville; his numerous articles and sermons breathe the refreshing spirit of true Orthodox zealotry, without any deviation either to the "right" or to the "left," and with emphasis constantly on the *spiritual* side of true Orthodoxy.

THE RUSSIAN CHURCH Outside Russia has been placed, by God's Providence, in a very favourable position for preserving the "royal path" amidst the confusion of so much of 20th century Orthodoxy. Living in exile and poverty in a world that has not understood the suffering of her people, she has focused her attention on preserving unchanged the faith which unites her people, and so quite naturally she finds herself a stranger to the whole ecumenical mentality, which is based on religious indifference and self-satisfaction, material affluence, and soulless internationalism. On the other hand, she has been preserved from falling into extremism on the "right side" (such as might be a declaration that the Mysteries of the Moscow Patriarchate are without grace) by her vivid awareness that the Sergianist church in Russia is *not free*; one can of course have no communion with such a body, dominated by atheists, but precise definitions of its status are best left to a free Russian church council in the future. If there seems to be a "logical contradiction" here ("if you don't deny her Mysteries, why don't you have communion with her?"), it is a problem only for rationalists; those who approach church questions with the heart as well as the head have no trouble accepting this position, which is the testament bequeathed to the Russian Church of the Diaspora by her wise Chief Hierarch, Metropolitan Anastassy (+1965).

Living in freedom, the Russian Church Outside Russia has considered as one of her important obligations to express her solidarity and full communion with the underground True Orthodox Church of Russia, whose existence is totally ignored and even denied by "official" Orthodoxy. In God's time, when the terrible trial of the Russian Church and people will have passed, the other Orthodox Churches may understand the Russian Church situation better; until then, it is perhaps all one can hope for that the free Orthodox Churches have never questioned the right of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia to exist or denied the grace of her Mysteries, almost all of them have long remained in communion with her (until her non-participation in the ecumenical movement isolated her and made her a reproach to the other Churches, especially in the last decade), and up to this day they have (at least passively) resisted the politically-inspired attempts of the Moscow Patriarchate to have her declared "schismatic" and "uncanonical."

In recent years, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia has also given support and recognition to the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, whose situation also has long been exceedingly difficult and misunderstood. In Greece the first blow

against the Church (the calendar reform) was not as deadly as the "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius in Russia, and for this reason it has taken longer for the theological consciousness of the Orthodox Greek people to see its full anti-orthodox significance. Further, few bishops in Greece have been bold enough to join this movement (whereas, by contrast, the number of non-Sergianist bishops in the beginning was larger than the whole episcopate of the Greek Church). And only in recent years has the cause of the old calendarists become a little "intellectually respectable," as more and more university graduates have joined it. Over the years it has suffered persecutions, sometimes quite fierce, from the State and the official Church, and to this day it remains disdained by the "sophisticated" and totally without recognition from the "official" Orthodox world. Unfortunately, internal disagreements and divisions have continued to weaken the cause of the old calendarists, and they lack a single unanimous voice to express their stand for patristic Orthodoxy. Still, the basic Orthodoxy of their position cannot be denied, and one can only welcome such sound presentations of it as may be seen in the article that follows [in the original "Orthodox Word" *September 1976, there followed an article about the Sacred Monastery of Sts Cyprian and Justina, Fili - ed.*].

The increasing realization in recent years of the basic oneness of the cause of true Orthodoxy throughout the world, whether in the catacomb Church of Russia, the old calendarists of Greece, or the Russian Church Outside Russia, has led some to think in terms of a "united front" of confessing Churches to oppose the ecumenical movement which has taken possession of "official" Orthodoxy. However, under present conditions this will hardly come to pass; and in any case, this is a political" view of the situation which sees the significance of the mission of true Orthodoxy in too external a manner. The full dimensions of the True Orthodox protest against "ecumenical Orthodoxy," against the neutralized, lukewarm Orthodoxy of the apostasy, have yet to be revealed, above all in Russia. But it cannot be that the witness of so many martyrs and confessors and champions of True Orthodoxy in the 20th century will have been in vain. May God preserve His zealots in the royal path of true Orthodoxy, faithful to Him and His holy Church until the end of the age!

Adapted from

"THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

§ 32. The Holy Vessels and Church Plate. The holy vessels, which are indispensable for the celebration of Divine service, are now [*i.e. at the beginning of the twentieth century! - transl.*] usually made of gold or silver and adorned with precious stones. For the celebration of the Liturgy we use: a diskos (paten), chalice, lance, spoon and asterisk; for the Mystery of Baptism, we need the font, and the chrism set; for a wedding: the crowns and cup.

a) The diskos or paten is a round metal dish or plate mounted on a short leg. The diskos usually has a depiction of the Christ-Child lying in the manger, or in His all-holy Mother's arms, inscribed upon it. During the proskomidi [*the first part of the*

Divine Liturgy] the Lamb and the commemorative particles from the prosphora are placed upon it. It represents both the manger and the grave in which the Saviour was laid.

b) The Chalice or Cup is the vessel from which the faithful are communicated of the Body and Blood of Christ, and it refers to the Saviour's holy cup at the Mystical Supper.

c) The lance is a cutting implement, shaped like a spear or lance, which is used to cut out the Lamb and the particles from the prosphora. It recalls the spear with which the side of the Saviour was pierced on the Cross.

d) The asterisk or star is made from two arched metallic strips which was joined at a central pivot and which are arranged crosswise, - often with a central star-like boss. It reminds us of the star which led the Wise Men to Bethlehem, and it is placed upon the diskos in such a way as to hold the veil over the particles arranged there, and not disturb them.

e) The spoon has been used since the time of St John Chrysostom (the fourth century) to impart Communion to the lay-people.

f) The font is a vessel something like a huge chalice, into which water is poured for the baptism of infants.

g) The chrism set (Myrnitsa - in Russian) is a rectangular casket in which there are bottles for the Holy Myron (Chrism) and for oil used at Baptism and Chrismation, a sponge for wiping it off, and scissors for the tonsuring of the hair of newly baptized persons.

h) The crowns are used in the marriage ceremony and are either circlets or made in the form of royal crowns and surmounted by small crosses. *N.B. in the Greek usage, it is more usual for bridal pairs to have crowns made of leaves and flowers, which they then keep themselves in their icon corners - ed.*

The church plate comprises: 1) the censer, usually it consists of two semi-spherical portions which cover each other, suspended from chains; 2) the sprinkler - used in blessing with holy water, - it is often made of fine sprigs of hyssop, with reference to the verse in Psalm 50; 3) various lights: candle stands, lamps, circlets of candle or lamp holders which are hung in church, lanterns for use in church processions;* 4) a square table-top with places to put up candles, and usually with an upright depiction of the Crucifixion at the back, used during memorial services and at other times so that candles might be offered in memory of the faithful departed; and 5) a stand with a basin for the loaves, two vessels for wine and oil, and a small container for wheat, used for the rite of artoclasia.

One could perhaps also include in the church plate the bells. Bells have been used since the seventh century (at first in the West). During the times of persecution, Christians were informed about the services by word of mouth, or sometimes they were called to church by special people who went from house to house. Later they used metal or wooden boards which were struck by a mallet. These boards are still widely used in the East and in monasteries, and are called semantrons or talantons. In the seventh century bells began to be used in the Italian region of Campania, from which we derive the word "campanile" - bell tower, from the West, the use of bells

was introduced into Greece in the ninth century, and it became particularly prevalent during the period of the Crusades. From Greece, not only did bells spread to Russia, but there they played a particularly important and majestic role. In the East, their role diminished especially after the seizure of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Bell towers were often built in the form of high towers and usually separate from the church itself. In Russia they used five or more bells of different sizes, which therefore gave a different note. There also developed three ways of peeling the bells, which are called the "Blagovest," the "Trezvon," and the "Perezvon." The blagovest is the ringing of one bell; the trezvon is when all the bells are pealed at one time; and the perezvon is when each of the bells is slowly struck in turn, beginning with the largest and ending with the smallest, and all the bells are struck together. The perezvon is especially used during the carrying out of the departed for burial. Now the custom of having the bells tuned to the musical scale has taken hold, and so special melodies can be rung on the bells. The ringing of the bells is used to add solemnity to the divine services, and there is a special service for the blessing of the bells.

§ 33. The Holy Depictions. The distinguishing mark of Orthodox church and of the Divine services is the presence of the holy icons and the holy Cross. Depictions of the Saviour, the Mother of God, the holy ones who pleased God, and sacred events are called icons. Icons have been used in the Church of Christ since the deepest antiquity. According to sacred Tradition, Jesus Christ Himself made a likeness of His Divine face for the prince of Edessa, Abgar.** It is also known from holy Tradition, that even during the earthly life of the Mother of God the holy Evangelist Luke painted her icon.*** From these beginnings, the icons came more and more into use. Before the fourth century, for the most part they were found in the catacomb churches, but with the cessation of the persecution of the Christians, they began to be used not only in the churches but even in the homes of the faithful.

The pious desire to depict in paints the faces of the Saviour, the Mother of God and the Saints has always existed in Christ's Church, but the fulfilment of what one might refer to as the outer aspect of this, the technique, was not always consistent. In the earliest times, even the most talented artists were unable to achieve the clarity or the likeness of their subjects in their works that were subsequently achieved, when the technique had developed and progressed. With regard to her religious art, the Church of Christ passed through various periods or stages. Beginning in the catacombs, where the light, which the artist needs, was poor, the religious painting were at first as it were indistinct and unfinished. But with the course of time, techniques improved, and the depictions became clearer and more akin to the events and persons portrayed.

To be continued with "The Holy Symbolic Depictions in the Catacombs"

Footnotes

*) During a Bishop's service, we also use: 1) the dikirion - a candle holder with two candles, which represent the two natures in Jesus Christ; 2) the trikirion - one with three candles, representing the three Persons of the Holy Trinity; 3) the ripidion or liturgical fans which are circular in form with depictions of the Seraphim.

**) The essence of the tradition is as follows: The prince of Edessa, Abgar, was suffering from a malady and hearing of the miracles of Jesus Christ, he sent Him a letter. Confessing his faith in the Divine Saviour, Abgar begged Him to come to his aid.

Tradition tells us that the Saviour sent him a reply, in which He told him, "Blessed art thou, for thou hast believed in Me, without having seen Me." And He added: "When I have ascended to My Father, I will send unto thee one of My disciples, who will heal thee of thine illness." And so He sent him the Apostle Thaddaeus, who healed Abgar and instructed him with regard to Christianity. To this tradition there is joined another one, that first Abgar had sent an artist to make a representation of the Lord, but the latter was unable to depict Him because he saw a radiance coming from His face. The Saviour thereupon took a napkin and placed it on His face and miraculously His likeness was imprinted thereon for Abgar.

***) According to a tradition confirmed by the earliest church writers, the holy Evangelist Luke was both a physician and an accomplished artist, and that he painted the Mother of God even during her lifetime, when she was living in Sion. From the lips of the All-holy Theotokos herself, he heard the promise that her grace would be with his icon. In the fifth century, the Byzantine Empress Eudokia, the widow of the late Emperor Theodosius II (+450), made a pilgrimage to worship in Palestine. From Jerusalem she sent the icon painted by the Evangelist Luke to her sister (in-law) in Constantinople, the Empress St Pulcheria, the consort of the Emperor Marcion (+457). We have historical records that the icon was still in Constantinople, in the Monastery of the Directress, throughout the period from the twelfth to the fourteen centuries. Thereafter we lose track of this holy thing, on account of the difficult circumstances through which the Byzantine Empire was going, and history can thereafter tell us nothing for certain about this icon. But from the ninth to the thirteen centuries we find that in Greece, as well as in Western Christendom (especially in Italy), and equally in Russia, icons were widely disseminated which were based on this ancient depiction of the Mother of God, done by the Evangelist Luke himself.

In Russia such icons are called "Korsunskaya" (after the name of the ancient city of Korsun, where St Vladimir had been baptized), and others known to us are the Vladimir Icon in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow, the Smolensk Icon in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Smolensk, and the Tikhvin icon in the Tikhvin Monastery in Novgorod.

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF FATHER GEORGE CHEREMETIEFF

Thoughts on a Journey
Continuation from last issue

Thoughts on the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

THIS PARABLE is a real testing stone for us; are we Christians in our hearts or do we just call ourselves that? Why? First, let us recall this parable. It is very meaningful.

Christ said that the Heavenly Kingdom is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers to pay them one denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. He went out about the third hour, that is, according to our system, at nine o'clock in the morning, and saw others, standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them: "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you." And they went. Again he went out at about twelve and at three in the afternoon and

did likewise. The working day was over at six in the evening (the twelfth hour). But about five in the evening (at the eleventh hour), he found others standing about idly, and he said unto them: "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" They answered: "Because no man hath hired us." And the householder felt sorry for those poor workmen, and said to them: "Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." When evening fell, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward: "Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last even unto the first."

And all received one denarius. However, those who had come earlier, thought that they should have received more. And they began to murmur. However, the householder told one of those who were murmuring: "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for one denarius? Take that thine is, and go thy way. I desire to give to this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? And the Lord appended to this parable: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

That is the parable. Let us think about it. From the point of view of the socialists, the first workers' protest was well founded; they had worked all day, and the last to come had worked only one hour and yet they received the same. Where's the justice in that? Isn't it scandalous? But now let us look at it from a Christian point of view: the first workers were fortunate - they had been given work for the whole day and had received good pay. They had not been wronged. Nobody had hired the last ones, but the householder had felt sorry for them and hired them for the same payment, as if they had worked all through the day. He did this because he knew that these were poor people and that their families also had to eat. What can we say? If we had a well paid job and our neighbours were starving, this would cause us grief. But if suddenly at the end of the month our employer invited our starving neighbours to work and gave them a full month's salary, wouldn't this make us happy, and would we not thank our good master? And, if perhaps those invited at the end of the month were not our neighbours, but strangers. Well, perhaps then, we would be upset....

What does this mean? It simply means that we love those close to us more than strangers. And the words always in our mouth, that all people are equal and are brothers to each other, are mere hypocrisy. But Christ said: "Love ye your neighbours, as yourself." And to the man who fell among thieves, his neighbour appeared as a foreigner, completely unknown to him. The Lord desires that every man be saved, and he grieves over us, weak sinners. Thus also we should feel sorry for others and not be envious when the Lord takes pity upon them. Christ accepted the repentance of the thief upon the cross, who repented with all his heart, even though it was in the last minutes of his life. The Lord did not reject him, but took pity on him, for He knew that he was repenting from the depths of his soul, and He said unto him: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" that is. He led him into that very Paradise, which even the righteous attain only with much labour. And the righteous rejoice and thank God that he had pity on a soul which had gone astray throughout all his life, who only at the very end had come to understand how bad he had been and had repented of this. It is for this reason that in his homily on Pascha, St John Chrysostom calls all to the feast of faith, both those who have observed the fast and those who have not.

And what do Christ's concluding remarks mean, that there are first ones who shall be last, and vice versa. Often among people, especially among socialists, one

meets people who are extremely proud, who say: "I earned this, you owe me that, but I do not accept charity." This is proclaimed loudly. And they also think to themselves: "But just to ensure that I am not at a disadvantage, I will make sure that others don't receive charity either." They are, of course, too embarrassed to say this openly. This is exactly why the first labourers *[in the parable]* became upset. They were envious, because the poor who had come last received the same remuneration almost without doing any work. And envy is, forgive me, the very cornerstone of socialism. Wouldn't a father give food to his hungry child, even though he had not worked for it? Of course, he would take pity on him and feed him. And would the child proudly reject it? Of course not. Because he is his father, to feed him is what he wants to do. And this is natural for both the father and the child. Christians must also have a human, family relationship. The master should take pity on the poor worker, if he is not just lazy, and if for some reason he could not work. And the poor man should accept gratefully without any pride. This makes for a human, heartfelt relationship. The last ones, who received gratefully, come to love their master, and thus they become, from the Christian point of view, the first.

But then, you might ask, does this philosophy not simply encourage the lazy? Absolutely not! Because God knows, and an experienced master can see, where there is laziness, which should inspire no pity, and where there is need, which in spite of the dead letter of Roman law, and in spite of the need to manifest equity, absolutely demands our help so that the inner, true righteousness of God might be made manifest in Christian love. For as Christ said: "Love will make us free." Yes, free from the sins of envy, pride, and free of the yoke of an ostentatious hypocritical and envious "justness."

To be continued

THE COMING MONTH

OUR ENTRY into the Holy and Great Lent on Monday 5th/18th March is the most notable happening in the month this year. Great Lent itself lasts for six weeks and is followed by Passion or Holy Week. So that we begin it decisively and it is impressed upon our hearts and minds that we have to make an absolute break with our sinful past, the first week of the fast is kept with particular strictness. On the first four evenings of this first week, we have the reading of the Great Penitential Canon of St Andrew of Crete read at Great Compline. Taking examples from the Old and New Testaments, Saint Andrew convicts us of our sinfulness, and speaks to us of the hope granted through the redemption granted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the Friday evening, among the Greeks the Canon of the Akathist and the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God are chanted at Compline. The Akathist Hymn is a long poetic composition, consisting of twelve alternating *contakia* and *oikoses*. The *contakia* are short verses, ending with the refrain. Alleluia; and the *oikoses* are longer verses which end with a series of salutations to the Mother of God each beginning with the word Rejoice. At the end, there is a thirteenth *contakion* which is repeated three times, and then we chant again the first *oikos* and the first *contakion*. For more than half of the composition, themes are drawn directly from the evangelical record of the Annunciation and the Nativity; then we continue acclaiming the holy Virgin for her role in the history of our salvation, ending with a hymn of praise to her as the fulfilment of

all the Old Testament types which foreshadowed her ministry. The hymn is called the Akathist, which means "Not Sitting" because it is not permitted (except of course to the infirm) to sit when it is chanted, and we stand reverently to participate. The chanting of this hymn in Lent - in the Greek usage, it is done on each of the first five Fridays of the fast - is linked with the celebration of the Annunciation in March (see below), because the hymn is fundamentally a proclamation of the truth of the Incarnation of God the Word. The hymn is also chanted to the Mother of God as our "Champion Leader" because she leads us in our spiritual warfare. In Byzantine times, the first kontakion of this great hymn, "To thee, the Champion Leader," which we hear almost every day at the end of Mattins as we set out to engage in life's battle for that day, was practically the battle hymn of the Empire. Now it is used as our spiritual battle hymn. We have recourse to the Mother of God to lead us through the battle field of the fast and as each week draws to a close we thank her for defending us, strengthening us and encouraging us.

In the most churches, the faithful use the first week in Lent to prepare for confession and to receive Holy Communion either on the Saturday of St Theodore's Miracle (the first Saturday of the fast) or on the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy (the first Sunday), and therefore in the Russian practice special services of preparation for Communion are held on the Friday evening in place of the Akathist service.

The Great Feast of the Annunciation is the only Great Feast which falls within March this year. Because it falls in the fast, despite its paramount importance (it is the festival of the Incarnation of the Word of God) it is kept only for two days. This year it falls on the Sunday of the Worship of the Cross, the third Sunday in the fast, and services for both commemorations are chanted together. The second day of the feast is kept as a festival of the Archangel Gabriel. The canon for the Annunciation read at the Vigil service is composed in the form of a dialogue between the All-holy Virgin and St Gabriel. This year because of the celebration of the Cross, at the very end of Mattins, after the Great Doxology, the precious Cross placed on a tray decorated with herbs and flowers, is brought out into the centre of the church, that the faithful might come up and venerate it. The Cross remains in the centre of the church until the following Friday, so that in this mid-week of Lent, the faithful might resort to it to be refreshed in their struggles.

For our mission at Brookwood, this year the second Sunday of Lent, that of Saint Gregory Palamas, will be particularly important, because it coincides with our dedication feast, the Martyrdom of St Edward. Furthermore, this year, on that day we shall have with us the Wonder-working Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God. And so, by God's providence and loving care for us, we shall have one of Orthodox Russia's most holy emblems as well as the relics of one of the few saints of Orthodox England to survive the barbarity of the Church reformations immediately after the Norman conquest and in the sixteenth century. A thousand years ago and more, there were close links between the Church in the British Isles and in Russia. There are evidences that Sts Sergius and Herman of Varlaam might have been monks from the British Isles. Later the Royal houses of England and Russia were linked, when the daughter of King Harold II married into the house of Rurik. Those links were paralleled again when at the end of the nineteenth century two princesses, granddaughters of Queen Victoria, married into the House of Romanov. Both of them are now numbered among the holy

New Martyrs of Russia; they are, of course, the Empress St Alexandra Feodorovna and her sister, the Venerable New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia. We have been blessed to be brought into the bosom of the Orthodox Church, through the missionary witness of that part of the persecuted Russian Church, which during the terrible years of the twentieth century, came into exile, and now, through God's mercy and loving care for us, we shall have for our veneration on that day the Miraculous Icon from Russia and the relics of our own King and Passionbearer. We might also note that the very first Liturgy celebrated here at Brookwood was served on the Saturday of the Laudation of the Mother of God, in Great Lent 1982.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"I understand that in the Orthodox Church we have various sexual taboos about taking Communion. What are these? No one seems to be clear on this" - IP., Sarasota, Florida.

This is really a question that you ought to sit down with your priest and talk through at some length, but I can perhaps give you an outline answer, which may be of some help at least in mapping out the territory. First of all, I think that your thinking of "taboos" is misguided - this seems to imply some superstitious mumbo jumbo. Rather what we have are disciplines. As Orthodox Christians, we are, as St Paul makes clear, engaged in an athletic contest (2 Tim. 2:5). There are various things which any athlete, striving for the mastery, will be forbidden to do. Some of these will be forbidden because they are simply against the rules of the game, and others will be forbidden because they will not help the athlete in his chosen endeavour. It will not help a sprinter, for instance, if he eats so much that he weighs as much as a sumo wrestler. So he keeps to a regime where he keeps his weight down.

So it is in our spiritual contest, and we have various disciplines and they have different purposes. We should emphasize that these disciplines do not only concern sexual matters. The very first thing mentioned in the Priests' Service Book, for instance, with regard to celebrating the Divine Liturgy (at which he will receive the Holy Mysteries) has nothing to do with sex, but is that he "should first be reconciled with everyone." Those which you have asked about and which concern the sexual side of our life may thus be put in various categories.

There are some things which are clearly sinful, and those who engage in them should not approach to receive the Holy Mysteries without first going to confession and accepting the *epitimia*, which their spiritual father enjoins them to. Even then they may not receive a blessing to receive the Mysteries for a period after they have abandoned their sin. This period is not meant as a punishment, but as a period of healing for them. In this category, one would put having sexual relations with anyone other than one's spouse, or when one has not been married in church; engaging in unnatural sexual practices, masturbation, being sexually provocative, etc. If one has engaged in any of these practices one should go to confession and not approach the chalice until one receives a blessing from the confessor to do so.

There are also other sins, usually of the thoughts and the imagination, which must be confessed when one has welcomed them and taken pleasure in them, but which sometimes come uninvited and are immediately repelled, and which then are

not counted to us as sin. Undoubtedly in these instances we should pray against these temptations in our prayers, and should confess them, but if they are slight and fleeting one may approach the chalice without confessing to the priest. Often the devil uses just such thoughts as these to confuse us and prevent us from communicating. If one is troubled by these temptations though, one can always ask your confessor for his advice and guidance on how to deal with them, and if you are troubled you should speak to your confessor before receiving.

There are also other aspects of our sexual side, which are not sinful but are natural to our fallen state. In the Orthodox Church married couples abstain from taking Holy Communion if they have not fasted from marital intercourse. This in no way implies that such intercourse is sinful or a defilement, but it is a reminder that such relations are part of our fallen nature and not of that nature as first created. It is also a recognition of the fact, that such relations, although honourable, are often tainted with sinful desires or inclinations.

Men also abstain from Communion if they have had an involuntary seminal emission, and there is a rule of prayer which they say after such occasions. Similarly women do not receive the Holy Mysteries when they have their period, although as this happens in the course of things and is less likely to be associated with some sinful inclination, there is no rule for them to say. Both of these disciplines, like the one about marital intercourse, are kept both because these things are reminders that our nature is fallen, and because they are often either combined with or associated with sinful inclinations. In the case of nocturnal emissions one should note that the sinful inclinations with which they are linked need not necessarily be sexual in themselves. Gluttony, pride, judging others can play a role.

This is a very brief and sketchy overview of our disciplines, and I think that it would be unwise to mention more, not knowing your particular interest in this question. In any case, you should consult your own spiritual father about any problems you have in this sphere and I only hope these thoughts might help you in your approach to him.

NEWS SECTION

REPOSE OF BISHOP MITROFAN OF BOSTON

ONE OF THE OLDEST HIERARCHS of the Russian Church Abroad, His Grace Bishop Mitrofan of Boston, died on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, Friday 2nd/15th February. Bishop Mitrofan was born in Brest, the son of a priest. After the Revolution, his older brother, also a priest, was executed by the Cheka. The family were able to return to Brest, now in Poland, and His Grace studied at Warsaw and Belgrade Universities. He married and he began his priestly ministry in 1934. Through the German occupation he cared for his flock and protected them, before beginning in 1944 a long pilgrimage in exile, which took him to Western Europe, North Africa and finally the United States. In 1960, he was assigned as pastor of the Saint Seraphim's Church in Sea Cliff, Long Island. In 1989, his beloved matushka of 55 years, Alexandra Semeonovna, died, and in 1992 Father Mitrofan was tonsured a monk at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, and thereafter consecrated as Bishop with the title of Boston. Last year "Troitsa Books" published his "Path to a Meaningful and Fruitful Life." The

funeral of the beloved Archpastor was to be served on Monday 18th February by Metropolitan Lavr. May Bishop Mitrofan, who served God's Church so long and fruitfully on earth, now find rest with the saints and Memory Eternal.

MORE ON ASSISI

THE MULTI-FAITH GATHERING in Assisi, held under the auspices of the Pope on 24th January, has attracted criticism both from official Roman Catholic spokesmen and from the "traditionalist" R.C. movements. Vittorio Messori, who collaborated with the Pope in his publication of "Crossing the Threshold of Hope" in 1994, is quoted as saying: "If the doctrine of every religion is acceptable to God, why persist in following the Catholic one?" He complained that the papal involvement had reduced the Pope's authority on moral issues. The Traditionalist Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, in their publication "Catholic," devoted nearly a whole page to a robust objection to the implications of Assisi gathering, by Rev. Fr. Nicholas Mary, C.S.S.R, entitled "Confusion and Scandal."

Happier news is that the Orthodox Churches of Greece and Georgia did not send representatives to the gathering.

POPE PLANS BULGARIAN VISIT

HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II is making plans to visit Bulgaria between 23rd and 25th May if the Bulgarian Patriarchate responds favourably to this initiative. An internet posting regarding the plans states that in a land of 7.7 million people, over 80% of the people are Christians. Of these, 2% are Roman Catholics and 2% are Protestant, but, the article states, "96% of Bulgarian Christians are traditional [sadly not traditionalist! - ed.] Orthodox."

Although this proposed visit is opening avenues between the Vatican and the Bulgarian Patriarchate, relations between Rome and the Patriarchate of Moscow have deteriorated lately, because Rome has up-graded the four administrative districts that she maintained in Russia to fully-fledged dioceses. As seems to be the way of things now, contentions about status, jurisdiction and positions continue, but little is heard with regard to contesting for the Faith.

CONDEMNATION OF CLONING

THE HOLY SYNOD of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) has issued a condemnation of the practice of cloning. "The fact that much of the life of an embryo is potential does not alter its nature as a human being," the hierarchs stated. "Because the DNA or genetic code is fully present from fertilization (or, we must specify today, from the onset of embryonic growth), unique and individually differentiated human life is fully present, even though it has not been expressed as specific organs or capacities, and even though it may twin to produce multiple offspring." The bishops called for a ban on nuclear transfer and parthenogenesis, stating "we may not use evil means to achieve good ends; therefore we may not kill human embryos, even to make possible life-saving or life-enhancing therapies." They noted that harvesting stem cells from adult tissue and from the blood of umbilical cords" was possible and suggested that these techniques should be supported and publicly funded.

MAY WE HOPE?

AT AN ORTHODOX-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE held in Warwick last December and inspired by the Papal letter "Orientale Lumen," Archimandrite Serge

Keleher (Greek Catholic) very wisely stated: "Let us not repeat the mistake of thinking 'Well we can do very well always speaking to the people we like and not to those whom we don't like so much.' Big mistake - very big mistake. Because quite often, it is the one's we don't like so much with whom we most need to listen and who most need to be heard. There is much talk these days of the evil of oppression. One of the worst aspects of it is to hear that no one hears you. That's much of the problem in Eastern Europe. They feel no one listens, no one cares. What they need is to be given the chance to articulate their pains ... also to give them a chance to feel, 'I am able to speak. That someone is really listening to me.'" (quoted from "Catholic Times, 16/12/01). Does this mean, we wonder, that Orthodox Traditionalists will be allowed a voice?

BROOKWOOD NEWS

DOUBLE BAPTISM: On Sunday 28th January/10th February, Father Peter Baulk was the celebrant at the baptism of Joanna and Eugene, the children of Simon and Anna Rotheram of Knaphill, Woking. Eugene Bourov and Katarina Abramova stood as sponsors for Joanna, and James Merritt and Tatiana Reardon for Eugene. The children returned on the following Sunday for the removal of their chism robes, but we ask the prayers of the faithful for them that they ever remain clothed with God's blessing.

VISIT TO CONGLETON MISSION: Over the weekend of 9th and 10th February (n.s.). Father Alexis visited the mission in Congleton, Cheshire. On the Saturday evening, the Vigil was chanted in the little garden chapel of St Werburgh at the home of Mrs Barbara Worth, On the following day, because of planning restrictions on the use of the garden chapel when the congregation is larger, the Divine Liturgy was appointed in the church hall at Eaton, which the parishioners have dedicated to Sts Constantine and Helena. Father Paul Elliott concelebrated with Fr Alexis, and at the end served a moleben to the New Martyrs of Russia, whose day it was, and of whom an icon from Russia had been donated to the parish by John and Katya Harwood. After the service, a parish breakfast was provided for all. Everything in the church hall has to be set up before and dismantled after every service, and it was impressive to join the little team of workers who arrived an hour and a quarter early to do this. Led by Subdeacon Vincent Gibbons, they transformed the bare empty hall, by setting up a portable iconostas with Russian style doors, a specially made Holy Table, icons stands and candle holders. They put up curtains to complete the division of the altar area from the nave, and placed icons around the church. Everything was movable, but the overall effect when it was completed was a witness to the love and devotion of the parishioners.

GIFTS TO SAINT EDWARD'S CHURCH: In recent days we have been given a set of priest's vestments, chalice veils and a quantity of liturgical books by Protopresbyter Alexander Cherney, the dean of the Latvian Orthodox communities in the British Isles. John and Ekaterina Harwood have also presented the church with a large chalice for use at festivals, when now our usual one is too small. May they all be rewarded for their kindness towards us and support of our mission, receiving from the hand of God things eternal for things temporal.

PRACTICAL TIP

APPLY YOURSELF conscientiously to keeping
Great Lent this year, and reap the benefits.