

November-December 77

Antiochian Church on the Road to Union

"The Orthodox Press and Information" of Paris, in its July -August issue, informs us of the recent measures taken by the Antiochian Patriarchate and the Uniate Melkite Catholic Patriarchate to reach union. Both Patriarchates have made statements of a general nature, expressing a desire for union, after the Patriarchs exchanged visits and had several discussions.

The statement of the Orthodox Patriarchate declares that "Patriarch Elias IV wants to work out a practical program for unification of the Eastern Church. We hope to go beyond the stage of dialogue and start to implement it".

The declaration of the Melkite Patriarchate is similar: "The Sacred Synod has ruled to make every effort to bring together the two branches of the Antiochian Patriarchate; efforts which would go far beyond the traditional theological opinions but would remain within the limits of programmed action, which establish the genuine Eastern identity of both Churches". At the same time, each Synod reached an agreement about the general program. One of the Melkite bishops suggested the term "unity of transitional period". According to this project, until the time that full unity can be reached the Uniate Catholic Patriarchate would join the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate. In that way, the Melkites would be in communion with Rome and with the Orthodox Patriarchate at the same time.

The Greek Catholic Uniates however, did not accept fully the proposed project. Their Synod unanimously selected a plan of gradual collaboration of both parties. While expressing the clear and definite wish for complete unity, it proposed several measures which would overcome present obstacles and lead to the total unity of both Patriarchates. Meanwhile, "each community is to retain its status, independent from each other in religious as well as in civil matters". In this manner the complicated theological discussion concerning the matter of "dual membership" is escaped. In other words, the Orthodox and Catholics want a unity of some kind, while omitting the dogmatical questions and treating conformity of doctrine as unimportant.

Pilgrimages to the Holy Land

From mid July until mid September there were several pilgrimages from the USA and from Europe to the Holy Land. Two weeks were spent by a group under the leadership of Archbishop Roman of Paris, as well as a group from Belgium, France and Germany headed by Archbishop Anthony of Geneva. There was also a group from Los Angeles, led by Fr. A. Mileant. There were also some pilgrims from Australia. The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission hosted the pilgrims at the hostel on the Mt. of Olives and at the Bethany School.

Bethany School

The Bethany School has begun its school year. This year the amount of students has nearly doubled. There are 124 girls enrolled in the school. Since its establishment the school has never had that many students. Certainly, the administration of the school is very happy to have that many students but at the same time there is much concern to find a means for the upkeep of this institution.

The Court Case

At the end of August, a meeting of the lawyers for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem was called in New York, in order to discuss the Court Case. Contrary to false rumours that the Mission had lost the Court Case the Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe), continues to work with the lawyers and the administration of the Mission on this matter. Through the assistance of the American and Jordanian governments, the Mission has managed to obtain very important and necessary documents, which will be presented at the next court session in the nearest future.

The Financial Situation of the Mission

In connection with the financial difficulties all over the World and also as a possible result of the general political situation in the Mid-East area, the cost of living and prices for most essential foods were raised considerably. Trade and business do not feel this as much as the Church and other charitable institutions, which totally depend upon individual contributions and church collections. No such collections are made in the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, because there is no existing Russian congregation. The prices for groceries which rose last year 40% were already this year raised another 25% more and according to the Jerusalem Post of October 16th are expected to be raised another 30% toward the end of the current year. Under such conditions it is practically impossible to keep up with the situation.

A Bit More in Reference to the Court Case

"While in Church, Sir, Hold onto Your Wallet." Under this title, the Newspaper "The Washington Star" of September 10th, published a very detailed article dedicated to the court case of our Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

The author of this article, Mr. William Willoughby, who visited Jerusalem some 4 years ago, gathered information from all sides and came to the conclusion that the story of the Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Anthony Grabbe concerning the intrigues and manner in which the governments can handle certain cases "could get an awful lot of people into real trouble - worse than Bert Lance is in."

In Willoughby's opinion, the handing over of the multimillion dollar property of the Mission to the Soviets was "one of the most stunning 'coups' in diplomatic history - a real estate deal, that I have a hunch, Isreal wishes it never got tangled up in."

We should remind our reader that in 1947 the Israeli government arrested and then deported the whole administration of the Mission and then declared it to be "abandoned property" by its owners. After that, the records of the real estate ownership were altered and the property given to the Communists as a token of appreciation to the Soviet Union for being the first to recognize their newly established State.

The author of the article has no doubts whatsoever, that the illegal seizure of the Mission's property by the Israeli government and handing it over to Soviet Authorities was a terrible violation of its legal rights.

"Those who were aware of the facts in Israel, long ago conceded that it was a gross mistake from the standpoint of international law. But how does one make the 'Gross Mistake', in this case the Soviet Union, pack up its belongings and let the rightful owners back into their property?...."

"I am not unversed in law and believe me, there are some very strange shenanigans going on in the handling of the Archimandrite's suit", continues the correspondent.

At the end of his article, Willoughby addresses the Chief of the Mission with the words: "It would appear to me, good Archimandrite Grabbe, that maybe the World Court ought to have a long, hard look at this case."

The Head of the American Episcopalians in Moscow

"The Net", an Episcopalian newspaper in Florida in its October issue, published some interesting details of the visit to the Soviet Union of the presiding Bishop of the Episcopalian Church in America, John Allin.

Although guests of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Episcopalians informed its representatives that they are very much concerned with the question of the freedom of religion in the USSR, but also agreed that the negotiations should not be limited to only this problem.

Dr. Alexis Bouyevsky, the Secretary of the Department of Interchurch Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate declared that "Our task is to affirm the normal progress of our church life. According to law, our government cannot interfere in the life of the Church, because the Church has its own laws". He also assured the delegation that "the State provides the church with all the material necessary for the production of Church articles." "In my view, said Bouyevsky, the State does its best to insure the normal life of our Church."

Dr. Anderson asked about the lack of religious education for children and also noted that the official press never gives any information on Church life.

Bishop Allin explained his views on the ordination of women to the priesthood and admitted that this question caused severe division among his flock. "The Episcopal Church found no progress was being made through argument. So permission was given by our General Con-

vention of the Church to test by experiment, that which could not be settled by argument. It was an effort to proceed in faith. It does not suggest that the Episcopal Church is correct and that other churches are wrong."

The President for the Foreign Relations Department for the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Juvenaly, said that although many Russians would like to cease ecumenical dialogue with the Anglicans because of the Women's ordination issue, he personally thinks that they are going to continue. "We have not agreed to stop dialogue, he said, the Russian Orthodox Church does not want to take a step back, but to face the difficulties".

The issue of the "filioque" was raised at this meeting too. Originally the Episcopalians used it, following the Roman Catholic example, then in the draft of the Creed in the proposed Book of Common Prayer, it was omitted and then restored by the insistence of the House of Deputies at the General Convention in 1976. Since the Moscow Patriarchate strongly disapproved of this decision, Bishop Allin assured her that this matter was not yet settled "in finality".

It is amazing how easily basic dogmatic teaching can be changed to this or that direction in our age.

Unrest among Episcopalians continues

While one part of the conservative circle of Episcopalians protesting women's ordination gathered in order to establish a new Anglican Church in North America from dissidents from three already formed dioceses, another group, still in communion with the official church, tries its best to avoid schism and yet quietly stop women's ordinations and obtain stronger laws against homosexuals and lesbians through pressure over more liberal bishops.

The conservative group was very well organized this time and through lobbying managed some success on some points. Yet, being afraid to be too persistent, did not demand any interdict against Bishop Moore, who ordained an avowed lesbian.

Another conservative group, which is in the process of establishing a new church has had some difficulties, mainly because it must find at least three Bishops who would be in full communion with the Church of England, since they need a duly ordained bishop. They hope to achieve that aim soon.

The combined result of conservative efforts was the unexpected offer of the president of the Anglican Church in America, Bishop John Allin to resign his post unless he received unanimous support from the Bishops. His statement, that he in good conscience could not accept women's ordination to the priesthood in spite of the decision of the General Convention, created quite an uproar. Despite the statement of one of the Bishops that Bishop Allin deviated from the teaching of the Episcopal Church the episcopate voted their support being afraid of another Schism. This was hardly an easy victory for Bishop Allin.

According to information in the New York Times of October 6th, the meeting was a very unruly one. Bishop Allin had to answer a number of difficult questions. In response he said that he thinks that it is doubtful that his colleagues would "not want a presiding bishop who could't make up his mind and would not state his conscience".

Although almost all the bishops said they admired their president, most of them still had some reservations that he could be a proper leader for the church during this troublesome times.

Another important issue which was threatening Episcopalian unity was the question of bishop Chambers, since he strongly supports the new dissidents. The bishops are still trying to get some assurance from him that he will not ordain a bishop for them. Yet he is adamant in insisting that he will continue his activities, "once I've put my hand to the plow, I can't look back" he said. All the conservative bishops support his stand.

The only bishop who kept cool head during the heated discussions was bishop John Wyatt of the diocese of Spokane. He was seen working on his needlepoint. While sitting among other bishops he declared: "It's hard just to sit here and not be active. Doing needlepoint helps. It also keeps me from wanting to get up and talk all the time".

The bishops came to the Convention with their wives and children and spent most of their free time at the swimming pools.

The Infiltration of Roman Catholicism with Masonry.

Upon noticing the sharp decline and changes of Traditional Catholic teaching during the last decades the conservative circles have often suggested that they were dictated by the infiltration of the masons in to the episcopate and clergy. Yet, so far there has been no valid evidence to support these suspicions.

Just recently, the Masonic Register of Italy published a roster of its members, including the date of initiation. Among the members are listed 17 bishops and senior clerics who hold key positions in hierarcial and political field.

Archbishop Agostino Caseroli, who seems to be the first to have become a mason (September 1957) and holds an important post as Secretary of Public Affairs of the Church, opens the list with his name.

He is followed by Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops, Archbishop Armibale Bugnini, the principal author of the "Novus Ordo" Mass, Mgr. Pasquale Macchi, private secretary of Pope Paul VI, Cardinal Villot, Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Leo Suenens, known for his support to the Pentecostal movement, Mgr. Virgilio Lovino, Assistant Director of the Vatican paper "L'Osservator Romano", Mgr. Franci Biffi, Rector of the Pontifical University of the Lateran, Archbishop Mario Brini, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Oriental Church and other influential and prominent clerics.

Forceble modernism by Catholics.

A Roman Catholic priest Robert Fox in his article "Bishops updating Theology?" (The National Catholic Register, Sept. 4th) gives interesting details on a seminar which he was obliged to attend due to an order given by the local ruling bishops. This seminar, which bishops called "institute" was of 6 weeks to 3 months duration and was attended by 50 priests. When they, including the writer of this article started to worry about what may happen meanwhile in their parishes, the church authorities assured them that the rectories will be staffed by substitute priests. Fr. Fox notes that when some time ago he wanted to leave for a pilgrimage in Europe for only two weeks he searched then for three months and was unable to find a substitute, but no there was no problem to find one.

The participants of the seminar were strongly persuaded to "accept Vativan II" although no one questioned its authority.

The new the logians were lecturing bishops and priests and, not without sadness, Fr. Fox notes: " Roles are reversed. Theologians become the "teaching Church" while the bishops listed and are brain-washed".

The bishop, conducting the "institute" told the participants that he can forse in the future women priests for Catholics. He also praised the Pentecostal movement.

When mentioning Pentecostals, the author recalls a case concerning his friend in Rome. He happened to attend the international Charismatic convention on the holy day of Pentecost. Suddenly, one of the participants broke out in tongues. The friend of Fr. Fox, a Catholic priest himself, who spoke 7 languages, could not understand the "tongues" stood next to his colleague, another priest, who exclaimed: "that man is speaking Arabic. Do you know what he is saying? I undersyand that language. He is praising the devil".

Fr. Fox bitterly cOmplains that the priest, who still follow tradition and are devoted to the Holy Virgin are persecuted by their bishops and forced out of their parishes and forcebly sent to courses in order to "update their pastoral Theology" according to the demands of modernists.

The Greek Archdiocese and Jews.

The Greek Archdiocese in America issued a special edition of its theological magazine entitled "The Greek Orthodox Theological Review (Volume XXII # 1, Spring 1977) edited by Nomikos Michael Vaporis and prominent rabbi, Mark Tannenbaum. This special edition of "Greek Orthodox Jewish Consultation" has a joint introduction of both editors and a separate statement by Archbishop Iakovos.

In his greeting to the members of the Consultation, Archbishop Iakovos said that : " Here in America..... in this ecumenical age of ours, we speak not only of a common Judeo-Christian tradition, but also of the affinities and similarities in the basics of theology as well as of morality". The Archbishop notes that for centuries each party has tried to monopolize "God and Truth, as our own property and sole posession".... "It is in the last part of this century, and especially after the atrocities and massacres of the German Jews by the Hitlerite regime, that

we felt that we Christians of the West were burdened with an equal amount of guilt since up to that time we were attributing the crucifixion of Jesus to the Jews" (p.2).

Rabbi Tannenbaum on his part noted the influence which Hellenism had over Judaism and gave credit to the Greek Church for saving the lives of some Jews from Nazi persecution, but at the same time said that "Certain traditions of anti-Jewish teaching and prayers continue to obtain a certain aspects Greek Orthodox life and liturgy, even as certain anti-Christian tendencies continue to disfigure the features of some quarters in Jewery". Rabbi Tannenbaum urges both parties to study the standpoints of each other in order to establish "correctives against such alienating forces" (p.4).

The author of these reports, certainly realizes the difficulty of combining Judaism and Christianity. Seymour Siegel admits that "Christianity claims to supercede Judaism" (p.6). And he finds a solution: "The duty of Christianity (which happily has been undertaken in many circles, already) is to cleanse the Church of anti-Jewish bias, to uproot the Christian roots of anti-Semitism. There is no doubt that the teachings of the church have added fuel to the uglyfires of anti-Jewish prejudice. Stories about the crucifixion images and pictures of Judas, and the denigration of the Jewish faith all have added to the teaching of contempt".(ibid). Then Siegel lists a number of Christian dogmas which are unacepitable for Jews.

The Greek member of this consultation, Theodore Stylianopoulos, opens the road for concessions on the part of the Orthodox even in regards to the books of New Testament. " As far as the nature of Gospels is concerned, he writes, we are now more aware that they are polemical writings, much like the religious literature on Greek Orthodox- Roman-Catholic relations after the Great Schism and the Crusaders, and like the literature on Roman-Catholic-Protestant relations after the Reformation, and that, therefore, the Gospels tend to sharpen and generalize the discontinuity and conflict of Jesus's ministry with Judaism" (p.72).

Alas, for the sake of reaching an agreement with Judaism, a member of the Consultation on the part of the Greek Archdiocese reduces the holy Gospels to the status of polemical literature of that age. Then, in the name of the Church Stylianopoulos accepts the Jewish point of view and writes: "a) the New Testament, as sacred as it is for us, contains in its sweeping anti-Jewish polemics and first seeds of anti-Semitism; b) the use of the New Testament as sacred Scripture for worship and teaching in the church has encouraged attitudes of prejudice and hostility against Jews; c) the same is true of many Christian hymns and liturgies based on biblical themas, images, or statements; and d) the absolute Christological and ecclesiastical claims of the New Testament involve or should involve an eschatological reality of spiritual newness which in no way expressed, but rather contradicted by, Christian prejudice, or evil actions against Jews" (p. 77-78).

It should be noted that this is written not by a Jewish person, but a representative of the Constantinopoliten Church.

No wonder this is echoed by a Jew. "Yet, writes Jacob B. Agus, the Jew also knows that the various documents constituting the New Testament were edited by Christians at time when the church consisted largely of Gentiles and engaged in bitter fights against Jews (ibid, p.86). And then the conclusion is made that "the New Testament passages implying the "rejection" of the Jewish people, as reversal of their previously been chosen, were superimposed upon the earlier tradition of the church after the fall of Jerusa--- Iem....." (p.87).

The above quotations make it obvious that the representatives of Constantinopolitan Church agreed to question authoritativeness of the New Testament, which occasionally expresses not the true and eternal Word of God, but as the polemical expression, characteristic only to the particular historical period. After adopting such a point of view, Archbishop Iakovos accepted a resolution, according to which "a study of Greek Orthodox liturgy to be undertaken by Greek Orthodox scholars with a view toward reviewing or revising negative or hostile references to the Jewish people and Judaism in certain readings in the liturgy" (Recommendations adopted by the Greek Orthodox-Jewish scholars Colloquium, January 25-26, 1972, p.155).

Fraternization of the Catholics with Jews

The widely known Brooklyn's paper "The Tablet" just recently opened a new section "Getting to Know our Jewish Brethren", which is a Question and Answer column.

One of the readers inquired: "Will they (Jews) go to heaven even though they are not baptized? Is it possible to have Masses said for deceased Jewish friends?"

To this a Catholic priest gives the following answers: "God wants all men to be saved. If a Jew worships and obeys God according to his own understanding of what is necessary, he will be saved. It is permissible to have Masses offered for deceased Jewish friends".

Yet, Mgr. Bosler didn't stop at this peculiar explanation (if one can be saved outside of faith in Our Saviour and baptism, then there would be no need for Him to become incarnate) which basically contradicts the very words of Jesus Christ, Who stated that there is no salvation without baptism. He feels a need to explain to the inquiring person why he had the urge to ask such a question. And here we find that because of holocaust when millions of Jews lost their lives at the hands of the Nazis, the Second Vatican Council called Christians for establishment of new relations among both religions.

"In 1974 Pope Paul created a Commission for Religious Relations with Jews. The same year that new commission issued instructions recommending changes in catechisms and history books, training in Judaism for seminarians and religious instructors so that Catholic children grow up with a better understanding and appreciation of Judaism".

A Peculiar Concelebration of Catholics and Protestants.

As per Episcopal Magazine "The Living Church" of Sept. 25th a strange ecumenical service was conducted in Iowa City. The participants were: Rev. Paul Sandin of the First Baptist Church, Roman Catholic priest Msgr. Cletus Madsen and Rev. Roy Wingate, a Lutheran pastor.

The "Liturgy of the Word" was served by all three clerics together and then, they split up into separate sections to celebrate the Eucharistic service. Another Catholic priest on the faculty of Temple University located in Philadelphia, the Rev. Gerald Sloyan preached.

New Revision of the Text for Oberammergau Play.

Since the Second World War a play which depicts the suffering and crucifixion of Our Saviour and is staged every 10 years in the Bavarian village of Oberammergau has been altered a few times. A new production scheduled for 1980 will be revised again, due to demands of the American Jewish Committee, and the whole play will be taken "line by line" in search for anti-Semitic expressions.

The New York Times of Sept. 4th relates that 4 members of this Committee headed by Rabbi Mark Tannenbaum spent 5.30 hours previewing the show in its proposed revised version. The members of the Committee came to the conclusion that although "there is a number of positive features that are encouraging", still a number of issues remain to be settled. Rabbi Tannenbaum thinks that one of the main issues is the incorrect presentation of the Sanhedrin and the Jews who because of it often are perceived as "instruments of Lucifer". The Committee also criticized the presentation of Pilate as a "weakling manipulated by the Sanhedrin and a howling Jewish mob".

Never the less Rabbi Tannenbaum was pleased with the results of the Comissions negotiations and described them as "serious and constructive", especially because the producers promised to be constantly in touch with the members of the Committee in order to "remain available to help bring about the maximum possible improvement through the removal of anti-Jewish referances and negative dramatic imagery".

Donations received and greatly appreciated : Mrs. Mary Bond, St. John the Baptist church in Washington, D.C., Mr. P. Iljinsky, Protopresbyter N. Ponomarev, Archpriest A. Mileant, B. Zane and Mrs. T. Galitzine.

PLEASE NOTE:

We regret that due to unforeseen various circumstances we were unable to furnish our Newsletter at the proper time. Yet inspite of latenes, we stil feel that some information continues to be of interest for our readers. For those who save them for referance-there will be no gap in numbering. We hope to do a bit better in the future.