



TOVER OF ST. CASSIAN

V.5,N.2

NEWSLETTER OF THE OCR

Autumn, 1997

+ IN MEMORIAM +

This Special Issue of The Tover is in memory of Steven B. Dwares, a member of the Society of St. Cassian, who died tragically on Nov. 7, 1996. Frater Steven had spent some time in the Summer of 1995 at Camp St. Cassian as a postulant. Two weeks before his death he was present on Oct. 27, 1996 at the Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea in Potter Hollow, N.Y., for the installation of the parish's new diaconal minister, Mrs. Maria Babwahsingh, the vice-president of the Societas Rosicruciana in America. Also present with him were Mr. & Mrs. Charles Cicero and Dr. Robert A. Gilbert. Deaconess Maria will succeed Sister Lucia as president of the Rosicruciana.

NEWS ABOUT OUR CHURCH

The AEC, Province of the East:

4/1/97.....M. Rev. D.M. Garrison appointed OCR Coadjutor; on 8/12/97 he resigned from the AOC & OMMTS effective 9/1/97

5/24/97.....The Primate, Dr. Bertil Persson, received Msgr. Paget E.J. Mack into the province.

6/6/97.....Camp St. Cassian is closed & put up for sale.

6/18/97.....Metropolitan Emi of the Belarusan Autocephalous Church in Exile visited with the Provincial to seek support for his work overseas.

7/12/97.....Msgr. Mack is consecrated Bishop of Harlem at St. John's Episcopal Am. Cath. C. by B. Persson, F. C. Spataro, H.E. Caudill and F. Ugalde.

7/20/97.....Feast of Madonna della Civita, Societa' Itrana

8/7/97.....OSBM is convenantly affiliated with the Prov. (Abbot-Bp. G. Christopher Reynolds, MA, Founder.)

Order of St. Benedict The Moor, Box 34, 560 Atlantic Av. 11217

Centre For Body, Mind & Spirit, Box 170234, Brooklyn, 11217.

The AEC, Province of the West:

The new Chancellery Bldg. is at 9424 International B., Oakland, CA 94603. [510]382-9941:hrs., Noon to 4PM.

The Coadjutor of the Prov. is the Rt. Rev. Howard Van Orden.

7/27/97..... Archbp. Weeks incardinated into the Prov. Chorepiskopus Jack Sweet, Rector of St. Leonard's, Woodland, & Fr. Massie, a missionary among Native Americans;

Bp. F. Ogden Miller, formerly of the Anglican Rite Jurisdiction of the Americas.

Creation of the AEC Diocese of American Canyon, California.

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THE TOVER

An Open Letter

[The following Letter was written on May 1, '94 to the " Dear Abbot" column of The Gnostic Christian, Rt 1, Box 5, Geneva, NE. For more on this read " An Eagle's Flight," Autobiography Of Gnostic Orthodox Christian by Abbot George Burke, \$ 17.95]

Dear Abbot:

....I am writing now because of a recent "Dear Abbot" column about women's ordination and your point of view about it. I know of your odyssey from Protestantism to Hinduism to Roman Catholicism to Liberal Catholicism to Old Catholicism to Eastern Orthodoxy to Gnostic Orthodoxy(sic). So I can understand your very personal & peculiar point of view. We are all entitled to our point of view.

.....This, however, should not be presented to your reading public as the Point of View of either the Eastern Orthodox or the Oriental Orthodox. In the March '94 issue of Credo, published by St. Luke's Priory, a monastery of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian diocese, whose head, Metr. Philip, sits on SCOBA, there was a reprint of an article by the late Msgr. Alexander Turner, superior of the SSB. Msgr. Turner makes it quite clear that, for whatever good reasons, the arguments of Occultism have no place alongside the Patristic Teachings of the Eastern Churches.

.....Msgr. Turner absolutely denies in his article that the early Christians believed in reincarnation, karma or pantheism. He calls it all from an Orthodox Christian point of view " the veriest nonsense" ! Our Lady the Theotokos in your column is presented as an incarnation (!) of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity and as the Feminine Principle within the Godhead ! And according to you she is comparable to "Her Son Jesus...the incarnation of the Only-Begotten of the Father....." Dear Abbot, this is NOT Eastern Orthodox or Oriental Orthodox theology. And you must make this clear to your reading public, however, noble your efforts to explain why women cannot be priests or bishops.

.....I humbly beseech you, even though your aims are worthy to clarify where you are coming from. I imagine that many of your readers and customers are not truly familiar with Eastern Orthodoxy and may come to think that the teachings put forth in "The Gnostic Christian" are the official ones of the Orthodox Catholic Church of the East....

Your brother in Christ,
The Editor of the Tover

(See the Aug. 25, '97 Newsweek's cover story on the " The Meaning of Mary " in the Church : " There would be a kind of Holy Quartet, with Mary playing the multiple role of daughter of the Father, mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit. " This idea of the lay theologian, Mark Miravalle, has been rejected by 23 Curia experts as counter the spirit of Vatican II by alienating both Protestants and Orthodox whose spokesman, Fr. George Passias, called it simply a heresy.)

The Tower of St. Cassian

SYNESIUS: AN AFRICAN FATHER OF THE CHURCH: Part One

By Archpriest Edward F. James, Ph.D

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The birthday of Synesius of Cyrene in N. Africa merits an entry in most good encyclopedias, and is variously given as AD 365/370. Born into a N. African pagan aristocratic family of the East Roman Empire, he later became the Orthodox Christian bishop of Ptolemais, a city on the northern Libyan coast. In looking at his life we get some understanding of how men who were traditionally educated in the Greco-Roman aristocratic style in the vast Roman Empire before the Dark Ages and in the pagan Hellenistic philosophical world, entered the Christian Church and even became Christian leaders.

Now the story of how Christianity was born into Jewish culture has often been told; the opening pages are in Acts. Convert memberships from Jewish communities in Antioch, Edessa & Nisibis nurtured early Judeo-Christian roots in the Near East. But Christianity became in a few centuries of its birth the religion of the entire classical world of the Greco-Roman Empire extending from the Mediterranean into the Saharan, E. African & Indian worlds, as well as deep into Europe as far as the British Isles.

And it was not in these areas into a Jewish ethos that the Christian vision came, but rather into the pagan cultures dominated by the Ancient Wisdom of the Greco-Roman heritage. These cultures and that heritage served to incubate the Christian vision of Rome, Alexandria, Carthage & Caesarea. The pagan world and pagan philosophy provided important building blocks for the intellectual bridge 1,000's of early Christian believers crossed in their conversion to their new Faith. Among those travelers was Synesius of Cyrene.

To understand the spiritual and intellectual journey of the man who would be Metropolitan of Ptolemais, we need to appreciate something of the historical & cultural landscape in which he traveled in the late 4th & early 5th-Centuries. This cultural background is what is called "The Hellenistic Period," or Hellenism and the term refers to the later phases of Greek culture from the conquests of Alexander the Great (334 BC to 323 BC) through the period of Roman imperial absorption of the areas conquered by the Greeks to the end of the Ancient World when those governed by this culture were not of Greek blood or ancestry. Hellenism influenced Phoenicia & its traders, South Russia and the Danube lands, Egypt, N. Africa and Macedonia, the West, Sicily, Gaul, Spain. Hellenism influenced even aspects of Persian, Indian, Iranian, Babylonian and Ethiopian culture. This macro-culture, carried on the vehicle of Hellenic Greek, included the concepts: elected magistrates, classical drama, athletics, Greek architecture, dress, furniture and urban planning. It stood apart from the Barbarian North.

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A most important characteristic of Hellenism was that it was inclusive of "foreign" ideas & religions: under the Romans, who made use of all that was Greek, the cults of non-Greek deities flourished. The Egyptian goddess, Isis, became a favorite in Hellenic culture; Persian Mithraism, worshipping a creator-father-god who saved mankind, was most popular among the military. Judaism with its monotheism became attractive to 100's who did not become Jews but worshipped as God-fearers on the edges of the synagogues. Among the Oriental cults, Christianity, ultimately overpowering all the rest, thru its material passed thru Jewish tradition, became the State Religion under Constantine the Great.

Christianity, which had initially used Hellenism as its cultural and linguistic vehicle, also became a propagator as the classical age began to wane. The values & ethics of Hellenism, very often most compatible with the Gospel message, merged with early Christian teaching. Very importantly, the City of Alexandria, Egypt, emerged as the center of Christianity. By 325 AD, at the Council of Nicaea, the Bishop of Alexandria was assigned a place of honor, second only to the Pope of Rome. The See of St. Mark was even superior to that of Antioch, where adherents had first been called Christians.

The propagation of the Christian Faith among the cultured in Alexandria influenced St. Pantaeus (+ 190 AD) to convert from Paganism as well as his students of Platonism, Clement of Alexandria (fl. 190 AD - 202) and Origen (fl. 202 AD - 231). And both would later consciously weave Christian thought with Platonic philosophy. St. Pantaeus headed Alexandria's catechetical & theological schools. Far from being isolated & narrow in his Christianity or his philosophy, Pantaeus had gone in the last decades of the 2nd-Century to India to preach to Brahmins and Hindu philosophers who had invited him to share his vision with them. It is important to recall that Alexandria from the 2nd to 5th-Centuries was a very cosmopolitan & sophisticated metropolis like NYC today. Another important current influencing the City and North Africa was trade in the Red Sea for spices. This spice route provided both an economic & philosophical exchange between the worlds of the Mediterranean, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Hellenistic Alexandria was the center for science, history, the Arts and scholarship. Since Hellenism was syncretistic, Christianity, as it emerged in Alexandria, was not narrow or rigid or fundamentalist. While the Christian Church of the 4th-Century found it necessary to formalize and crystalize its Trinitarian & Christological beliefs as at Nicaea, nevertheless, the Christian vision which emerged in Alexandria was pulsating with the vitality, dynamism, excitement and positive energy of the World Religions which had dialogued there for centuries.

[To Be Continued In the Next Issue]