October 3

Print

Dionysius the Areopagite

witness

Today the Orthodox churches commemorate the author of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, who became known in history as Dionysius the Areopagite.
The discrepancy between the very little we know about his life and the powerful impact his work exerted on the spirituality and theology of later centuries is surprising, perhaps more so than for any other Church father. Dionysius was probably a Christian of Syriac ancestry who lived in Athens for many years. Strongly influenced by the last neoplatonic philosophers, who were active in the city during his lifetime, he composed a series of writings to which he signed the name of the Athenian who was converted by Paul's preaching at the Areopagus, according to the Acts of the Apostles.
In his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and Celestial Hierarchy, Dionysius inquires into the cosmic order at whose summit is Jesus Christ alone, both in heaven and in the militant Church on earth. In his Divine Names, he employs "positive" theology, analyzing the attributes Scripture assigns to God as a way of seeking out what human beings can attempt to say about God on the basis of revelation. But Dionysius was above all a prominent voice in "negative" theology, according to which one can reach God only by naming the attributes that cannot be attributed to him. All that is left, at that point, is to enter the "more than luminous darkness of silence" and of the unknowing of God, which alone leads the seeker to the ineffable mystery of God's Triunity.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Acts 17:16-34; Mt 13:44-54

Gregory Peradze

(1899-1944)

priest and martyr

Gregory Peradze, a priest of the Georgian church and a world-renowned scholar and ecumenist, died in the concentration camp of Auschwitz in 1944.
Greogory was born in 1899 in Sakascethi, near Gori in eastern Georgia. He graduated from the seminary of Tbilisi, was ordained a priest and enrolled at his country's philosophical academy. Later, he transferred to Bonn, where he earned his degree in 1925.
When the Soviet regime annexed Georgia, Gregory was forced to remain in exile. He pursued his research in England, Germany, France, and Poland, and discovered the emerging ecumenical movement, of which he became and informed and convinced spokesperson. In Europe he taught Georgian history and literature, and became a professor of Patrology at the University of Warsaw. His contribution to the study of the Georgian Church fathers was especially noteworthy.
When Nazi troops occupied Poland and the Second World War began, Gregory, who in the meantime had become archimandrite, was arrested and deported to Auschwitz. He ended his last voyage voluntarily by entering the gas chamber in place of a Jewish father with a large family, whose life was spared.
Gregory Peradze was officially canonized by the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1995.

George Allen Kennedy Bell

(1883-1958)

pastor and ecumenical witness

On October 3, 1958 George Allen Kennedy Bell, bishop of Chichester and pioneer of the ecumenical movement, died peacefully at his home in Canterbury.
Born in Norwich in 1883, Bell studied at Oxford and was ordained a priest in 1907. From 1914 to 1929 he served as first chaplain to the English archbishop, after which he became Dean of Canterbury.
Overwhelmed by the suffering caused by the two world wars, Bell worked fervently to promote reconciliation among nations, tirelessly forming ties with Christians of all denominations.
A man of action, although he by no means lacked theological training, Bell led the Life and Action movement for a number of years. When the movement joined forces with the World Council of Churches, he was elected as first moderator of the newly formed worldwide ecumenical organization. His open scepticism regarding theological dialogues did not prevent him from becoming close friends with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Nathan Söderblom and Wilhelm Visser't Hooft. These friendhips paved the way for the gradual drawing together of the churches after the Second World War.
The last sermon Bell preached before he died was on Luke 17.10: "So you also, when you have done all that you were

ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless servants; we have done only what we ought to have done.'" Significantly, Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached his first sermon on this passage, and it is also the verse that was inscribed on Nathan Söderblom's tombstone in the cathedral of Uppsala.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

LUTHERANS:
Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), founder of an Order in Italy

MARONITES:
Dionysius the Areopagite (?), martyr
Theresa of Lisieux (d. 1897), confessor

ORTODOSSI E GRECO-CATTOLICI:
Dionysius the Areopagite, disciple of saint Paul, hieromartyr
Michael and Theodore of Chernigov (d. 1245), thaumaturges and martyrs (Russian Church)
*Gregory Peradz*e, martyr (Georgian Church)

SIRO-ORIENTALI:
Theresa of Lisieux (Malabar Church)