

First Missions – Greece & Armenia

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Greece & Armenia

Greece & Armenia

Revised March 7, 2024

Greece & Armenia

JOHN MICHELETOS migrated to Canada as a young man and professed in 1910 or 1911 in Alberta and went in the work in 1912. From the start, he wanted to return to Greece to preach. Because of the total control of the Greek Orthodox church, it seemed impossible to go with a non-Greek male companion, and there were no other Greeks in the work at that time. So he married **ANNIE McBRIDE**, one of the sister workers he had first heard who was quite a bit older than he. **They went to Greece in 1920.** Annie died in January, 1948, and John lived until 1966.

After the War, two Australian brother Workers went to Greece, one of them being **THEO KARVOUNAKIS**, a Greek who immigrated to Australia, professed there, and went in the work. One source gives 1924 as the year and they are shown on a 1929 workers list. His companion was **FRED QUICK**, an Australian who ended up spending the rest of his life in the Mediterranean area, working in Syria, Egypt and Cyprus. Fred died in Cyprus in 1968. Theo K. was killed in Athens by a bomb on Dec. 28, 1944 during the war. **ANTON KOUTSOURELIS**, who became the overseer after John's death, went in the work in 1945. Anton was born in Khania, Crete on Dec. 23, 1904 and died June, 1981, age 78 years. He spent most of his ministry in Greece and Crete.

Anton was succeeded by **Nicolas Papadakis** until 1984 or 1985, when the majority of the Greek workers petitioned for someone to come to replace him, and he was dismissed. His name is shown at the top of the 1984 list and is absent from the 1985 list. Up until then, there hadn't been any non-Greek workers working in Greece. Nicolas, **Catherine Stavroulakis**, a sister worker, and **Athanassios Kalogeropoulos**, a brother worker all left the fellowship along with a few others and formed a Breakaway Group. Nicolas and Catherine married.

He just recently passed away. At that time **Pierre (Peter) Bill** came from Switzerland to be overseer until his death in an accident in November 2003.

KATINA KAULAFTAKI, a niece of Theo Karvounakis, and her sister were the first to profess in Greece. In 1931, **KATINA KAULAFTAKI** and **AMALIA BOUZAKIS** were first two Greek sister workers to start in the work. Amalia's husband was killed in 1931 shortly after they professed, and she hid for some time from relatives who wanted to kill her. She was 41 years old at the time and she spent the rest of her life in the work and died in Hania, Crete, 1980. She also spent a number of years working in Egypt.

In spite of a lot of persecution, a number of other Greeks went in the work in the 1930s and 1940s. **JOHN BAKOSIS**, a Greek brother who started in the work in 1932 was executed by guerillas in June, 1944.

There has been a significant growth in the number of Greek workers in recent years, and several young men and women have started out. Greece has been exporting a number of workers to the rest of Europe, and there are a few foreigners also working in Greece now. Like Spain, they have ended their years of isolation which was imposed during the years the religious authorities had such a strong influence in the government.

Convention is a fairly recent event in Greece. The years of persecution by the official state church in both countries made any kind of larger gathering impossible.

Read about the [Division in the Two by Two Church in Greece](#)

ARMENIA is attached to the work in Greece. Workers have been there for several years. **ERIC CULBERT** from England is the overseer in Greece. Workers from Romania, Switzerland, U.K. and the USA have all worked in Armenia in recent years.

When did the workers first arrive in Greece? 1920

Who were the first workers? 1920 A married worker pair: John & Annie Micheletos (nee Annie McBride, a sister worker John professed through)

Who were the first brother workers? Theo(dosios) Karvounakis (a Greek from Australia) and Fred Quick, from Australia
2nd arrived in 1924: **Theo Karvounakis** (Greek emigrant to Australia) and **Fred Quick** (Australia)
1932: John Bakosis (Greece)

Who were the first sister workers? 1931 **Katina Kaulaftaki** (Greece) and [Amalia Bouzakis \(USA\)](#) [Read Amalia's Testimony](#)

below.

In 1936: Theodosia Politakis from Crete.

Who was the first to profess? Katina Kaulaftaki and her sister

When & Where was the first meeting? (info needed)

When & Where was the first baptism? John Maragoudakis and his daughter, Elly Maragoudakis **Elly Maragoudakis**

When & Where was the first convention? 1928 in Athens in a friend's home; ceased for a time and reconvened after the monarchy was overthrown and the republic eventually established religion freedom, breaking the influence of the Orthodox church. (late 1970's?). **View 1978 Greece Workers Photo**

Where is the current convention held? Athens/Inoi; Crete

Who have the Overseers been?

First: **John Micheletos** (died Dec. 1966 in Athens); **Annie (McBride) Micheletos** died in Hania, Crete Jan., 1948

Succeeded by **Anton Koutsourelis** until he died in June 1981 while visiting the USA

Anton was succeeded by **Nicolas Papadakis** until 1984 or 1985 when he was dismissed from the work. He married Catherine Stavroulakis, a sister worker, and they left the fellowship along with a few others and formed a Breakaway Group.

Nicolas was succeeded by **Pierre (Peter) Bill** who came from Switzerland and was the overseer until his death in an accident in November 2003.

Graham Snow replaced Peter Bill for a short time.

Then **Eric Culbert**, from England, assumed the oversight around 2005. Eric was laboring in Armenia until he became overseer in Greece.

NOTE: In 2009, the work in Greece also includes Armenia, Cyprus, Albania, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and the republics that were formerly Yugoslavia.

Early Days in Greece by Howard Mooney

INTRODUCTION

By: Eva (Vardakis) Vassiliou

January 1986

These notes are a summary collection of memories and certainly not a complete one. There are dates, persons and events that would otherwise be forgotten as the time goes by and the older friends are passing away. The younger friends hardly know any of these stories and to some of them even the name of **John Micheletos** will be unknown.

In the fall of 1982 my husband and I visited South Africa and the friends there showed great interest into hearing our testimony and especially the stories about the beginnings of the work in Greece. **I know some stories from my mother Elly and my father Kimon Vardakis.** As a child I had heard John Micheletos many times giving his testimony and later **Anton Koutsourelis**. The friends in South Africa wrote down our narrative and sent the notes to us in Athens. This motivated me to ask my mother to fill some gaps as I realized it was about time to keep some notes on the past events. It is hard to describe the hardships that the first workers and friends faced in our country. But it was a good and sound foundation and there was true unity among them.

At John's funeral on Dec. 8, 1966 there was a big crowd of people, friends, relatives of friends and people who had met him and had been impressed by his spirit. It was like Jacob who had left his fathers home with only his rod in hand yet he returned rich with a crowd of people and many possessions.

John Micheletos passed away in Athens 1966

Annie Mc Bride-Micheletos in Hania, Crete 1944 (*another date for her death is Jan. 1948*)

Theo Karvounakis in Athens 1944

John Bacossis was executed by guerillas 1944

Amalia Bouzakis in Hania 1980

Anton Koutsourelis while visiting the U.S.A. 1981

John Micheletos was born in a village on the high mountains of western Crete around 1880. As a young man of about 17 he left Crete and went to Canada to seek his fortune, as many other Greeks did in those days. He had no formal education, he had only learned the essentials of reading and writing instructed by his father. He was a strong tall fellow ready to fight at the least provocation and—as he used to say in his testimony—he always slept with a revolver gun under his pillow.

In Canada he used to work as a helping hand in the farms. Teams of men like him offered their work during times of pressure with harvesting et. al. moving from one location to another. In those days preachers of various denominations would stop by giving

sermons after which there was a collection.

One day two sister workers arrived at the area of John's work and held a Gospel meeting for the farm hands that evening. They were surprised to see and hear women preachers. These were **Annie Mc Bride** and her companion. After the meeting the men decided to have a collection among themselves and offer it to the sisters. They thought it would be more appropriate than letting the women collect. To their surprise the preachers refused to accept any offer.

This made a deep impression to John. He attended further meetings and he came to the point of decision. He wanted to follow the Truth but he felt so unworthy, so full of sin, that he believed the Lord would not accept him.

One certain night he prayed in agony and promised that if the Lord would accept him, he would serve him with all his heart for the rest of his life.

This prayer brought suddenly a great peace in his heart, an assurance of God's acceptance and a calm restful sleep as he never had before. He must have been in his mid-twenties at that time.

Living a Christian life among these hard people was not easy at all, and John was teased and tested by his comrades all the time. But he had made a steady decision. After some time he expressed the desire to go out to the harvest field.

His own country, Greece, was in his mind and he wanted to spend his life preaching the gospel to his people. But this was discouraged by everyone. Greece was just after 1st World War. Times were difficult with a lot of internal political turmoil in the country. No companion was available for him and John was extremely disappointed.

He confessed all his thoughts and temptations to Annie Mc Bride who had brought the Truth to him and who listened to him as a spiritual mother. Annie, who was almost 20 years his senior, offered to marry him and join him as his companion to Greece.

She did this because she realised how eager he was to go and how sincere his desire was to help Greece. She understood him deeply and helped him stand on his feet and overcome his disappointment. Their decision was faced with great skepticism by the elders; and John would always refer to Annie's great sacrifice to marry him and spoil her flawless testimony.

Annie was a very spiritual person and had a deep knowledge and revelation of the Bible. Her presence helped John to deepen his roots and rise above his background. Everybody who knew them remember how much he respected her and sought her opinion and also how she obeyed his every decision.

She was a petite frail Irish woman, a strong contrast to him who was tall and imposing with his fair hair and blue eyes. They remained in Canada for a while and then they left, via Ireland and England, for Greece.

While they were in the British Isles they gave a wise advice of a problem that had arisen in the church and thus brought a godly solution and peace to the friends there. They were encouraged by the brethren, and it was from these countries that they received help in the difficult years of the beginning while there were no saints in Greece.

They arrived in Greece in 1920. At first in Athens and then to Crete in the mountain villages of John's parents. (John's mother died early and he had been raised by a stepmother). They spent their time visiting the relatives while Annie tried to learn Greek. John, as well, had quite forgotten his language after more than 20 years in Canada.

John's immediate family regarded Annie with great respect but they never professed. His stepmother professed in the last days of her life. Many of his other relatives, however, professed later.

After some time Annie could manage the language quite well even though she always spoke Greek as it is written in the Bible.

They were alone until 1924 when Theo(dosios) Karvounakis (a Greek from Australia) and Fred Quick, came from Australia to join them. Theo and Fred stayed mostly around Athens, while John and Annie from the villages went to Hania the nearest town and started to preach the gospel.

How Elly Marangoudakis and her family professed

In 1926, a few weeks before Christmas, John and Annie visited the town of Rethymnon and placed an advertisement in the local paper for "Christian Sermons". The paper was printed by Elly's uncle. Elly's father John Maragoudakis was a school teacher of good social standing in the town. Both he and his wife were very disappointed with the Greek Orthodox Church and had stopped attending any services. Elly as a little girl in grade school was very sorry for the condition of her parents because she considered them atheists. The girl believed in God and in His power and used to pray in front of the icons that a change be brought to her home.

Over her bed there was an icon of a saint and Elly decided to write her unanswered questions about eternity on a piece of paper and place it behind the icon on the wall. One year later, on that saint's anniversary she reached with trembling hands to find the answers to her questions, but she only found the moulded paper as she had placed it. She was very disappointed.

About this time she dreamt one night that she was standing in their backyard and saw two doves coming from heaven and landing near her. She felt very delighted in her dream and awoke with a pleasant anticipation.

When Elly's parents John and Evanthis read the announcement at the newspaper they took their cousin Zampeta (a widow) and Evanthis's sister, Marigo Markaki and went to the Gospel meeting which was held very close to their home (next street).

It had not been realised that the preaching was not orthodox, so all the prominent people of the town were there, dressed-up and eager to listen and socialize. Some enjoyed what was spoken and after this it was said that they can come back the next evening.

Elly's relatives went again and decided to go the following day too, being even more interested in what they heard.

The following evening, however, John stood at the door of the hall thanking everyone and saying they were sorry but no more Gospel Meeting was to take place. They had been ordered by police and the Bishop to leave the town within 48 hours. John shook hands with Elly's relatives too and they returned to their home disappointed and thinking about those two preachers.

As they arrived home they were wondering about where these people are staying in the night and if there was a possibility to see them again. Would it be possible to ask them for a visit in their home? Would they accept or would they decline the invitation? Anyway, they decided to give it a try. They were not sure if they still had time to catch John at the entrance of the hall. They send a boy, Vassos, Marigo's son with Elly to rush running and invite John.

John had just closed the hall and was heading to the post office to mail letters. The children met him on the way and John was very glad indeed to be invited.

After some time he and Annie arrived at the home where they found a company of relatives awaiting them. The children were sent upstairs to their bedroom – as usual they were not allowed to be present in the conversation of adults.

Elly and her brother Andreas – one year younger – found a slot between the floor boards and falling on their knees took turns to peep through the opening and watch the people downstairs. Elly, while watching John and Annie was reminded of her dream and had the same peaceful feeling in her heart. The visit lasted until late in the night and they had one more visit the next day. But then they had to leave the town and go back to Hania. They promised to keep in touch.

About a month later in January 1927, Annie came back to Rethymnon alone at Elly's home and held Gospel meetings every evening. A number of people were gathered and Elly's father assisted Annie in expressing her thoughts in Greek as she could not speak well.

John came to join her later but the police was informed and he was sent back on the same day! Annie spent there forty (40) days at that time. When she left, Elly's father continued to read the Bible and speak to those gathered.

They corresponded with John and looked forward to see the workers again. That same spring, in May 1927, the workers passed by boat through Rethymnon going to the conventions in England. Elly's parents and some others had a short visit with them on the boat.

During their absence, some Evangelical Protestants approached Elly's family bringing their message and causing a great confusion in their minds. They insisted they were just as good as the workers and sincere as well. John and Annie were very sad with the situation and tried to explain some things. God, however, cleared the air through some events that made everyone reveal what was in their hearts. The road was now free for some to make their choice.

In January 1928 Elly's father, John Maragoudakis, went to Hania to be baptized. Elly who was then 15 years old accompanied him. Her mother stayed at home with her son Andreas 14, and her two younger children 3 ½ and 1 ½ years old.

Her father wanted to be baptized on January 6, the day it was believed that Jesus was baptized too. In Hania they attended the Gospel meetings at John and Annie's room. Then Elly was asked if she also wanted to be baptized. She was surprised because her father had not discussed his decision with her – considering her a child – and she had not realized that her infant baptism was not valid in the eyes of God.

She understood it, however, and spoke with John extensively. She was gladly baptized just after her father. She must have been the first girl or woman who was baptized in Greece.

John and Annie mentioned to them about two other young women who were Theo Karvounakis nieces and were also listening to the word of God. They lived in a village and Theo had written from Athens that they should wait for a while before they could also take that step (one of these girls, Katina, went out to the work later). One month later, on February 10, 1928, John visited the family in Rethymnon and Elly's mother was baptized. Then her brother Andreas, two aunts, another woman with her daughter from a village and a few others.

Elly's grandmother professed (from her mother's side) but her grandfather was resisting for a while being strongly attached to the traditions of the religion. He had long discussions with John and one certain evening he professed and said he was ready to be baptized that same night. It was January 1929, winter with cold wind and rain and the waves of the sea rolled high. But the old man (Vardis Hatzidakis) insisted that he should be baptized lest his life would end that night (he was in his eighties).

So John baptized him and he lived several years after that. He passed away in his nineties after 3 days of sleep. He woke up some time and he said he had seen his (long dead) brothers and talked to them. He asked for a cup of coffee and slept again never to wake up. John used to say he was such a good and decent man that if he had not professed, God would have "a hard time" to put him with the unsaved.

In 1928 on July 1, 8 men and women were baptized in Athens.

The workers Theo Karvounakis and Fred Quick were preaching with visits at homes of people as public preaching was persecuted everywhere. Between these people was Amalia Bouzakis with her husband Christos who was a lawyer, working in a bank. Amalia was from Crete from John's villages and she went out to the work after her husband's death in 1931.

The first "convention" took place in August 1928 at a friend's home in Athens. They were all invited to attend from Hania and Rethymnon and they spent 3-4 days there.

Jack Carrol was there and a friend from the U.S.A. Mr Writtenhouse who took a picture of the friends. The photo is taken in the yard of the house. The man of the house, Stavros Aivaliotis has died but his niece Panayota, who was also professing is still living in Athens.

The first one to pass away from the group was Elly's brother Andreas, at the age of 19, a very faithful boy and very close to Annie. A cousin of Elly who was a young girl then is also living today and also Elly's younger sister and brother who were small children in the photograph.

In 1930 a few professed in Thessalonica where Amalia and her husband lived then (he was working there) and Fred Quick stayed in their home. Another young girl from Crete professed and started in the work in 1936, Theodosia Politakis. She is our oldest sister worker today.

In Patras, a big town of Greece (area of ancient Achaia) the work started in 1938. Areti Vassiliou professed and a young man that was helping them in their dairy shop professed too. He is Michael Manetas, one of the workers today.

Areti's grand-mother-in-law and later her husband Panayotis made their choice and that opened the way to the workers to approach a small village on the mounts of central Greece. This was the village of Sykia where these people had come from Patras. Many people professed from that small village and many of them and their children are among the friends in Athens now.

Michael Manetas' family one by one professed and Michael went out in the Harvest field in 1945. A few months later in Athens, Anton Koutsourelis went out into the work too. Anton was coming from a well-to-do family who owned a wine and liquor factory. He was well educated and his father planned to leave him as his successor. As a young man of about 22 he started enquiring for truth in his life. He studied the various philosophers with eager desire to find answers to the meaning of life yet he was disappointed. He came to the point to learn German in order to read Goethe in the original text and finally he decided to start reading the Bible from the beginning to the end of the book.

After he had finished his study he only realized that something lies beyond the works of the bible whose Meaning is hidden from him.

At that time, 1933, one of the friends met him and after a short discussion invited him to the meeting that same evening. He went and felt that what was said was just his case and there was no way the workers could know about him. They spoke about the woman with issue of blood 12 years (Luke 8:43) "who had spent all her living upon physicians neither could be healed of any". Anton professed and became a worker of God. After John's death in 1966 he was our overseer until his death in 1981.

In these early years there was hard persecution of the workers and friends. Ely recalls the meetings at their home with the shutters closed and the stones hitting them continuously. She was in the work for 5 years 1934-1939, and during this time she was sentenced 5-1/2 years (suspended) jail. In Dec. 1933, John Micheletos, Annie, Elly's mother and one of the friends were sentenced in the Rethymnon court for one year term. They were set free after a few days with a bail of 32,000 drachmas (a considerable amount of money at that time). The court of Appeals one year later in Hania absolved the two women but the men were sentenced to 6 months jail (suspended). Many other times friends and workers were arrested and brought to courts or were imprisoned because the laws of the country prohibits "proselytism" and the Orthodox Church had been asking for enforcement of this on every possible occasion.

George Manetas, Michael's younger brother who is now also in the work, served 9 years in prison because he refused to carry ammunition during the war. The other brother, Constantinos, also served many years in prison for the same reason. They had been originally sentenced to death—changed to life term.

Kimon Varkakis and Elly Maragoudakis were later married. He was a teacher of Mathematics in high school and she was a teacher of Home Economics. In 1948 during the civil war of Greece, Kimon was sentenced to death because of his refusal to carry a gun and spent 2-1/2 years in exile-prison leaving Elly with 2 infants. Later in 1960 Elly lost her job as director and teacher of Home Economics School because her faith was incompatible to her position by Government decision ~ ~

Letter by Amalia Bouzakia
Athens, Greece
April 15, 1966

My Dear Francis,

You asked me to give you my testimony so I'll try to write you (by Anna) some of my life.

At first John Micheletos is a relative of mine and he with wife Anna (Annie) was visiting my home often when I was 13 years old. I had three sisters older than me but Anne said to John that, "this little girl will be professed one day."

Some years after when I married, my husband met in the street Fred Quick, who knew him from John, and asked him, what was the reason of his staying in Greece, and he answered him, "to learn the Greek language and preach the Gospel."

Then Christos (my husband) asked him if he would like to teach him the Greek and gives him the English; in this manner they agree to make lessons one to another and Christos in that year was waiting for the diploma of avocata (lawyer).

You must notice that Christos and I didn't believe in God because of the bad example of the different religious representatives. So when Fred was speaking about God and His way, we heard him ironically, although after a while Christos valued Fred's life and was hearing better than before and myself too. But I had great love for the things of this world.

Fred tried himself to make Christos believe to God, to the eternal life and to the day of judgment; Christos knew that one of those who God will judge in this day will be himself too. So it was beginning of his big fight as just this time he got diploma of the lawyer; he saw that he can't be a Christian by this job, as should be speaking many lies and falsehoods. I was seeing his unquietness but he didn't tell me what happened to him as he feared don't be hindered by me, because he loved me.

When he decided, then he said to me that he would like to follow Christ and work as employee in the bank than to use the diploma of the lawyer; I get very angry to hear this and I tried to hinder him so much, but he had overcome in his wise choice and after that was so humble and quiet and didn't give me permission to stop him of his decision; then I had a compunction in myself when I heard the word of God from His servant and one day I said, Christos, that I couldn't accept their visits at home anymore.

Then he went to tell them what I said and they advise him to love me more than before, but to don't permit me to injure his soul. When he returns, I asked him what did they say, and when I heard that, I was disgust myself and I said to him, "go call them to come," and he was delighted and ran bringing them at home. And after some gospel meetings I decided; and prayed to God to forgive me, to help me and lead me in His Way.

I was 22 years old and Christos after 2 years died as his kidneys had been destroyed and before his death advices me to use my life in service to God. So after his death I went into the work with dear John and Anne and then I had to face my mother because I refused to take the pension from the bank where worked my husband; but I'm glad that overcame that voice where was saying "that when I shall be old, everyone will reject me, etc. was not true and I am thankful to God for His care and mercy from then until now where I have passed 36 years in the work.

(Signed)

Amalia Bouzakia

Letter by Annie Micheletos
Central P.O. Box 80
Athens Greece
May 15, 1934

Our dear Brother and Sister,

I am sending you a few lines today to pass on the good news of our freedom and hoping these will find you both well in every way also the dear children.

I hope you received my last letter to you written on Nov. 13 th, 1933 in which I mentioned how just now we were having some trouble with the authorities who had received complaints from the bishop of the Orthodox (Greek) Church. We were called to the court to give an answer for our doings as grievous complaints had been sent in against us for proselytism.

The day of the trial came (Nov. 30 th) and we were sentenced to a years imprisonment each, also two saints in whose homes we were having meetings. By the help of God, and the saints, after a few days in prison we all got bailed out and John made an appeal to the Court of Appeal in the said city, and the day set for the trial was the 9 th inst. December.

We praise God for the way He undertook for us so that we all four were set free. We believe this will lead to more liberty than before and we prove that all was worked out for the furtherance of the Gospel. One of the first clerks of the first court, heard us for the first time as we gave our testimonies before judges, lawyers, police and many others (who were mostly against us and kept calling out to the judges to shut us up.) This clerk began to attend meetings and he was one of the witnesses on our side in the second trial. We would not have been without this trying experience, as it has enriched our knowledge of God and His mighty power to deliver when things outwardly looked almost hopeless and our faith and love for Him is increased as we feel doubly indebted to Him to give Him our best service to the end of the journey.

The two lawyers on our side testified of how they knew John from boyhood and watched his life (the last trial was held in John's home

city, the capital of Crete) and were assured that he preached only the truth of the Gospel and lived according to the pattern of Jesus and sought to teach others to follow Christ. One of them, an old rich and honoured man, said before the judges and with much feeling "I wish I was Mr. Micheletos." The other testified that if it were possible for a man on earth to live a spotless life, John was that man as he was incapable of doing harm to any. He said that if all the people were like us, there would be no need for courts and prisons nor for police and soldiers as none would think of harming the other.

The president said at last (after the priests and false witnesses said what they could against us) that it was not all false that the people were saying against us as there was clear proof that those who believed our teaching had no more use for the Church of the State and its priests and ordinances. The Attorney said that if this teaching was allowed, the Bolchevics would come and take their country. (Thought of what they said of Jesus that the Romans would come and take their nation if they let Him alone.) The judges went into their consulting room and seemed determined to punish us. One of them said (who was for us) if you punish these people, then you are going back to the ignorance and darkness of 120 years ago.

John said in his speech that if what he was doing was worthy of condemnation, he was willing to suffer, but if it were allowed he was willing to bear all the punishment, and the rest of us go free. So the judges decided to punish John and Panagates, one of the saints and set us two sisters free, the sister saint and myself. They then pronounced this punishment in the court, but the old lawyer went up to the president at once, and begged him to set us all free, which he did at once, under the conditions that if within three years either of them were taken to court for anything, then the six months would be added.

During the five months from the first trial, we ceased not to preach and teach as God helped us to obey Him rather than man. The priest mentioned this in his speech against us. He said, "I don't know what kind of people these are, for from the time they were condemned to a years imprisonment they have not ceased to preach, and lately the noise they were making singing could be heard outside in the street."

One of the lawyers took him up on this and asked him in a quiet way if he thought it was wrong to sing praise to God. "Oh no," he said, "I do not think that is wrong." He said that John was a troublemaker. So the lawyer asked him if he knew John and if he was a bad man? "Yes, I know him and he is a good and quiet man." Both he and other false witnesses contradicted themselves as they were so nervous.

At last one of the lawyers said to one of them you have told so many lies that if these people were like you they would have put you in prison for false oaths. It is wonderful how the Lord undertook and set us free. The 103rd Psalm and other such like is the language of our hearts as we realize God has done great things for us which may lead to us having a wide open door that no man can shut.

We hear from **Fred Quick and Willie Phyn** who are plodding on in hope of a harvest some day in the **Isle of Cyprus**. **Theo and John Bakeses** have gone to Berea seeking to get in touch with a few there. The two sister workers **Amelea and Katina** are labouring some miles out of Athens and see some interest and one has decided. A few got baptized round these parts lately.

Shall close with loving greetings to you all from us all here.

Yours in Christ,

(Mrs.) Annie Micheletos

Why do we use the King James version of the bible? We believe it is the best translation of the Bible. There are other translations that might help us to understand some verses better, but according to brother and fellow worker, **Anton Koutsourelis**, who was a professor in English before he began in the ministry in Greece, the King James version is the best translation. (**Eldon Tenniswood**, Young Peoples Meeting 1982)

I asked, **"Is there a real advantage in learning Greek as far as understanding the Bible is concerned?"** The answer was, "No, you have every accuracy in the King James version that we have in the Greek. The Greek might give you a deeper insight, but it doesn't change the accuracy." (**Howard Mooney**, Notes from informal talk February 13, 1979, Kobe, Japan)

Early Days in Greece

By **Howard Mooney, 1985**

Until February 1976 every meeting held in Greece was considered illegal. The Greek Orthodox was the state church, which made it part of the government. So, when the workers had meeting different than the Greek Orthodox, they were arrested on grounds of undermining the government. **Of all the workers in Greece, only two younger workers had never been in jail. All the others had been. George Manetas had spent eight years in jail, altogether.**

But in Feb. 1976, Anton Koutsourelis received a summons to appear in court. He couldn't figure out what they'd done to receive a court summons. When he walked in, there were three judges sitting on the other side of the table just as they always did, and a person would have to stand at attention and receive the sentence of the judge. Anton received a surprise this time when one said to him,

"Have a chair", smiling. He said, "We've found out the Greek Orthodox church has been giving us the wrong impression of your church. They had told us you were working underground against the government. But a while back we were talking together and came to the conclusion that these ministers aren't that kind of people. We investigated your workers for six weeks. We've found out that your people are a real credit to Greece and we're not going to interfere any more."

That summer Anton came to England for conventions. I [Howard Mooney] was there too. The workers asked me if I'd go, together with Anton, to Greece to spend a little time there. They hadn't any outside contact for a long time.

Our first stop was Thessalonica, a city 2,600 years old. Its walls are as solid as when built. But the homes have all been replaced. They're made of adobe bricks that only last a short while, so you couldn't tell where the synagogue was where Paul and Silas preached. But you know it was through the gates of this city, and up and down the streets that the first workers trod, and where that mini-mission was worked only three Sabbaths, but a little church established, and there's still a nice little church in Thessalonica. We had mtgs. there Wed. and Thur. evenings as all are working, and not free during the day.

Then we went on to Corinth and visited the saints. It is a city built about two miles back from the sea, to have protection from the enemy which always came from the sea. The home of Priscilla and Aquilla still stands. And the marketplace, I had always wondered how they could preach the Gospel in such a place of noise and confusion. But it's a big flat stone, with about a 10' X 4' platform. From this place, the towncrier gave the news, morning and evening; any message from the governor, etc. Anyone could use that platform, meantime. It is still standing. From this platform, Paul preached the Gospel to the Corinthians.

The conversion of the Corinthians was the most impressive of all, maybe—such a background they had, but they became a model church. I stepped up on that platform, just to see what advantage one would have, and when I got home, one of younger brothers asked me if I preached a sermon from there. "I surely didn't", I said, "You don't feel like you can say a word. You realize, 'It happened right here' and it is a very solemnizing thing".

Achaia is a little above Corinth. We read of the time the work started there. It still is one of the most fruitful places. Then we went to Athens and saw Mars Hill. I had pictured Mars Hill as a little theater-type place where people gathered to hear some new thing. But it is a big granite boulder, the size of a building. On top stood the supreme court of Greece. It was so severe that all cases were realized at night. The judges didn't want to be influenced by any emotion or pity. It's one now, but in Athens, there is a new court and the cases are still tried at night, that is, in the dark.

Socrates, before Paul's day, had also said that only a living God could help the people, and he was tried and done away with. They thought they would do the same with Paul. But the chief-of-court, Dionysius, and also notable women, believed in Paul and in Christ, and so they realized, we can't do away with Paul, when the court is believing in him—but when they said, "We will hear thee again", they really meant, "We'll get you yet". That explains why he left by night, that night. He stayed at Corinth for 18 months. God kept him there until it was safe to go back to Athens.

In the Greek Orthodox, there is no such thing as a "Prodigal." If you leave the church, you can never go back. If parents know of any children going to leave the church, their duty is to put them to death, and they'll go to heaven. Several of our workers escaped death from the hands of their parents.

One of these Demetrius. As a youth, he went to Athens to work, and each weekend when he went home, he would tell of the meetings he was attending. At first, they were happy, because at least they knew he wasn't running the streets. But one Sunday having dinner, he told his folks he was going to profess. His father got up quickly, ran into the bedroom to get something, and Demetrius knew he had to act quickly. He saw his father take the revolver out of the drawer. Demetrius took it from him and said, "Come back to the table. I want to tell you about this faith. After, I will give you the gun, and you can do what you like."

He talked to them for about an hour about this truth and what it meant to him. Then he said, "Here is your gun". His father looked at Demetrius, and then at the gun, went and put it away, came back, and said, "Demetrius, you're dead" (because he almost was dead). "Leave right away and don't ever come back". He left so glad to be alive. Two weeks later, there was a letter from his mother. She said "I can't stop thinking about that wonderful church you told about. Do you think some of the workers could come and study with me?" So, twice a week the two workers went to study with her, and eventually she made her choice.

The father got so angry he was ready to shoot every worker in Greece! But a while later he said to her, "If I went to those meetings, do you think I could get what you have?" He also professed and had been baptized a little while before I got there. It could well have been a disaster. There are many cases like this, where the parents wanted to destroy the children. Usually, each time the workers were sentenced to prison, someone got saved.

One day, they were at a little Sunday morning meeting—two brothers and two sisters with the saints. At this time the meetings were still unlawful. The officers came in the middle of the meeting, and the four workers were each sentenced to one year of jail. But the sisters found an audience ready to listen in jail. There is no entertainment in Greek prisons, so it meant much to them to hear something like this—the Truth.

At the same time, the two brothers were doing the same. The authorities realized they were not punishing them—they were giving them a congregation! So, they set them free after three months. When they were released, they found that the treasurer of the court had been so impressed with their testimony that while the workers were in prison, he had gone to look up the home from which they had been taken, and now he was already professing! One of our friends, a contractor, built a large home with a big upper room. Anton said to him two years before (1976), "Why this huge room?" He replied, "I have faith to believe that someday we're going to have Special Meetings here." We had it while I was there. There were 202 adults present. His faith was justified.

One time when Anton was to be whipped for having baptized someone, a priest gave money to the judges to have the privilege to doing the whipping. He would have beaten Anton to death. The two of them were taken off in a van to the warden. But when the warden saw the papers, he said, "There is something wrong here. I'm the one who does the whipping here". The priest made such a fuss he was put out. The warden said, "Is it true that all you did was baptize one person?"

This is a crime against society to do this to an old man like you, just because you have helped someone." He went, and chose the smallest whip, drew it gently across Anton's back, so that he felt no pain and it didn't leave a mark. But it was such a traumatic experience that it left Anton spent, and he had to spend a few days in bed. We're so grateful his life was saved. He was a very special overseer. Anton said he felt that the Greek workers had a privilege few others have, in proving that this truth of God hadn't lost any of its power with the passing of years—in the lives of the same Greek people, in the same Greek cities. Instead of the work dying out in Greece, it has prospered.

There is a nice church in Thessalonica, and in Beria. 13 Sunday morning meetings in Athens. All had professed with the possibility of losing their lives. It's thrilling to see the young people. Several have gone in the work—others will follow in the future. Once, **John Kocaletes** was arrested for preaching a gospel different than the Greek Orthodox. He was sentenced to serve a month on the Island of Crete—a most embarrassing sentence, because it's where the criminals are sent.

The clerk, filling out the papers for him to take there, said, "The next time we see you be through the bars". John went and had one month of Special Meetings with the saints on the Isle of Crete, a wonderful time. When John came back, there was a different clerk in court. "Where's the other?" he asked. "Oh, he got a little careless with the court funds and now he is serving a sentence in prison on the top floor." John went up to see him. "You're quite a prophet. You told me the next time we'd meet would be through bars!"

Two years ago, there was an election in the country. We like the old government and hoped they'd get back in. But another party won. The first thing they did was sever all connection with the Greek Orthodox church and the government. So now, the church can't interfere. So now, we have conventions each year in Athens and on Crete. Workers have prayed for this for years. The thing that impressed me most listening to their testimonies was that there was no doubt but what the Lord was standing by them in every experience, and He will stand by us, too. They're worthy of our fervent prayer.

TTT Editor's Note: Corrections or additions are most welcome; as well as other historical accounts for other countries.

Email TTT