

Archive 1999

This sermon was preached by Fr Gregory on the Sunday after the Nativity.

The Promise of God

The promise of God is sure but it is worked out within the conflicts, trials and sufferings of every day life. The flight of the Holy Family into Egypt from the murderous Herod, the slaughter of the Holy Innocents, the proto-martyrdom of St. Stephen, the suffering of the martyr St. Theodore the Branded; these are all examples from history which find their way into our Calendar to remind us that our Christian lives are forged in the furnace of affliction.

The world hates us because it first hated Him. Listen to these words of the Gospel of St. John: -

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent me." (John 16:18-21)

And again in the First Epistle General of St. Peter: -

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

(! Peter 4:12-14)

How far this gospel pattern is from the experience of many Christians in the West, many of whom have succumbed to the temptations of an easy life, placating the hostile secular power and culture that has attempted to strip Christianity of its very essence. In trying to be all things to all men, Christianity has now become despised where once it was merely mocked. Standing for anything it now stands for nothing. The only thing that matters today is "keeping the punters happy;" in other words, entertainment, dumbing down and minimal content.

The Orthodox Church, alone I think sometimes, simply doesn't concern herself with what the world thinks about her life provided she is faithful to the full gospel and maintains an unflinching adherence to that which has been entrusted to her by God. This is profoundly the right instinct. Where would the Russian Church be now if she had given in to Soviet blandishments in the 20's to modernise and moderate her claims? Where would the Greek Church be now if it were not for her New Martyrs of the Turkish yoke who gave of their lives rather than renounce their faith of Christ? Where would the Orthodox Church in America be now if her penniless Old World immigrants had given in to the seductive calls to adapt to the Protestant New World Order?

To some this Orthodox insistence on faithfulness against overwhelming odds is the essence of its appeal. These folk feel acutely the generalised anxiety of the West now that it has dismantled its old sacred landmarks and launched into an uncertain future on the stage of an increasingly dangerous and endangered world.

For others this godly obstinacy, although attractive in its own right, is not sufficient to counter balance the (for them) depressing realisation that that Orthodoxy is not going to take the World by storm with a temple on each street corner by the year 2020. There is still something of the "western disease" in this last approach; the feeling that since Orthodoxy is the True Faith it must be 'successful' in terms of numbers and influence. This is a very worldly estimation of Orthodoxy and based on false premise. God did not promise that we should be successful, He promised that our names would be written in the Book of Life. To His servant Paul, Christ promised that he would suffer much for the Gentiles and their inclusion into the Church. To us he promises the Kingdom but we would do well to remember that these are scraps that fall from the Master's table. His is the Banquet, His is the Feast, His is the Invitation. What he requires from us are not grandiose schemes but a faithful and whole-hearted response to His call.

We conclude, therefore, that we cannot possibly see the structure and plan of God's design over the millennia. If we do attempt to do this then we shall fall into the insanity of our presumption. We shall, indeed, fall out of the very picture we are attempting to see. It is sufficient for us to be faithful and to be ready for persecution when it comes. Such are the blessings that await those who trust in God's promise and who take no heed for the morrow: hard, but saving words, these: - words for a true faith and hope on New Year's Eve!

The Abyss

This word "Abyss" seems a little melodramatic for my purpose. I use it to refer to our current situation approaching the Third Millennium. However, first a warning: millennial 'fever' is commonplace at the moment and I have no wish to be part of its gloomy predictions. Its practitioners too often seem to exhibit a morbid delight at the prospect of "things going wrong." These are the people I suspect who might be tempted to gawp at accidents or who are simply misanthropists. I'm sure for example that the Millennium computer bug is a very serious matter but we are not about to be thrown into anarchic chaos as planes fall out of the skies, basic services fail everywhere and looters take to the streets with home made weapons. Even if this was in prospect, (which it is not); this is not what I mean by the "Abyss." The Abyss is much more serious than that.

So what do I mean by the Abyss? Well, I mean that in our western cultures we are now experiencing the anxiety of vertigo as we peer into an uncertain and admittedly dangerous future spiritually unarmed. The Abyss is not the danger itself; it is being "unarmed." The armoury of which St. Paul speaks in Ephesians 6: 10-20 is vitally important for all Christians in all ages. The Abyss has been created by Christians themselves in the West neglecting this all important emphasis on spiritual combat against the "principalities and powers." We are tottering and falling into our own nothingness because we regard not the Word of God, Christ. A great 19th Century theologian, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow put it like this:-

"All creatures are balanced upon the creative Word of God, as if upon a bridge of diamond; above them is the abyss of divine infinitude, below them, that of their own nothingness."

Notice that there are two "abysses" here. The first, upward, is glorious; it is God Himself and His inexhaustible love and power, our armoury and goal. The second, downward, is our vertiginous descent from the Word, Christ naked and alone, falling into hell. Not to put too fine a point on it, we are already falling and the fall will not readily be broken. Even normally upbeat non-Orthodox Christian voices, (themselves in some ways part of the problem), are making their concerns public. The Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, spoke recently of Christianity in the West *"bleeding to death."* (The Church of England stopped publishing its attendance statistics recently because they were allegedly misleading. Uhhmm!). The Anglican Bishop of Oxford, the Rt. Revd. Richard Harries, sees a bright future for faith in the next century but for Islam not Christianity!

Now, Orthodox could at this point stand back smugly and say: - "Defeatism! Give us a hand on the tiller!" This misses the point entirely. Even if the Pope was to become Orthodox tomorrow and Dr Carey hand over the keys to Lambeth shortly afterward, the Abyss would still be in prospect. Too much is now too far gone in the West. There is a pathetic element in the collusion of hard bitten godlessness, secularism and a weak 'watered down Christianity.' Howls of protest were heard recently from the ecclesiastical establishment at the absence of any televised act of worship on the BBC on Christmas Day. "Oh!" said a successor of Lord Reith, "didn't you know, this is the 6th year we have not broadcast anything on Christmas Day?" Religion has been privatised ... OK between consenting adults in private but not for big grown up boys and girls in the public domain. Here the Beast rules. For a culture so seemingly rational in its denial of "supernatural Christianity" anything supernatural or spooky is acceptable provided that it is not Orthodox / orthodox Christianity. Neo-paganism has returned. The masses worship in the hypermarkets, shopping malls and soccer grounds or prostrate themselves before the all powerful technocracy, the new "priests" in white coats.

Make no mistake about it, the Abyss waits ... but (and it's a big BUT), there is no Abyss whatsoever for those who walk that diamond bridge which is Christ in faith, hope and love ... no Abyss at all, only heaven on earth. This is the ultimate paradox which the world does not see. The "nothingness" of faith is explosive and bright with possibility. The seeming brightness of earth-bound optimism is in reality a never ending abyss of darkness and despair. St. Paul put it well in terms of his own experience of being a Christian. Would that this was the reality which all Christians knew. It is the reality of Orthodox Faith and Life, deliverance from the Abyss, resurrection ...

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

(2 Corinthians 4: 16-18)

Fr Gregory

Fast Disappearing?

As the Church moves into the heart of Great Lent the unusual quality of her witness becomes increasingly apparent. The Roman Catholic Church has largely abandoned fasting in ordinary parish life although it still features in stricter monastic observance and in some "specialised" lay societies. Independent evangelicals still fast with prayer but can hardly be said to consider Lent as a special time for this practice.

None of this should cause Orthodox to indulge in pharisaic pride. Fasting is a secret thing, a tryst between God and Man whereby we prioritise His jealous love for us in the totality of a surrendered life. If we step back and admire our zeal in keeping the commandments then we have already broken all of them by a single act of pride.

So is the Fast disappearing in Orthodoxy? Well, that must depend partly on the individual state of each soul upon which only God may judge. However, we must rightly ask whether or not fasting is not succumbing to a narrow minded legalism on the one hand and an extreme laxity on the other. The legalists would have us debate endlessly the difference between vegetable oil and olive oil; whether it is proper to eat caviar on Lazarus Saturday and so on. Those sliding into non-observance are also legalists in that they still think of a "duty" to be somehow "argued around."

In order that the spirit of our actual fasting might match the ideals of the season we perhaps need to take stock again of the primary reason for fasting. Raising money for the poor, knowing what it feels like to be hungry and such are only secondary and derivative effects. The primary focus must be the redemption of whole personality, body and soul.

A measure of self discipline in my life enables my will to be strengthened and my passions to be rendered subject to the work of the Holy Spirit for salvation. Fasting is the key which opens up my God-given potentiality to be His servant without any other competing claim. Fasting purifies my soul and my body so that my entire personality becomes radiant with the presence of the Living Christ. This is my entrance into the joyous victory of Pascha which is my liberation from the tyranny of death, evil and sin. This is why we fast.

Fr Gregory

Passing Over

The Orthodox name for Easter is "Pascha" which is based on an Aramaic word, (the language Jesus spoke), and it is also the same as "Pesach" in the Hebrew language of the books of Moses. It means Passover. "Easter" on the other hand is pagan in origin, deriving from "Eostre" ... a central European Spring goddess of fertility.

This Christian Passover or Pascha celebrates Christ's triumph over death and is prefigured in the deliverance of the People of God out of bondage in Egypt, through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea to the Pentecostal freedom of fruitfulness in the Promised Land. The Old Testament readings of the Vigil Liturgy pick out precisely the types and symbols of the far greater Passover which is Christ God Himself and His Resurrection victory over Hades and Death. This is our true Passover and in this service we begin to anticipate a freedom not only for ourselves, not only for our fellow Christians but also for the whole of Creation. It is this Creation perspective of Pascha to which the Blessed Apostle St. Paul refers in Romans:-

"...creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." [Romans 8:21]

Death was a curse brought upon by Man's primeval disobedience against God that afflicted not just the whole of humanity for all time but also the whole created order. The reversal of that curse in the infinite blessing of Christ's victory heralds a New Creation, in one sense *more* significant than the first ... which before Christ had been subjected to futility and corruption. This New Creation is the life of Christ, pre-eminently to be found in His Body, the Church but not limited to that sacred realm.

In Baptism and Chrismation we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the New Creation life, the resurrection power of God. However, the Christian life is not just about receiving. We are called to use this Gift according to the measure of our sanctity and work tirelessly for the Kingdom. Orthodox Christians, therefore, are unambiguously "pro-Life" in all its aspects. Our labours, even perhaps unto death, are orientated toward confronting all the demons of human savagery, neglect, cruelty and despair, and in the Name of the Risen Christ dispelling them by the Word of His Power.

In an age where many well meaning but heterodox or misinformed Christians commit either the error of a graceless activism or a useless pietism Orthodoxy stands out as a beacon of truth for something else. The Greek word is *synergeia*. It captures sublimely the truth that human transformation is achieved by two active and harmonious principles subsisting in one ... like Christ Himself in fact ... the human and the divine. Synergeia means that the New Creation power of Pascha is realised through the active offering of our whole life to the Blessed Trinity. If we uphold this principle daily in our lives, working with the Paschal grace of God, we shall become powerful instruments of the New Creation in ways of which we can only perhaps dream. Isn't that worth living for? Indeed, isn't that worth dying for? Behold the dawn of Christ's New life awaits us all. May we respond always with joy and hope and be worthy of our high calling; worthy of the name, "Christian."

Fr Gregory

The Norman Legacy

The fourth in a year's series about Orthodox in Britain in the First, Second and Third Millennia

The title given to this talk is the Norman Legacy and it can be said at the outset, that the legacy was probably the opposite of what is usually claimed in our history books. In the middle of the eleventh century, these islands were inhabited by many differing ethnic groups -- so what is new? But many of those groups would claim a strong ethnic and cultural connection with cousins on mainland Europe. Before the Normans came, there was a simple, easy-going culture which was based on a common religious base. The invasion of 1066 changed all that and one reason for the change was, that the invaders brought with them a new-look style of Christianity. In all fairness, it is probably easier for us looking back, to be able to disentangle the various strands than it was for the people involved.

The key to understanding this is the date, said to be the only one known to all Englishmen. A little earlier, back in 1054, there had occurred the breach between the Eastern and the Western Church. No one took it seriously at the time as there had been previous break-downs in communion which had all been settled. But this one didn't heal and is still unresolved. One factor which prevented any immediate healing and helped to perpetuate the schism was the invasion of these Islands by William of Normandy twelve years later. The growing imperialism of the Western Patriarch had been one of the causes of the break in communion, and when the Pope, Alexander II, gave William his blessing, and a relic of St. Peter, and a consecrated Papal banner, in return for a promise that England would be held in future as a fief of the Pope, in those dramatic acts, the schism was sealed, and one of the seeds of the so-called Reformation, 500 years later, was laid. Big trees from little acorns grow.

The run-up to, and the invasion itself, are well described by Fr Andrew Phillips in last September's edition of "Orthodox England" and the article is well worth reading. Here, we are concerned with the legacy which can be described in the short term as disastrous for the ordinary English people, and in the long-term, as bearing some benefit for them.

The Norman conquest was a disaster for the people because of its bloodshed, its savagery and the wholesale destruction of the previous culture. We hear a lot today about "ethnic cleansing" and this is just what William did. He marched his army to every quarter of England and created a wilderness. Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland suffered grievously. From York to Durham, sixty miles, there was not one inhabited village left. In Northumberland, the survivors were reduced to cannibalism and many eventually sold themselves and their families as slaves to the conqueror. In the south, an area of sixty square miles was forcibly depopulated -- 108 villages and 36 parish churches flattened. Why? To make a leisure park for the King and his nobles to hunt, in what is still called "the New Forest".

It's not surprising that the flourishing English culture was wiped out as well. Splendid churches built before the Conquest were pulled down and Norman-military-style ones built in their place. The best example of this is Durham Cathedral, begun as early as 1093, which has been dubbed as "half Church of God; half castle against the Scot".

Metal-work, coinage, embroidery and book production which had been the finest in Western Europe in the preceding century became lost arts. The thriving local culture, based on the spirituality of the un-divided Church through translations of the Gospels into local languages, Old English homilies, and lives of saints, were all lost, only to be replaced, after a gap of about three hundred years, by the alien Latin culture of the Middle Ages.

Father Phillips writes: "During the first millennium, the British Isles brought forth thousands of saints. The second millennium, including-in-Ireland, has brought forth a mere handful, even by Roman Catholic reckonings". (The English Tradition page 231). It may be that this decline was partly caused by the bureaucracy which evolved in Rome to establish proper precedents for declaring sainthood as opposed to the

acclamation by common consensus used earlier. But the decline in numbers between 1066 and 1517 is rather revealing.

That the former English/Celtic tradition lingered on is shown by three writings still extant from the 14th century. These are the writings of the English mystic Walter Hilton (+1396); the poetry of the mystic and hermit Richard Rolle (+1349) and the treatise called "The Cloud of Unknowing". These are all still read with profit and rely greatly on the pre-Latin tradition.

It has been claimed that "through this community of suffering, the English race learned unity". And on the positive side, unity was a welcome outcome, eventually, of the Conquest. This was brought about through a strong monarch who curbed the power of the local barons. This saved England from the type of disunion common both in Germany and Italy until the nineteenth century. In France, too, great nobles, like William himself, retained sovereign rights locally, thus preventing any national unity. But in England, William claimed he retained the Anglo-Saxon manorial rights, adding a new element, by making feudalism a system of land tenure as well as an economic system.

The effect on the Church was far reaching in that it was brought into closer connection with Rome, and was strengthened by national synods, and the setting up of its own, independent, spiritual courts. Another relic of Orthodoxy was also lost in that some bishop's sees were removed from small towns and villages to larger towns e.g Dorchester (in Oxfordshire) to Lincoln, thus creating in many cases vast dioceses. The King also laid other foundations upon which Henry VIII would build by enacting that his consent was necessary for the recognition of the Pope in England; for the receipt of Papal bulls and for the ex-communication of tenants-in-chief.

It is often said that the effect of these changes was to bring England into closer union with Europe. This is hard to see, as one Norman legacy for us was almost perpetual warfare with France. Another legacy was the introduction of the Norman-French language, still prominent in manorial bearings, which for some time was spoken by the upper classes; Saxon, by the lower, whilst Latin was the official language. Perhaps this explains why today we are so poor at speaking foreign languages.

Whether we fared better as a result of the Conquest, it is impossible for me to judge. Certainly, many traces of Orthodoxy were lost and the Church tied more closely to Rome and set firmly on the road to the next schism in the 16th century.

One strange legacy of the Normans, which cannot be blamed on them, is that ever afterwards, our monarchy has been drawn from non-English royal families. The present Royal Family only changed their name from Saxe-Coburg to Windsor during the first World War.

So Maurice Hewlett could write of 1066 in his epic "The Song of the Plow":--

"There was a year, I understand,
A thousand-odd since Christ the King,
There reigned three kings in England
Ere Christmas bells were due to ring;
And after them came never a one
Of English blood of song to sing"

That, I consider, is a very sad legacy.

Fr. John-Mark Titterington

What is Truth?

We may ponder Pilate's words as he stared the Truth (which is Christ) in the face, "What is truth?" as either naïve, cynical or just dull. His were the concerns of an administrator, any bureaucrat, in a troublesome backwater of the Empire. In the Roman Imperium, loyalty, not truth was what mattered. We recall that Christians were marked down by their persecutors not for their beliefs, (that was just propaganda to justify their actions to the mob), but rather for their refusal to offer incense, (worship), to the Emperor.

Roman pluralism has its similarities in the contemporary post Christian West, only now this relativism is not based on the apotheosis of Tony Blair or Bill Clinton but on the similar idea that nothing matters so long as populism can be stimulated and relied upon to generate power for the establishment. This populism is dressed up as a mandate for "inclusivity," self determination and the like. Its propagandists, the spin doctors, are the preachers of a new establishment cult. These are adept in manipulating a sycophantic Media which has increasingly lost its cutting edge.

It is difficult to see how any notion of truth can survive in this climate except that promoted by the new high priests in white vestments, the laboratory scientists. Occasionally, populism may conflict with scientific and commercial interest. For example, if "Jo-Public" says he doesn't very much like the idea of cloning sheep or eating genetically modified food, then U-turns are always possible. Nonetheless, everyone more or less seems to go along with the idea that nobody's ideas can be excluded as erroneous, this side of law breaking at least, and that politicians can be safely left alone.

The Church, of course has radically different standards. We live by the truth of GOD ... not truth for me, truth for you ... the truth of God for all, a Truth which can never change or be relativised. Moreover this Truth into which the Holy Spirit leads is a Person. As Christ says of Himself: -

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

We are called furthermore to live by the truth, the Truth of God in Christ. In all of this Orthodoxy, true belief, is totally uncompromising before the world. John 17 spends much time preparing the early Church for the consequences of this insistence on the objective nature of Christian truth ... (read 14-19)

For this truth, the martyrs paid dearly and our responsibility to them to adopt their same strategy and quiet determination.

Our responsibility to the world is to present saving truth in season and out of season, welcome or not, whether the world welcomes us with rejoicing into its cities or kills us with the rest. The time of the tribulation is always at hand.

All this, however, requires from each one of us that we be also "sanctified by the truth." "Sanctified" is a difficult word for many ... not just in understanding, but also in acceptance. It means ... "set apart for God."

To be set apart for God is to put a distance between ourselves and worldly concerns and attitudes. It means having the mind of Christ. *For God* means that He must be "all in all" for us and uncompromisingly so. Thus orientated we shall embrace, not only the Spirit of Truth, but also the Spirit of holiness. The Truth must be as much manifest by our lives as our lips. We must be living symbols of the Truth we proclaim. This too is only accomplished by the Spirit of God working in and within our active co-operation, our repentance.

And so to the Holy Spirit who makes all this both necessary and possible.

Truth and holiness by the Spirit is an affirmation that human flourishing comes not from below but from above; not from Man but from God. The "Way, the Truth and the Life" which is Christ is the gift

of God to those who believe ... note that, believe, not have opinions! Our standing of children of God, crying "Abba, Father", is a work of the Spirit, not of Man. Our whole work is to work with the Holy Spirit so that our lives may be built and extended on this foundation of our baptism and chrismation, the seed growth of the Holy Spirit within us all, leading to salvation. Pentecost is a celebration that the life we live is not our own but a gift from God Himself. In this manner we shall be sanctified by the Truth that will set not only us free, but also countless others who will be attracted by the fragrance of a godly life.

Whilst we attend to these matters and present the truths handed down to us faithfully to this generation, we must be detached in a certain way from the response we receive from others. Too many have fallen into the error of letting the world set the Christian agenda because of a certain anxiety that the Church is not filling up as we expect. This is not our concern; faithfulness to the Truth is. We must not like Pilate look the Truth in the face and then act as if it, (He), didn't matter. I can't imagine a worse condemnation of a Christian that he/she did not "speak the truth in love."

Fr Gregory

Orthodoxy and the Renaissance

"Renaissance" (from the French) means "rebirth." It was a term first coined by 19th century historians who sought to describe the transformation in western society and culture brought about between the 14th and 16th centuries across the continent of Europe and which profoundly affected the Western Church both before and after the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

Rebirth ... but rebirth of what? Well, in the main, the Renaissance saw the rebirth of classical learning in philosophy art and, later, the natural sciences. This was first brought about by the recovery and translation of classical Greek and Latin texts which gave access to this learning, mainly by Italian scholars. The pioneer of this work, and arguably the father of the Renaissance, was a certain Italian writer named Francesco Petrarca. Petrarca had an enormous influence on European literature through which Renaissance humanism was spread.

Humanism, was the central idea of the Renaissance. It was believed that revival of classical learning would renew European civilisation made moribund by the "logic-chopping" of the intellectuals, (the schoolmen or scholastics), and the conservatism of the Church. Petrarca, however, was a Christian and a great defender of the Pope. At the time that he started writing the papacy went into its French captivity at Avignon and later split in two. Petrarca vigorously opposed the move to Avignon but perhaps he did not understand the forces he was unleashing through his popularisation of classical learning. Some later humanists did cherish their newfound freedom and began to oppose their insights to those of the Catholic Church and vice versa.

In the 14th and 15th centuries the Conciliar Movement sought to submit the ever-expanding power of the papacy to the decisions of Church Councils and this too was driven by Renaissance ideals. Orthodoxy had problems of its own with Turkish encroachment on the Eastern Empire but nonetheless sought political advantage in seeking western support for its defence. It felt better able to do that now that Rome seemed to be moderating the power of the papacy. It was not to be. This was indeed the time of that ill-fated Council of Reunion that sought to re-unite the Catholic and Orthodox Church, the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438 - 1445). Orthodox at this Council, together with the Western Conciliarists were essentially conned by the papacy that, cleverly, used the liberalisation of the Councils to reinforce its own continuing and unabated centralisation. In consequence, Renaissance humanism lost out to the papacy, (at least until the Protestant Reformation a little later), but it nonetheless profoundly affected the western religious spirit ... which is probably the more important point.

In understanding this, remember that the Renaissance was essentially a humanist movement and although the first Renaissance thinkers were Christians, many of the later ones were not. Renaissance humanists placed Man at the centre of all things, not God. In doing so they were consciously or unconsciously seeking to dethrone a "god" who had become a human irrelevance. An unholy alliance was developing between those secular thinkers who wanted Man to be liberated from theology and theologians who thought that human effort and culture were irrelevant to spiritual goals. Interestingly, the intellectuals did not see this divorce. These scholastic intellectuals, however, were rejected by humanists for narrowing the scope of human culture to reason. The Renaissance was about much more than mere reason. It both gave an emerging science the freedom it needed for a rational investigation of the natural world and it also secularised a Christian culture which had been long imprisoned by a theological framework which was, arguably, anti-human. This affected everything, including art and spirituality.

Whereas before the Renaissance, Rome had retained something of an Orthodox spirituality and iconography; after the Renaissance, this all disappeared. Icons changed gradually into religious paintings that were commissioned to adorn the new basilicas. These were designed not to evoke contemplation of objective spiritual truth but merely a carnal emotional response from the beholder drawn to the subjective view of painter. Christian art became an impermanent and fluid thing, a humanistic endeavour, overly sensitive to personalities, fashions, trends and schools. In spirituality, the Orthodox ecclesiology of the Church as the Community of the Resurrection changed into the collective piety of individuals who develop their own cruciform spiritualities ... the so-called "Devotio Moderna," best represented perhaps by Thomas a Kempis in his *Imitation of Christ*. Such individualism and subjectivity was later to provide fertile ground for the growth of the Protestant Reformation.

How, then, does Orthodoxy assess the Renaissance and its legacy? Well, there are positive and negative elements in this assessment. The Renaissance became necessary in the West to loosen the grip of the papacy and open up new potential for the human spirit. Unfortunately, it could only do this by reacting against Catholicism. Christian humanist scholars like Erasmus tried to combine Christianity with the new ways. The fathers of the Reformation looked to these early pioneers, but Rome was having none of it. The papacy understood the threat modernity posed to its own structures and ethos. Later, the Reformation was to react more definitively against Rome and could not resist the inexorable logic of a humanism which eventually led to a new "Renaissance" in the West, the Enlightenment. Today we see yet another transformation of the Reformation beyond the Enlightenment into Post-Modernism where no single Great Idea can hold the key to anything anymore. The Renaissance has now indeed come of age and, curiously, it has disinvented itself!

Underlying all of these developments, however, is a fundamental distortion in the legacy of Western Christianity running now over 1000 years since the Schism. This distortion continues to generate new divisions between faith and reason, between authority and freedom, between experience and revealed truth. The distortion, the mother and father of all our problems is a failure to recognise the Human Face of God in Jesus Christ. Orthodoxy says that the ONLY way to become fully human, to become fully alive, is to be deified ... to be transformed inwardly and outwardly by the resurrection power of Christ. Let us be clear about this. Catholicism did not preach and live this fully before the Renaissance, neither did the Protestant Reformers, neither do non-Orthodox Christians today. To be fully human, both then and now, is somehow, for them a separate issue from Easter, a separate issue from paschal belief; it is a different thing altogether.

In short, the West has seen a secularisation of Christian Mind because it cannot stand "God" anymore! It cannot stand a "god" who deprives us of our humanity, a Calvinist "god" who rewards the elect and punishes the damned, foreordained from the foundation of the world. It cannot stand a "god" who sits remote from human life, a more or less benevolent despot who disposes from on high. It cannot stand a "god" worshipped in a cult of death; for that is precisely the form into which many western versions of the atonement degenerate. It cannot stand a "god" who is merely the deity of the tribe, the nation, the establishment totem. It cannot stand a "god" who is merely reasonable and rational. The Christian heart of the West yearns for something better than this, but which at the moment it cannot just yet quite see!

True, many, many western Christians have managed to grasp an Orthodox Christian vision of humanity transformed by the glory of God. Theirs are prophetic voices heard above the discordance of religious conflict and error. Praise God for Laud, for Andrewes, for Wesley, for Herbert, for Traherne, for Lewis and for many others. Such people have no need of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Post Modernism. They have no need of these things because they are not seeking to reform the irreformable. Theirs is a wider vision, a more or less "orthodox" vision, first articulated by St. Irenaeus ... "the end of Man is the Living God; the glory of God is Man, fully alive."

Sooner or later, (let's pray sooner!), Holy Orthodoxy will emerge from its self-imposed incarceration and become a haven for those honest seekers who, like the first Greeks who approached Philip and wished "to see Jesus." Consider yourselves, therefore, as the "advance troops" of this New Renaissance, this New Rebirth of the Church in the West. This New Renaissance will herald the renewal, not just of the Church in the West, but of a whole Orthodox Christian culture, the like of which we have not seen in these isles in all its fullness for over 1000 years.

Fr Gregory

ORTHODOXY AND THE REFORMATION

It is tempting to begin a talk entitled "Orthodoxy and the Reformation" by declaring that there is no connection between the two -- we never had one, and that's it. But it is far from true to say that there is no connection between the two as the link is there, plainly for all to see, albeit five hundred years earlier. Many of our history books give the impression that what they call "The Reformation" was a sudden, grass-roots revolt against the Western Church, pioneered by the monk, Martin Luther, in Germany in 1517.

This is misleading because the seeds of the revolt were sown first, in the turbulent run-up to the historic break between the Eastern and Western churches in 1054 and then in the five hundred years which followed. These seeds briefly were, the growing imperialistic designs of the Western Papacy, coupled with the increasing power of "the priesthood", both in the running of the Church and also inside the monasteries; and in cultivating, amongst other novel developments, daily and votive masses and clerical celibacy. It can now be seen that just because the Eastern church rejected these changes, it hardened the attitudes of their Western brothers, with the inevitable result -- the explosion which happened in 1517.

But in between, three other events disturbed the status quo. First of these was the sacking of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the setting up there of a Latin patriarch. True, that arrangement only lasted fifty years, but many Greek-minded historians would claim that we are still reaping the results of that violent conquest -- in Kosovo, for example.

Relations between the Eastern and Western churches became so poor that something had to be done and there followed two quasi-Councils, both arranged to patch up the various quarrels. One was called the Council of Lyons and the second and more important the Council of Florence in 1438-9. At both of these agreement was achieved but when the Eastern representatives reached home, the treaties were rejected. This proved to be a last chance for peace, as just fourteen years later, in 1463, Constantinople was conquered by the Turks and life was never the same again in the East. It was against this background that the so-called Reformation erupted in Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century, only sixty-four years afterwards.

The Turkish overlords were in many ways tolerant of Christianity. The Sultan appointed a new patriarch who had to pay a heavy fee for the privilege of being enthroned, but in return the Church received some protection, even as a second-class religion. The Church became what the Turks called a *millet* which meant in effect that the patriarch now became, not only the head of the Orthodox church, but also the head of the (nominally Greek) nation as well. In time, the Turkish occupation had two great

effects on the Church for which survival became the all-important aspect. First, as could be expected, it caused an upsurge of conservatism -- nothing could or indeed, should be changed. And secondly, it led eventually to almost the opposite of that attitude, some degree of westernisation. This came about because of contacts which the Church made in non-Muslim countries with members of other Churches, e.g. the Jesuits and the Lutherans, and in Constantinople itself, with the chaplains of foreign embassies, who often played a religious as well as a political role. By comparison, the Orthodox recognised that their standards of education were lacking and the tendency arose for forward-looking Orthodox to go to Europe for their schooling.

The first important meeting of Orthodox and Protestants began in 1573 when a delegation of Lutheran scholars from Tübingen, visited Constantinople and gave the Patriarch a copy of the Augsburg Confession translated into Greek. Obviously they hoped to start some sort of reformation among the Greeks. As one of their leaders said "If they wish to take thought for the eternal salvation of their souls, they must join us and embrace our teaching, or else perish eternally". The patriarch wrote three letters to them and eventually declared the correspondence closed, but the exchange shows the interest felt by the reformers for the Orthodox. More important, the Patriarch's replies are the first clear response of Orthodoxy to the new doctrines of the Reformation. The chief matters discussed were free will and grace; Scripture and Tradition, the sacraments, prayers for the dead and to the saints.

That exchange ended amicably but not so the first major contact with Rome. This happened in the Ukraine which at the time was part of Lithuania and Poland because of the union of their rulers, and the Jesuits were keen to make the people of "Little Russia" as the Ukraine was called, into Roman Catholics. Eventually in 1596, a council was called at Brest-Litovsk to proclaim union with Rome but two bishops and a large delegation from the monasteries and the parishes voted to remain Orthodox and in the end both sides just excommunicated each other. This council in 1596 has tended to embitter Roman-Orthodox relations to modern times.

One of the representatives of the Patriarch at Brest-Litovsk was a young Greek priest called Cyril Lukaris. He was appalled by the treatment of the people of Little Russia by the Poles and when he became Patriarch, he devoted much of his great energy to combating all Roman Catholic influence in the Turkish Empire. This meant that he became deeply immersed in both politics and also in the natural opposition, Lutheranism. It's a long and involved story which we can't go into now. Five times was Cyril displaced from the Patriarchial throne and five times restored. Eventually he was strangled by Turkish soldiers and his body thrown into the Bosphorus -- a tragic end, for he was an able man. But he is sometimes dubbed as "the Calvinist Patriarch" for a book he wrote called his "Confessions" which was condemned by no less than six local councils between 1638 and 1691. This was written after his contact with a Dutch Calvinist, Cornelius van Haag who significantly influenced him in a reformed direction but he was really alone in taking this road.

In other places, away from the Ukraine, relations with the Roman Catholics were more cordial in the seventeenth century, especially in the Greek islands under Venetian rule, but after 1700 these contacts became less frequent. In 1724, a large part of the Antiochian Patriarchate submitted to Rome and this made the rest of the orthodox world more cautious. The climax of anti-Roman feeling came in 1755 when the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem declared Latin baptism invalid and demanded that all converts to Orthodoxy be baptised again.

But these things ebbed and flowed. The great Orthodox compendium of spirituality called the *Philokalia* was first published in Venice in 1782. It was a huge volume of 1,207 folio pages and the Monk Nicodemus of Mount Athos who put it all together included Roman Catholic works of devotion by Lorenzo Scupoli and Ignatius Loyola. He was also a strong advocate of weekly communion for the faithful at a time when most Orthodox received communion just three times a year.

Looking back, it appears to us now that there was much talking without any tangible results. The reasons for this are plain to see. In trying to come to terms, as for example, at the Council of Florence, both East and West were really hoping for military aid against their foes and God hardly got a look in to

the agreements which were made and then discarded. With the Lutherans the Orthodox had little common ground except their mutual fear and dislike of Rome. This, Steven Runciman says in his book "The Great Church in Captivity", was not enough. He goes on: "The Orthodox, with their mysticism, their taste for the apophatic approach and their loyalty to their old traditions, belonged to a different world, a world which the West could not understand" (page 319). This, as we shall see in future talks, is still a fair comment.

Fr John-Mark Titterington

Millennium Madness and True Sanity

On 11th August this year in Great Britain, citizens and visitors in the South West of the country will experience a total solar eclipse for a brief two or three minutes. It is widely anticipated that the sheer numbers of people trying to cram into Devon and Cornwall along difficult roads to a destination that can barely cope with the influx will generate not a few headlines. All sorts of kooky and dangerous people are jumping on this bandwagon. New Age couples will get "married" in stone circles as the sun is darkened; even the Anarchists are widely expected to try and wreak their havoc again after the appalling mayhem and damage they caused recently in London. Add to all of this that monstrous waste of money, the Millennium Dome, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey apparently making sceptical comments about the "knowability" of the resurrection (per the "Mail on Sunday") and this year, this century, this millennium seems to be ending on a very curious note.

I suppose we ought not to be surprised by all of this. Society in Britain is drifting (some would say rushing headlong) towards an uncertain post-Christian future in which everything our forefathers lived and died for is now simply an "alternative lifestyle." The architects of this New Age see in the dawn of the Third Millennium a great promise of new things for humanity. As Orthodox Christians we are bound to conclude that this rag bag collection of empty headed idealists can only serve up a banquet of empty promises and soul-less food.

I am very much reminded in all of this of the Apostolic Age when the pluralist Roman Empire was at its zenith. "Bread and circuses" for the masses any faith will do just fine provided you burn incense to the Emperor, (don't rock the boat). Orthodox Christianity will have to go underground again in order to retain its authentic witness. It will have to distance itself from the World. That will not be difficult since the World has already put that distance between us! More positively, the Church will have to be much more radical about its "alternative lifestyle." We must not make of ourselves an anachronistic time piece, an exhibit in a Byzantine museum; we must live out our Orthodox Faith and Life in common again. "In common" is the key. True community life for an Orthodox Christian will become what it truly is and should be: a divinely sustained common life which irresistibly attracts because of its love and power.

We can all make a start here by renewing the idealism of our commitment. This commitment is not simply to run a "good" parish and have lots of interesting groups and activities. It is for every parish and every community to become a place of change and growth, an environment in which a new humanity is being forged in the resurrection life of Christ by the Holy Spirit from the Father. Two things will then happen. The Church will grow and the Church will be persecuted. We await a new legacy from a new Constantine, sometime perhaps in the 23rd Century???

Fr Gregory

ORTHODOXY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

How do Orthodox assess the so-called "Age of Reason," that period of heady optimism between the Restoration of the Monarchy in England in 1660 and the French Revolution of 1789? It was in this period that the seed of humanism, sown in the Renaissance and germinating in the Protestant Reformation finally came to full flower in what is today called the "Enlightenment."

"Enlightenment" suggests the emergence of humanity from the darkness of a preceding age. Already the anti-Christian, secular agenda of the Age of Reason becomes clear. It is in this time that the adjective "medieval" becomes a term of abuse. It is in this time that the natural science comes to regard theology as a straight-jacket from which it will gladly rid itself. The new merchant class will embrace Non-Conformity as a strike for freedom against the established Anglican country class of inherited wealth and prestige. The Industrial Revolution will generate an unchurched class and drive Britain towards a glorious Empire in which Anglicanism will redefine itself as a denomination riding on the back of colonialism. Much of this, however, is for later. The roots of the Enlightenment are in neither machinery nor capital but in a secular philosophy which will replace what remains of Orthodoxy in the West.

The heroes of this age are Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke. Both are believers but not in the Orthodox Christian sense of that word. They believe in the natural law of creation and the reasonableness of Christian morality, but not in miracles, revelation, resurrection, salvation, regeneration and the sacraments of the Church. They are crypto- (if not actual) deists. Hand in hand with the Whigs in politics, this new intelligentsia lays the foundations of a movement which will sweep across much of Europe. Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau seize on the new thinking to widen the breach between a compromised French Church and a disenfranchised peasant class which they, like all good bourgeoisie then and since, manipulate to seize power themselves. On the Continent and starting in France, the anti-Christian bias of this movement towards "reasonableness," paradoxically, generates the irrational excesses of Revolution.

Mercifully, Great Britain is saved from the violence of this Age of Revolution but its Christian culture will remain stifled by this watered down "rational" moralism for a century or more. Only with Wesley and the Methodists will the English working class be reached for Christ, but on the basis of the heart rather than the mind. Here will start the Evangelical Revival. In the meantime, some Anglican Churchmen such as Berkeley and Butler will valiantly attempt to halt the slide towards Deism which, in the Spirit of the Age, preaches a rational, cool and distant god. He it is who makes laws and simply sits in heaven doing nothing while the real work is done by reasonable men who obey both His will and the natural law and have everyone's best interests at heart. How comforting! How Establishment!

In truth, however, the real end of the Age of Reason comes with the French Revolution whose bloody excesses remind all of Europe that the preachers of the new rationality can be just as cruel and oppressive as their aristocratic predecessors. David Hume completes the demolition of this confidence in Reason by showing how tentative all our approaches to the natural world and truth can be. By emphasising the need for evidence without presuppositions of any kind, he helps to usher in a new confidence, not in Reason as such, but in the rise of Science.

So much for the historical survey. But how does the Orthodox Church react to all of this? We have no or little evidence from the period itself. The Mediterranean Orthodox World was cut off from the West being incarcerated under Ottoman Islamic rule. The Russian Church was too busy dealing with a Tsar in Peter (the so-called) "Great," who seemed to spend much of his time aping western ways. Significant Orthodox responses only emerge retrospectively and then, mainly, in relation to the legacy of the Enlightenment for western churches down to this day. It is this legacy that informs how we Orthodox must make our mark now.

Orthodoxy lies way distant from the Enlightenment because its approach to the human mind is so radically different. We do not believe that the human mind is so pure that the exercise of unaided reason

will inexorably lead to certain self-evident truths about God and humanity, or simply, just humanity. We cannot even tread part of the way with David Hume because it must remain a sorry little faith that only relies on evidence.

We might be tempted perhaps to join with Protestants in our emphasis on revelation rather than reason or evidence; but no, our understanding of revelation and evidence is of quite a different character. If a Protestant Christian cannot accept revelation as God's steamroller grinding into history and flattening everything before it, he must eventually side with the rationalists and have done with such debased notions of God's action. This is, indeed, what many Protestants have done as their Calvinism has collapsed under the weight of modernity. We cannot even side with what we may call the "heart-Christians," the Methodists, Pentecostals and Charismatics. They would make of Christianity a "warm glow" and little else, reducing it as surely as the Quakers did before into pious platitudes and social activism. Orthodoxy is bound to regard all western reform movements as well intentioned but essentially suspect until a more radical analysis of the problems of the western Christianity is undertaken.

One good place to start is the relationship between the mind and the heart. It was the medieval scholastics led by the Dominicans who had first begun the grand enterprise of Reason, namely, to discern and confirm the great purposes of God using the faculties of the human mind. Although Protestants rebelled against this, many Reformed Churches eventually substituted their own scholasticism of the mind. The Enlightenment was the inevitable anti-Christian resolution of this trend. Developing in a parallel fashion, both before and after the Reformation, the religion of the heart was propagated by the Rhineland mystics, the Spiritual Franciscans, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, the Methodists and the Pentecostals. However, these two tendencies in the West, the mind and the heart, remained quite distinct. Sometimes, open warfare broke out between them, but each, essentially had its own separate domain, method and spirituality and each was often defined *against* rather than *for* the other.

Enter now Orthodoxy, a quite different idea, or one should say, a different ascetical practice, now largely forgotten in the West. In the highest work of Man, prayer, the mind descends into the heart. There, the mind remains in tact, still active and functioning; but in the heart it listens to a Song wider and deeper than its own reasoning, the murmuring of the Holy Spirit who reveals the Living Word, Christ-God, whom it must worship before it understands. However, having met Christ in the heart and having battled against all the demons that would seek to dethrone His just and gentle rule, the mind resurfaces to the active realm to understand the blessing it has received. This understanding combines all that is good and noble in the human and natural sciences, not in an "easy" humanism that would sell its Christianity for acceptance by the world, but in a new synthesis, the transfiguration of all that is human by the Word and Power of God.

In this synthesis of Holy Orthodoxy there are no battles between Faith and Reason, between Heart and Mind, between Religion and Science, between the individual and the community. All are one in God and this unity extends from humanity to the whole Cosmos.

Let us recall then that the source of this true Enlightenment is in the meeting between the mind in the heart and God. This Enlightenment is not simply thinking about God or feeling His Presence. It is a struggle with and for God begun in baptism and completed only on the Last Day when the Kingdom of God and the Cosmos will be utterly and indistinguishably joined together in Love. In the Love of God, the mind and the heart are already one. Orthodoxy has no need of any extra added Enlightenment. It is Enlightenment itself. Introduce Orthodoxy to the West and the old destructive so-called "Enlightenment" will just shrivel. Soon may that day come!

Fr Gregory

Return to Eden

Not only does the Church's New Year begin on 1 September but this significant date also marks Orthodoxy's worldwide day for a celebration of Creation and a concern for environmental issues.

The word "green" is now on everyone's lips even if it only stands for low emission, lead-free petrol. It is less well known that Orthodox theology is "green" to the core. It has always been thus and in marked distinction to late western theology that looked on Creation as something to be mastered rather than cared for.

There can be little doubt that an important factor in the West's rape of nature has been its erroneous view that we must treat the earth as fallen, intractable, as a threat. This, I believe, is the legacy of considering Man's experience of Creation after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden but before or apart from the recreation of the world in Christ. The curse experienced by Adam and recorded in Genesis 1:17

"... cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life"

.... is not the final word for those who know that Creation itself has been touched by the resurrection of Christ. It is not humanity alone that has been delivered from bondage and the corruption of death but, through Man as priest, the whole Creation is to be transformed in a manner described by St. Paul

"the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:21)

Instead of this glorious vision of a New Creation for the world as well as for Man, the West has largely left Creation out of the sphere of redemption. Its understanding of salvation has been falsely spiritualised to the neglect of the material world. Of course a reaction did set in to all of this in the 19th century. Poets of a romantic, idealist mentality praised Creation as if it was God rather than His handiwork. This is most evident in Wordsworth for example whose nature mysticism led him far away from Christianity. New Age folk and neo-pagans are the inheritors of this tradition today. It's understandable I suppose if people react to the atrocious effects of Man's attempt to master Creation by subordinating themselves to it - or should we say "her?" However, a true understanding of Creation for Christians cannot be based either on an attempt either to master the material world or to worship it.

The Orthodox way is to make it possible for people to return to Eden, not as if the fall had not happened, but in order to live out fully the resurrection life. In this resurrection life the fall into death has itself been destroyed and a restored harmonious relationship with Nature has again been made possible. The model for this restored harmony is to be found in Genesis before the fall and in Revelation at the End of time.

In Genesis we read that God put Adam and Eve into the Garden to *"till it and keep it."* (Genesis 2:15). The God-in-breathed body that is Man received his priesthood to care for and relate to Creation as God's steward, his gardener. He forsook that gardening priesthood through disobedience; but, and this is crucial, he regained it in Christ. Will he forsake it again? The parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-43) is a warning against complacency in this regard. If we reject the message of the Prophets and the Son of Life Himself we shall have no part in the Kingdom of God.

In Revelation we read of the therapeutic role of the New Jerusalem, the New Temple which is the Church. The baptismal flood, picking up a prophetic theme from Ezekiel, irrigates the whole World.

"Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22:1-2)

There is no division here between salvation and creation. The whole Cosmos is transformed by the paschal victory of Christ, not just humanity.

Now all of this could just be an interesting and inspiring idea if it were not for the fact that the renewal of creation lies at the very heart of Orthodox faith, life and experience. For shining exemplars of this we need look no further than the Saints who dedicated themselves to living this life to the full. They remind us of the life that we could all be living with sufficient single-minded faith and dedication.

Dear to our own land is St. Guthlac, a 7th Century warrior of the Mercian king Ethelred who in his early 20's was overcome by a sense of the futility of war. He retired as a hermit into the Cambridgeshire Fens at Crowland to do battle instead with the powers and principalities of darkness. He emerged, like the great St. Antony before him, victorious, a person recreated by the Holy Spirit. The records show that he had an intense familiarity with the natural world. Birds and other wild creatures came to him, and not just to be fed. He could exercise authority wisely, most notably by his banishing of vermin from the village of Fishtoft, simply by his word. His life was and is not the only witness. St. Seraphim of Sarov befriended a wild bear. Many know of St. Francis, not himself an Orthodox Saint, but surely close to our tradition in this respect. There are many, many more examples.

The lesson we derive from all of these saints is that a proper relationship to the natural world only comes with spiritual effort and great labour. Merely loving Nature or passing laws to protect her is necessary but not enough. If Man is to find his rightful and harmonious place within Creation he must set about the task self-mastery by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit. He must set aside his ego, his lust for power and control for the sake of Him who set aside all these things for the love of the whole World, the Cosmos. He must measure up to the status and dignity God gave him in the beginning as a priest of Creation. If he does not do all these things, then even what he has will be taken away, and once again, dust and toil will be his lot. If he does do what God requires of him then Eden will return.

Fr Gregory

The Saints Who Reign on High

From the Profession of Faith at Chrismation...

"I believe and confess that it is proper to reverence and invoke the saints who reign on high with Christ, according to the interpretation of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Church; and that their prayers and intercessions avail with the beneficent God unto our salvation. It is well-pleasing in the sight of God that we should do homage to their relics, glorified through incorruption, as the precious memorials of their virtues."

It is this area of the Church's Life, the saints, that our Orthodox practice is most severely challenged in our Protestantised culture. It may even be that in unconscious ways, our own Orthodox life is itself conditioned by this marginalisation of the Holy Ones. So, what of the saints according to Orthodox teaching?

Firstly it is necessary to appreciate that the saints personalise Christianity. There are versions of Christianity around which reduce Church life to a set of doctrines, good in themselves, but because they are not enfolded in the lives of real people, such Christianity remains, abstract, dry, formal, conceptual. Think back to your time at school. I guess it's not the lessons you remember directly, rather the teachers who, for you, embodied and made accessible what they taught. So it is with saints. If you want to know who the Holy Spirit is, read the account of Motovilov's conversation with Fr. Seraphim. If you want to understand the place of monasticism in the life of the Church, read St. Athanasios' Life of St. Antony the Great. If you value the healing work of God, don't even read about it, just invoke the prayers of St.

Panteleimon, St. Swithun or some other unmercenary healer. The saints make real, vivid and personal what we believe and how we live by those beliefs.

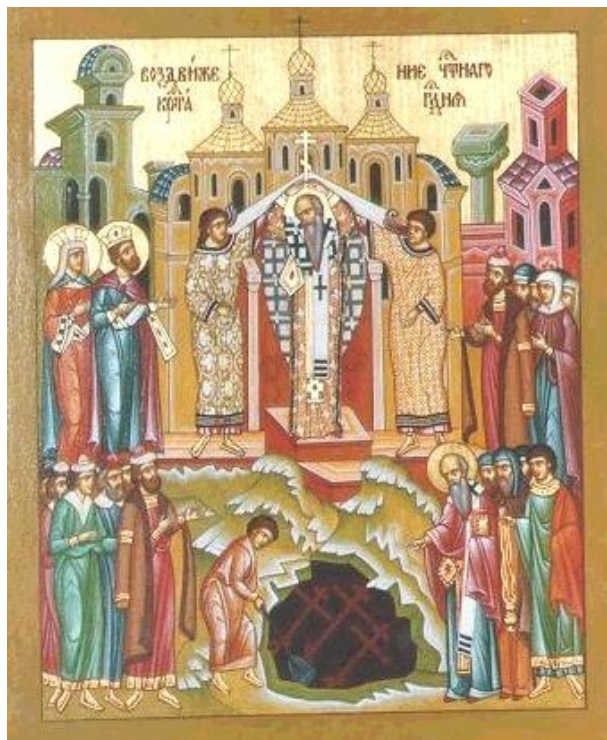
Secondly, the saints warm the fellowship of the Church. Being the friends of God, they are our friends as well. As friends, we should get to know them, develop a personal relationship with them. We can do this in ordinary tangible ways. Their icons are our portals into their fellowship. Their incorrupt remains are memorials of a faith and a life that is literally death-destroying by the power of God. Their prayers, when invoked, avail with God for our salvation. They are mighty intercessors before the Lord and many are the miracles that have been wrought by their prayers. It is right that we should develop personal attachments to those particular saints who speak to us, those to whom we feel drawn. In this way is the Church built up within one fellowship, the Communion of Saints, here and beyond the grave.

Thirdly, the saints provide us with living testimonies of a redeemed humanity. They show that Christian perfection is not an absurd or inaccessible goal. They are the ones whom God has touched and made whole. They shine with the uncreated light of the Godhead, irradiating their humanity with the new life of the Kingdom against which even death itself has no power. They are mirrors, as we behold them, of what we could be. They inspire us towards this goal, theosis, the promise of a new humanity, a New Creation, transcending even the biological necessities and chances of evolution towards something sublime and true, the Love of God made visible, the birth pangs of a new age in which God shall be all and in all.

Who then could do without the saints? No-one truly calling themselves Christian. The saints are the keys toward the re-conversion of these islands to Christ. Let us honour them in our generation that others by their example, fellowship and prayers may also become friends of God.

Fr Gregory

Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross



This feast commemorates the discovery by the Empress St. Helen, Mother of St. Constantine of the Cross in the fourth century. St. John Chrysostom records in 395 A.D. that three crosses were found

preserved on the traditional site of Golgotha and that the Cross of Our Lord was easily identified by both its position and the inscription.

The Holy Cross remained for veneration until 4 May, 614 when the Persians invaded, burned the Basilica and removed it. In 628 A.D. Emperor Heraclius defeated the Persians and had the Cross returned to Jerusalem. Over the centuries the remains were dismembered for relics, some of which still remain.

St. John Chrysostom's Encomium on the Holy Cross

The Cross has dissolved hatred towards Man, has brought reconciliation, has made the earth heaven, has mingled men with the angels, has conquered the bastion of death, has neutralised the strength of the devil, has dismissed the power of sin, has rid the earth of error, has restored the truth, has driven away the demons, has torn down pagan temples, has upset sacrificial altars, has dispelled the smell of burnt offerings, has planted virtue, has founded churches.

The Cross is the Will of the Father, the Glory of the Son, the Joy of the Spirit, the Pride of Paul.

The Cross is brighter than the Sun and more joyous than its rays.

The Cross has torn up our debts, has rendered useless the prison of death.

The Cross is proof of the Love of God, the unshaken wall, the unconquered weapon, the security of the rich, the richness of the poor, the weapon of the threatened, the rebuke of the passions, the kingdom of virtue, the wonderful and strange sign.

The Cross has opened Paradise, has admitted the thief and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the Kingdom of God.

Fr. Gregory

ORTHODOXY RETURNS

Although remnants of Orthodox Faith and Life persisted in the churches of Britain during the Second Millennium, the fullness of Orthodoxy was restored only with the arrival of the Greeks to these shores. These originally came as sailors and merchants, then as missionaries, later as mercenaries, (especially after the Fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453), and subsequently as students during the long years of the Ottoman rule in Greece and the Greek Islands (1453-1821).

Although this remained a numerically minimal presence of Orthodoxy in Britain until this century, the story of the return of Orthodoxy cannot be told without an understanding of the history of Greek immigration. It was, after all, the presence of Greek Orthodox Christians that first exposed British people to Orthodoxy, a presence which formerly held out great hope in terms of Anglican-Orthodox dialogue. Later, and more especially after the Revolution, the witness of Russian Orthodoxy became important, and, after the Second World War, Serbian refugees settled down to a new life here, mainly in the Midlands But, what of the Greeks?

The first organised Greek Orthodox Community, was established in London in the 1670s, when a group of some 100 refugees, probably from Mani, led by a priest named Daniel Voulgaris, sought permission from the Church and State Authorities in England to create a Greek Orthodox religious centre in the heart of London. The permission was finally granted in 1677 to Archbishop Joseph Georgirines of Samos who had come to London to have one of his books published. A church was eventually built in

Soho Fields, Soho, on a site offered by the then Bishop of London, Henry Compton, and with money collected by Archbishop Joseph from various donors. This church, however, was confiscated by the authorities in 1684 and handed over to the Huguenots to the dismay of the Greek Archbishop who gave vent to his anger over this flagrant injustice in a pamphlet, a copy of which is now in the British Library. It is widely accepted that the influence of the then strongly Protestant Anglican Bishop of London who tried to get the Greeks to abandon the Holy Icons was instrumental in the untimely end to this particular venture.

After this setback, the Imperial Russian Embassy offered its hospitality to the Greek community for its religious and communal activities in London until 1837, when they created their own Greek Orthodox Chapel in Finsbury Circus, in the City of London. In 1850, however, they built a new church of their own in London Street in the City, and in 1877 the magnificent Church of the Divine Wisdom (St. Sophia) in Moscow Road, Bayswater. In the meantime the number of Greeks who settled in Britain increased, particularly during the first decades of the nineteenth century, and this not only in London but also in other major commercial cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Cardiff. In the first two cases, churches were built in the 1860s, while in Cardiff a church was built in 1906. So, with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, in Great Britain there existed four thriving Greek Orthodox Communities, all centred around a Greek Church of their own: London (Saint Sophia), Manchester (The Annunciation), Liverpool (Saint Nicholas), and Cardiff (Saint Nicholas).

Up to this time, however, these four Greek Orthodox communities had no direct connection with any of the Greek Patriarchates or Autocephalous Churches, although theoretically and canonically they owed their allegiance or came under the jurisdiction of the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. For a short period of time (1908-1922), the Oecumenical Patriarchate transferred its rights to the Church of Greece. This irregularity was finally settled when, in 1922, the Holy Synod of the Oecumenical Patriarchate, through the initiative of Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis, created the Diocese of Thyateira, named after the famous See of Thyateira in Asia Minor. London was chosen as its seat, with jurisdiction over Central and Western Europe, and the eminent theologian Germanos Strinopoulos (at that time Rector of the Chalki Theological Academy) was chosen as its first bishop (Metropolitan). Germanos was succeeded after his death in 1951 by Archbishop Athenagoras Kavadas (1951-1962); after his death by Archbishop Athenagoras Kokkinakis (1963-1979) and after his death by Archbishop Methodios Fouyias (1979-1988), who was replaced in April 1988 by the present incumbent of the Archdiocese, Archbishop Gregorios Theocharous (who for the previous 18 years had been Bishop of Tropaeou, serving in North London).

In the meantime, however, with the number of Greeks increasing rapidly throughout Western Europe after the end of the Second World War, Greek Orthodox Communities were being established all over Great Britain. A huge increase in numbers of Orthodox was experienced in the 70's as dispossessed Greek Cypriots left for Britain after the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus.

Until the time of Archbishop Methodios the Greek Church used Greek exclusively in its services and for political and cultural reasons declined to engage in direct witness to the peoples of Britain in their own tongues. Archbishop Methodios steered this policy in a new direction and ever since there has been a gradually increasing acceptance of the use of English in the services and the ordination of priests of an English background, a policy which has been continued by Methodios' successor, His Eminence, Archbishop Gregorios. We must conclude, therefore, that the presence and witness of numerous Greeks over a long period has contributed significantly, albeit some would say, somewhat slowly, to the growth of British Orthodoxy and the recovery of our Orthodox Christian tradition in these islands. For this we thank and praise God.

The story doesn't end with the Greeks of course. In parallel there has been the witness of Russian Orthodoxy. The Russian Church had a presence in London as an Embassy community from 1741. In 1923 it moved to St. Philip's Church, Buckingham Palace Road, and then in 1956 to the present church in Ennismore Gardens, (formerly the Anglican parish church of All Saints, a daughter church of St Margaret's, Westminster). The building was bought outright in 1979.

The influence of Russian Orthodoxy in the UK and across much of western Europe was much more marked in the 20th Century as many White Russians fled after the Revolution. Although the theological centre of these émigré communities was undoubtedly Paris, the London community also developed a stronger interest in its presence amongst the British and for the British, particularly in the 1970's when a national network of 14 parishes was established. The strengths of the Russian Church here have been in its accessibility within English culture. The works of Metropolitan Antony Bloom and the music of John Tavener are well known. The Russian Church has shown itself willing to use native languages and traditions, (English and Welsh), within its churches and it also has ordained indigenous clergy. One cannot leave an assessment of the influence of Russian Orthodoxy without also mentioning ROCOR which in the late 90's experienced a strong revival of its witness in this country under the pastoral leadership of Archbishop Mark of Berlin. ROCOR has shown itself to be highly committed to the growth of British Orthodoxy and, thankfully, it is now emerging from a long period of isolation on the Orthodox scene.

Finally, it is sometimes sadly forgotten that the Serbian Church has a strong presence in the United Kingdom. A vibrant community exists for example in Birmingham where the Cadbury's helped to build the Church of St. Prince Lazare for Second World War refugees. Serbian Orthodoxy has perhaps been less significant, however, in terms of the development of British Orthodoxy with no English use communities established under its wing.

This brief study has attempted to trace the re emergence of canonical Orthodoxy in Great Britain since the fall of Constantinople and more especially since the 17th Century. This is not a matter of antiquarian interest. In the next talk we shall learn of the historical and ecumenical impact of these Orthodox communities in Great Britain and later we shall consider the prospects for ethnic and convert Orthodox alike to work together toward the re-evangelisation of Great Britain.

Without pre-empting these studies we may perhaps finally reflect on the possible part the return of Orthodoxy has played in God's plan for the Church in this country. Firstly we need to celebrate the determination of Orthodox Christians to survive and grow in a sometimes uncomprehending and even occasionally spiritually antagonistic environment. If that has made Orthodox somewhat cautious in their witness within Great Britain, then the reasons are understandable.

Secondly we need to understand that this history of Orthodox witness bears within it two different but not necessarily mutually exclusive models of Mission. The first and until recently predominant view has been that evangelisation must be subtle and discrete, a matter of quietly witnessing by one's life. Understandably this has been necessary to avoid the pitfalls of proselytism, particularly at a time when other Christian groups were much stronger and thicker on the ground here and when immigrants saw themselves as guests rather than British citizens ... a citizenship in letter or in spirit. The second model, whilst also eschewing proselytism, is much more prepared actively to engage with British culture in a long term strategy of reaching out with Orthodox Faith and Life to the native peoples of these Isles. This is done of course with the intention of restoring to them their Orthodox spiritual inheritance from the first millennium. It is done in order that they might have once again a sure means of salvation open to them particularly in the modern era when Orthodoxy seems now such a faint echo in the churches of the West. In this endeavour the Patriarchate of Antioch and other Orthodox Churches have been very active and committed. Antiochian Orthodox know their own history in this regard over the last few years!

There are some Orthodox, particularly converts, who nonetheless remain frustrated that the pace of change in the development British Orthodoxy has often been agonisingly slow. Much of this frustration is both justified and understandable. However, untempered zeal can often prove counterproductive. We also must understand that in the history of the Church from Apostolic times, the Christianisation of a culture often took a long, long time. It was not for example until the 7th Century under the leadership of the then Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, one our patrons, St. Theodore, that the English Orthodox Church really gelled together. In our day we must therefore recognise and celebrate the historical and present role of ALL Orthodox, consciously or unconsciously, be default or design in reclaiming this

land for our Orthodox Faith. The stability and extension of this great work now depends on developing Orthodox unity in a common labour for Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit from the Father. It is up to all of us now to play our part in this new and exciting phase of the return of Orthodoxy to Great Britain. It is not for us to envision the later stages of God's plan. It is sufficient that we remain faithful and do what God requires of us.

Fr. Gregory

ORTHODOXY AND ANGLICANISM

We saw in a previous talk how the Orthodox Church came into contact with the Lutherans and Roman Catholics after the

the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in the East, and the so-called "reformation" in the West. Contact was also made with the authorities of the Church in England. Cyril Lukaris, who figured so prominently in Orthodox relations with the Lutherans, also had correspondence with George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury (1611-33), and a future Patriarch of Alexandria, Metrophanes Kritopoulos, studied at Oxford from 1617 to 1624. Like Cyril Lukaris before him, he also wrote a book called "Confessions" which was slightly Protestant in tone, but was in fact, for a while, widely used in the Orthodox Church, until his teaching was condemned. Then in 1694, a plan was put forward to establish a "Greek College" in Oxford and about ten Greek students actually arrived, but they didn't stay long -- the food and the weather put them off.

In 1688, when the Orangeman, William, came to the English throne, a group broke away from the Church of England rather than swear allegiance to him, on the grounds that by so doing, they would break their former oaths to James II and his successors. There were nine bishops (including the well-known hymn writer, Thomas Ken) and about 400 clergymen and some eminent lay people. They became known as the Non-Jurors, and between 1716 and 1725, they carried on a most interesting correspondence with the four Orthodox patriarchs (and bishops in Russia as well) in the hope of establishing communion with the Orthodox. But in the end, the Non-Jurors could not accept the Orthodox position on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist; nor were they happy about the veneration shown to the Theotokos, the saints and the Holy Icons, and the exchange ended without any agreement being reached.

Maybe, the faults were not entirely on the English side. On this episode, Bishop Kallistos makes a typical Ware comment "one is struck by the limitations of Greek theology in this period; one does not find the Orthodox tradition in its *fullness*". Nevertheless, the Councils of the 17th century made a permanent and constructive contribution to Orthodoxy. To quote Bishop Kallistos again: " The Reformation controversies raised problems which neither the Ecumenical Councils nor the Church of the later Byzantine Empire was called to face. In the 17th century, the Orthodox were forced to think more carefully about the nature and authority of the Church....and to define its position in relation to new teachings which had arisen in the west." (History, page 109)

It is interesting, that at the same time as the correspondence with the Non-Jurors was going on, the well-known Russian, Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk (1734 - 83), a great preacher, teacher and a fluent writer, was borrowing heavily from western books of devotion -- both German and Anglican -- and his meditations on the physical sufferings of Jesus are more typical of Roman Catholicism than Orthodoxy.

Ever since the time of the Reformation Settlement in England, there have always been Anglicans who have regarded it as temporary, and who appeal, like the Old Catholics, to the General Councils of the Church, the Fathers, and the Tradition of the 'undivided Church'. The Non-Juror, Bishop Ken, has been mentioned. He claimed:-- "I die in the faith of the Catholic Church before the division of east and

west". Many Anglicans have looked with sympathy to the Orthodox Church and many scholars, especially in the last century, worked hard to translate Orthodox spiritual works into English.

There have been some official conferences between the two sides. In 1930, an Orthodox delegation came to England during the time of a Lambeth conference and held discussions. And this was followed by a further conference a year later. Honest attempts were made to face problems of doctrinal differences such as the relation of scripture to Tradition; the Procession of the Holy Spirit; the doctrine of the sacraments, and the Anglican idea of authority in the Church. This was followed in 1935, by a similar joint meeting with the Romanian Church in Bucharest which ended with a statement of accord but in the event, this proved premature.

Another attempt in Moscow in 1956 was more cautious than its predecessors as it tried to carry the discussion to a deeper level by reviewing the whole faith of the Churches and not just the apparent differences. In 1984, the Dublin statement of the Anglican - Orthodox Dialogue revealed widening differences in ecclesiology, and on the role of women. Also in the 20th century there have been conflicting statements from different parts of the Orthodox Church about the question of the validity of Anglican orders. The reasons for this variation in outlook is reflected in Bishop Kallistos' statement referred to just now when he talked about the "fullness of Orthodox doctrine" being recognised. On this point he comments; "This helps to explain why Constantinople in 1922 could declare favourably upon Anglican orders, and yet in practice treat them as invalid; this favourable declaration could not come properly into effect so long as the Anglican Church was not fully Orthodox in the faith". Put the other way round: Orthodox theology refuses to treat the question of Anglican orders in isolation but takes into consideration the whole faith of the Church. Even so, a negative answer at the present does not rule out hope for the future -- which puts the ball in the Anglican court.

What, then, is the chief obstacle to reunion? To quote Bishop Kallistos again:--" From the Orthodox point of view there is just one main difficulty and that is the comprehensiveness of Anglicanism; the extreme ambiguity of Anglican doctrinal formularies and the wide variety of interpretations which these formularies permit". In his book "Anglicanism and Orthodoxy" published in 1955, the Anglican Professor Hodges says:"The ecumenical problem is to be seen as the problem of bringing back the West....to a sound mind and a healthy life, and.....that Faith to which the Orthodox Fathers bear witness and of which the Orthodox Church is the abiding custodian." (ibid page 329).

Obviously, there are many Anglicans who would not agree with that statement and so the Orthodox church, though longing for re-union, cannot enter into closer relations with the Anglican communion until the Anglicans themselves are clearer about their own beliefs.

Fr Deacon John-Mark Titterington

Much to Beef About

A trade war looms. The French have doggedly refused to accept that British beef is safe to eat after the BSE scare, notwithstanding the expenditure of billions of pounds in making the industry ultra-safe and the consistent witness of scientific opinion in our favour. Meanwhile the sewerage-in-cattle-feed French farmers mount petulant mini-blockades as French police stand idly by and watch, grinning as their kinsmen illegally break the customs seals on British lorries. Back in the UK, some retailers and many consumers start boycotting French goods in retaliation. "Entente cordiale?" more like the 100 Years' War all over again! Sadly, this affair has exposed and reinforced the centuries old antagonism between the British and the French. We suspect them of protectionism, they suspect us of underhand dealing, and so it goes on.

Meanwhile, Tony Blair and the UK Government are trying to ease us into the European Union, a growing political entity, some would say within 10 years a United States of Europe. The British might

be a little more willing to sacrifice the Pound for the Euro if they saw similar sacrifices being made elsewhere, most notably in the fields of France. Gallic independence belies European pretensions. Suddenly the very idea of a European Union seems paper thin.

When will we learn? Unions do not come about by political manoeuvrings or the sheer force of economic power. We see what Tito did for Yugoslavia. It didn't last. We see what Indonesia has tried to enforce on its dependant territories. It has broken the oppressor, not the oppressed. We see what Soviet Communism tried to impose on the ethnic diversity of European and Asian Russia. It didn't hold together.

An instructive lesson may be derived from the life and work of a Greek Archbishop of Canterbury from the city of St. Paul, Tarsus. St. Theodore came to England in 668 AD at the behest of Pope Vitalian and set about uniting the nations of Britain under one common banner; that of Christ. He managed to unite an ethnically and religiously diverse nation, (Celtic, Saxon, Roman), not merely by his superb administrative skills, nor even by his pastoral tact, (which was sadly lacking in the case of St. Wilfrid's experience of his reorganising), but simply by offering the peoples and kings of Britain a vision of another Kingdom in which unity came not by force or subterfuge but by the kindly rule of the King of Peace. Under such a rule all could be assured of their place, none forced to give way to another.

I like to think that this Greek St. Theodore contributed greatly to the celebrated British spirit of mutual respect and concord which derives not from our racial identity, (which is as wonderfully patchwork as you can get), but from the spiritual solidarity and elevated vision of our most holy Orthodox faith, now, sadly long buried under centuries of neglect. Maybe, however, we don't quite like the idea of the "United States of Europe" not because we are all "little-islanders" (although some are), but because many of us still feel for a unity which is from above and not from below. The "Beef Episode" has perhaps exposed all of that. One thing is for sure, Europe will not embrace a united future unless she considers once more what she truly believes. That kind of unity does not seem to be "just around the corner."

Shhh! It's Sir Cliff!

I can't say that I am a particular fan of Cliff Richard but I am right behind him when it comes to the "Millennium Prayer" ... a setting of the Lord's Prayer to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," which has proved itself to be a number one best seller. Strangely it has been banned airplay by most national and local radio stations in the U.K., an action which is, for this material, both extraordinary and unprecedented. Let's consider the possible reasons:-

- (1) Faith doesn't sell mobile phones, (the biggest sellers for presents at Christmas). True, but hardly sufficient reason to ban the record. No one is seriously suggesting that this or any other record depresses the sales of this or any other product.
- (2) Sir Cliff released the record too early for Christmas. This reason, (unbelievably, actually used by some radio stations), is the limpest of all. Sir Cliff's timing doesn't seem to be far out so far! Don't hold your breath for the great expected dose of media gospel telling nearer the time. It hasn't happened before!
- (3) Not all listeners are Christians. True, but the millions who have gone out and bought the record surely might reasonably expect to hear it on their radios as well.
- (4) The hard-bitten secular DJ's and producers are too embarrassed to play it. Maybe but that's hardly good commercial decision making is it?
- (5) Jo-public will be too embarrassed to hear it ... not if the record sales are anything to go by!

(6) It isn't the right image for the radio station. We're somewhat nearer the truth now. The media pundits and moguls who run the leisure industry are mostly light years' distant from any sensitivity to spiritual concerns. However, it would seem that they don't know their public very well. Maybe this cynical secular cocoon will be their undoing.

In my judgement I think the reaction can be explained by understanding that Sir Cliff, in releasing this record, has broken one of the strongest taboos of our highly controlled and regulated media in the UK. *"Thou shalt not display thy faith in public."* This isn't a matter of English reserve. It's far more worrying than that. It's the idea that Great Aunt Maud has done something unspeakable in public. The Family (Establishment) closes ranks. The truth is that the people know better and quite like the old dear.

I have rarely encountered a better justification for a total deregulation of Christian broadcasting than in the events of recent days. OK, so we might get a lot of naff tele-evangelists. But, we also might gain a more open attitude towards faith in the public domain. That would have to be for the good.

Fr Gregory

British Orthodoxy



by Revd. Fr. Deacon John-Mark

Father Gregory's faith in my powers of clairvoyance is touching if unrealistic. Like me, you have probably heard or read already many prognostications upon the future. For myself, a most important and useful reminder was provided by Fr. Columba Flegg (*"Orthodox Outlook"*) who points out that as Orthodox, we must exercise a caution here. As faithful followers of Our Lord, we must first of all be

mindful of His promise to return at a time which we know not, but in anticipation of which we must always be ready.

Fr Lev Gillet pointed out (in his book, "Communion in the Messiah") that the western Churches, having lost the sense of Jesus' Messiahship, have lost also the Messianic vision, and he added "For the Orthodox Church, the things that are to come, have always been more important than the things that are now". So, our constant prayer has to be, as it was in the first centuries of the Church,:- "Even so, come Lord Jesus"

If we scan the first two millennia of the Christian era, we could say that in the first, Europe rose from the depths of paganism to the heights of holiness and in the second, she fell from the heights of holiness to the depths of paganism. This process speeded up in the second half of this century with the rejection of Christian values, summed up in the now-discarded phrase, so common a few years ago: "God is dead". It is salutary to note that in considering Europe alone, it was during this second millennium that mostly, she was separated from the fullness of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic faith as it was preached in the first.

Therein lies my hope for the coming century. It can be termed the "re-awakening of Orthodoxy" to its true role, the role which she assumed during those vital early centuries, when she successfully spread the Gospel over the known world. In those far off days, as now, the whole tide of public opinion ran against her but she stuck to her role and conquered.

To my way of thinking there are three obstacles in her way, and two of them are within the control of the Church. The first obstacle is the lack of trust among the various branches of Orthodoxy towards each other and it is quite obvious that nothing can be achieved with a divided leadership. The second obstacle is the support which Orthodoxy in general has given so far to the cause of ecumenism. Sad though it is in some ways to have to admit defeat on this front, the fact remains that there now seems little hope of a reunited One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church being brought about through the efforts of the World Council of Churches and many Orthodox observers at the Council are openly admitting this to be the truth.

There is unfortunately, a third obstacle which is outside the Churches' control. In 1995 I returned to live in North Manchester and was very surprised to find how much it had changed in the 30 years I had been away. The change, needless to say, was that so much of the commercial life of the area is now in the hands of the Muslim community and the native population seems to shrug its shoulders and adopt an attitude of *laissez faire*. This is very much in the British tradition and in many ways is admirable but, in the long-term, it does cast a shadow over the freedom which the Christian religion has enjoyed in this country.

Of course, it is true that no other part of Christendom has had more experience than the Orthodox of dealing with the followers of Islam but we can hardly claim that she has usually come off best in the struggles. Extreme Muslim groups, still smarting over their military defeat in Spain and final expulsion from that country in the 15th century, have proclaimed "Europe for Allah in the 21st century" and they plan to achieve this, not by force of arms, but by peaceful infiltration. Should they succeed, persecution of the Church is inevitable and we can hardly claim to be geared to live with that at the present time.

So it may well be that one question we ought to face is: what future is there for British Orthodoxy in the 3rd millennium in an increasingly Muslim milieu? Most Orthodox in this country at the present time have been dismayed at the way our lords and masters reacted to the crisis in Kosovo because it showed us, all too clearly, that the powers that be, on either side of the Atlantic, could not understand a culture with a convinced religious base. Our leaders were expecting that the problem of Kosovo could be solved by a change of ownership of land regardless of any other consideration and were surprised when the locals did not agree with them. The situation will be similar, although reversed, in this country when we try to make any arrangement with Muslims who have by that time become entrenched and so will believe that they are doing God's will to resist any uncongenial deal or compromise.

How to live until that day comes is the immediate question, and again, I say, that I pin my hope on a re-awakened Orthodox church, which people see as a unity in itself, even though in fact there may be a diversity of jurisdictions. But a Church which is showing the residual Christians in this country what the Church was and did in the earliest centuries could turn out to be a rock in a very changing world. The fact that so many people today are searching for "Eastern spirituality" and in many cases, going to great lengths to try to find it, show that there is a longing for a deep-seated and convincing way of living. We ought to try to fill this vacuum by proclaiming the faith once delivered to the saints.

It may be that in a Muslim-centred culture, we will do best to start always by proclaiming Jesus, whom the Muslims say they accept as a prophet, and showing that we believe Him to be the Incarnate Son of God. In His teaching, Jesus interpreted the Old Testament scriptures to show that they pointed forward and referred to Him and we believe that they only make sense when seen in the light of His revelation. It is important to help Muslims see this, as they regard the O.T. scriptures in the same way as our Jewish forbears, i.e. as attributing to God human and sinful values. This rejects Christ as True God and True Man and also it rejects the Holy Spirit as well.

"Only Orthodox Christianity", Fr Andrew Phillips declares, "tells of the Transcendental God Who became Incarnate Man and 'dwelt among us', unlike both Islam, which accepts only a transcendental god, and the west, which accepts only a fallen man. Only Orthodox Christianity speaks of the continuing Revelation of the Holy Spirit, Who makes Christ present among us, and not as the finished revelation of the Koran, or the revelationless west....."

And only Orthodoxy speaks of the Resurrection-Victory of Christ over Death, Death whose sting is taken away neither by the free market, nor by Mohammed who failed to rise from the dead".(Orthodox Christianity & the English Tradition, page 425).

Our Lord asked a most important question:- "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Lk.18:8). It is our contention, that He will find faith on the earth, if the Orthodox remain faithful to their original calling and do not compromise their faith but come closer to what they are meant to be, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church whose constant prayer is "even so, come Lord Jesus". (Rev. 22.20)