

Archive 2004

"Sufficient Unto the Day is the Evil Thereof" (Matthew 6:34)

Life isn't fair. This discovery of adolescence is a conclusion to be revisited many times throughout life. Subsequently our experiences often lead to far more violent reaction and even despair, particularly if we have been parties to or witnesses of some traumatic case of innocent suffering.

For some this can fatally undermine faith, particularly if that faith has been founded on a conviction of God's loving personal care for each and every one. The Holocaust was just such an experience for the Jews. Disasters since, man made and natural, personal and global, have given rise in many of us to Job-like complaints and doubts from time to time. How could God have stood by and seen up to 50,000 people killed in the recent earthquake in Bam, Iran? Jesus himself was once asked a similar question.

Luke 13:4

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

The question and the troubles it causes is, of course, much older than this reference. Let us consider Epicurus for a moment, a Greek philosopher writing 300 years before Christ

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?

Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing?

Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing?

Then why call him God?

Epicurus (c. 341-271 BCE)

Let's rule out human error and abuse of freedom for a moment. This is certainly legitimate when considering, for example, natural infant mortality. In this case the "freewill defence" doesn't work. The child that dies from leukaemia hasn't done anything wrong nor has anyone else connected with that child. So, why doesn't God save that innocent child? It's here of course that Epicurus' complaint comes into its own. Perhaps we should reread his lament with this specific example in mind.

There are a number of traditional Christian reflections for this heart rending situation ... but none completely satisfy. Let's rehearse three of them all the same. Note that I am only considering reflections on the problem of INNOCENT suffering. I shall give the objections to each one under: *OBJ.*

(1) The Fall has introduced evil into an otherwise good creation. Death, disease and innocent suffering arise from that calamitous breach between God and Man. No one has to be personally responsible to share in that suffering. We are all in the same boat, saint and sinner alike, the innocent and the guilty.

OBJ: Then God is unjust to set up creation so that the innocent suffer along with the guilty.

(2) Human standards of justice are not divine. We have only the slightest hint of what the Universe is really like and why things are as they are. God's wisdom is inscrutable, sure, just and ultimately

triumphant. All wrongs shall be righted. It ill behoves any man to take God's place and pronounce judgement on him for transient misfortunes.

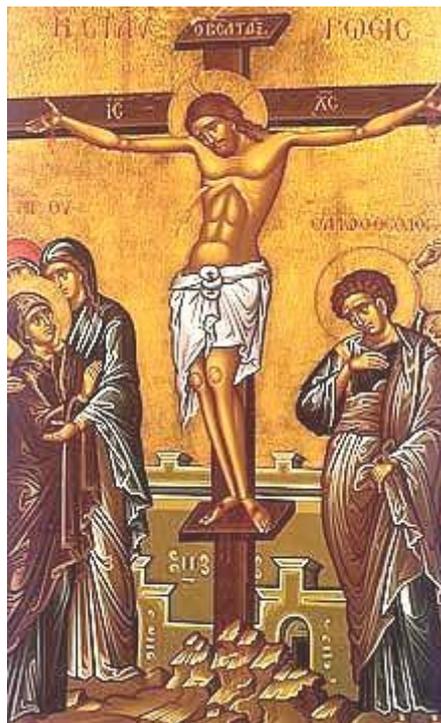
OBJ: Then God's standard of care is inferior to that of most diligent human parents, no matter what the final outcome is. Do not Christians say that: "the ends do not justify the means?"

(3) Innocent suffering cannot be assessed on moral grounds. Misfortunes happen because we live in a Universe operating according to dependable and functionally optimal natural laws. Without volcanoes we wouldn't have life on earth even if they also take away life. Genetic errors in human cell biology are necessary in order to drive evolution even if some are fatal. The Universe is not moral. It just is.

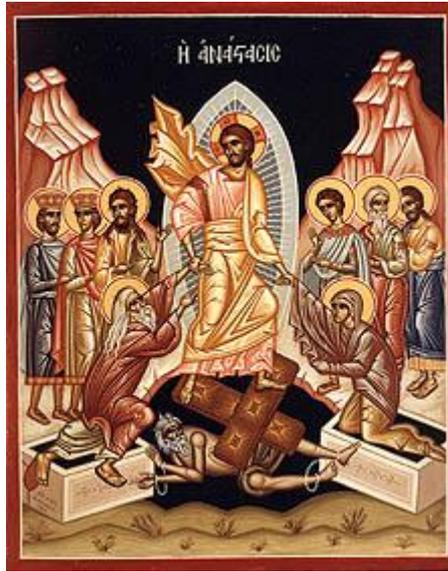
OBJ: Then why do humans imagine and yearn for a better world. Is this the best God can do?

The force of these (and other) objections is very clear to someone who has actually had to face innocent suffering rather than someone who theorises from afar having read all the right text books on "The Problem of Evil."

Christianity DOES have a response though to such questions ... but it is unlikely to impress secular moral philosophers and others who stop short of faith. Actually it's not so much an explanation as a solution. It doesn't and can't answer whether or not God could have or should have made a "better world." It does, however, bring sweetness out of bitterness, hope out of despair, light out of darkness and death out of life. It's God's transformative Life-Giving Presence in Hell because of this ...



and leading to this ...



THAT is what is distinctive about Christianity and why no other faith comes close. It is not a message though that many Christians seemingly want to hear. It's too brutal, too challenging, too disturbing. For those, however, who have no human hope no other hope will do. That is the perennial and universally disclosed secret of God's dependable love ... even in the midst of hell itself. This is why God is believable ... because He comes amongst us and gets His hands dirty.

For a discussion of Epicurus' complaint go here to the ["Ship of Fools" Discussion Board](#).

Fr. Gregory

THE 7th CENTURY NORTHUMBRIAN CHURCH

of St Benedict Biscop & St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne

Explorers 3rd January 2004 (Fr. John-Mark Titterington)

This year's Explorer's addresses will deal with various themes, centred upon a saint of the month. For January we are going to explore the Northumbrian Church of seventh century, using the feast of St Benedict Biscop on the 12th as the starting point. It is unfortunate that this Benedict is not better known in our country as he did so much to help the Church of his day to grow.

He was born into a noble Northumbrian family and at first was in the service of the King, Oswiu until the year 653. Then he decided to become a monk, but first went with Bishop Wilfrid to Rome to visit the tombs of the apostles, and after returning home, he collected Alcfrith, son of Oswy, and took him on another visit to Rome. You may think that Benedict Biscop is entitled to become the patron saint of travel agents because in all he managed five, perhaps six, visits to Rome. On his way home from this second visit, at last he was tonsured a monk at Lerins, in France, taking the name Benedict.

Soon he set out once more for the Eternal City where he found Wighard, the Archbishop-elect of Canterbury awaiting ordination. The good Wighard died before this happened, and the Pope instead laid hands upon Theodore of Tarsus, an old man, who was put into Canterbury as a caretaker-archbishop, but who did a great deal to establish the Church in England as we will see in the Explorers Liturgy in September. Our Benedict came back to England with Theodore who promptly made him abbot of St Augustine's Monastery at Canterbury.

But Benedict wanted his own place and he persuaded King Egfrith in Northumbria to give him some land at Wearmouth where he began to build a monastery dedicated to St Peter. To help with this he imported French stonemasons and afterwards he brought in some Flemish glassmakers who provided the most imposing Church and buildings of the day. We are told that the foreign craftsmen we at pains

to teach the English their trades. Benedict had brought books to start a good library and, of course, the Rule of St Benedict the Great, Biscop's patron, was observed in the monastery.

Now it was time for another visit to Rome and on this occasion we are told he returned with "an innumerable collection of books of all kinds", together with relics, service books and calendars, but above all, he managed to secure the services of the archcantor of St Peter's Church in Rome, John by name, whose task it was to teach the English to sing the psalms as they sang them in Rome. Another monastery was formed, this time at Jarrow and dedicated to St Paul, thus honouring the two saints of Rome, Peter and Paul. In passing it ought to be mentioned that there remains to this day a substantial portion of both monasteries which are well worth a visit if you are near Sunderland and Jarrow.

In 685, Biscop made another visit to Rome and returned with even more books, sacred images and vestments. But his travels and his labours had taken their toll, and for the last three years of his life, Benedict Biscop was stricken with paralysis, but he continued to supervise from his bed the monasteries he had helped to found. He died in 689., and was buried in his own monastery at Wearmouth surrounded by his books and treasures.

Some so-called history books would try to tell you that Benedict Biscop lived in "the Dark Ages". From the little just recounted, it is obvious that he did more than most to bring the light of the Christian faith to these shores, and he also made it possible for those who followed to study. For example, the library he started allowed the Venerable Bede to learn and he is, perhaps a little grudgingly these days, called the "Father of English History". Besides academic studies, Biscop helped teach his fellow countrymen music; to build in stone and create fine vestments, and then install, if not double glazing, at least one means of keeping out wind and rain while letting in the daylight, all of which were important steps forward in civilized living. Not a small achievement for one man.

Still in the Church of Northumbria, there was at that time, another shining light living on the Scots border. This was St Cuthbert who, like Biscop, came of a well-to-do family. Praying one night, he saw in the dark sky, a shaft of light down which angels descended and soon went back up with a resplendent soul. Next morning he heard that Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne and evangelizer of the north, had died. This decided Cuthbert, then aged 15, to offer himself as a monk at Melrose Abbey. With the abbot, Eata, he went to Ripon where Alcfrith, whom Biscop had once taken to Rome, gave some land. At the same time, though, the donor demanded that the new monastery there follow the Roman customs, so the Melrose monks returned home and the monastery was taken over by Wilfrid who also had been in Biscop's company in Rome. It is truly amazing how tight-knit the Church leadership of the time was. Cuthbert became prior of Melrose in 661 and spent the next few years in missionary journeys around the lowlands, all the time inflicting the most severe discipline on himself.

After the Synod of Whitby, he, too adopted the Roman customs, and then became the prior at Lindisfarne Monastery. By his patience, he won over the monks there to his own point of view, but he did this by persistent prayer. He built himself a hermitage on the off-shore Island which today is named after him. In 676 he gave up the office of Prior to withdraw to solitude on the Inner Farne Island, where St Aidan used to spend Lent.

But such a light could not remain hidden and soon he was chosen by King Egfrith and Archbishop Theodore to be Bishop of Hexham. His standing was such that he was able to exchange this see with Bishop Eata for Lindisfarne and in 685 Cuthbert returned home.

His zeal was expressed in his prayers, his teaching, asceticism, preaching and care of his diocese. He was also reputed to have the gifts of prophecy and healing. He died on 20th March 687 and was buried at Lindisfarne. Eleven years later his body, when being transferred to a new shrine, was found to be incorrupt.

Two seventh century men, both noted Church leaders but very different in character. Benedict Biscop the active go-getter, leading from the front and planning to ensure that those who came after could

develop and build on his foundations, and Cuthbert, the man of prayer, who led his people by giving them a vision of the holiness of God.

.Just as Jesus commended both Martha and Mary in the Gospel, so the Church always needs leaders of both types – the man of action and the man of prayer, and it is rash of us to judge which is the more important. It is interesting to note that the memory of the Man of God eclipsed that of the activist, and today, Cuthbert is remembered at his Shrine in Durham Cathedral, and by seventy-two church dedications in this country, whereas Benedict has no known ancient Church dedicated to him. Nevertheless, we can praise and glorify God for giving the seventh century Church of Northumbria two great and blest leaders whose influence is still apparent to us today.

Fr. John-Mark

The Fathers on the Publican and the Pharisee

And as with regard to raiment and gold, when we expose them in a market-place, we attract many ill-meaning persons; but if we put them by at home and hide them, we shall deposit them all in security: even so with respect to our good deeds; if we are continually keeping them in memory, we provoke the Lord, we arm the enemy, we invite him to steal them away; but if no one know of them, besides Him who alone ought to know, they will lie in safety.

Be not therefore for ever parading them, lest some one should take them away. As was the case with the Pharisee, for bearing them about upon his lips; whence also the devil caught them away. And yet it was with thanksgiving he made mention of them, and referred the whole to God. But not even did this suffice Him. For it is not thanksgiving to revile others, to be vainglorious before many, to exalt one's self against them that have offended. Rather, if thou art giving thanks to God, be content with Him only, and publish it not unto men, neither condemn thy neighbour; for this is not thanksgiving.

St John Chrysostom

And just as a ship, after having run through innumerable surges, and having escaped many storms, then in the very mouth of the harbour having been dashed against some rock, loses the whole treasure which is stowed away in her — so truly did this Pharisee, after having undergone the labours of the fasting, and of all the rest of his virtue, since he did not master his tongue, in the very harbour underwent shipwreck of his cargo. For the going home from prayer, whence he ought to have derived gain, having rather been so greatly damaged, is nothing else than undergoing shipwreck in harbour.

St John Chrysostom

Boastful I am, and hard-hearted, all in vain and for nothing. Condemn me not with the Pharisee, but rather grant me the humility of the Publican, O only merciful and just Judge, and number me with him.

The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

Make account that thou hast done nothing, and then thou hast done all. For if, being sinners, when we account ourselves to be what we are, we become righteous, as indeed the Publican did; how much more, when being righteous we account ourselves to be sinners.

St John Chrysostom

Our virtue, therefore, must not be contaminated with fault, but must be single minded and blameless, and free from all that can bring reproach. For what profit is there in fasting twice in the week, if thy so

doing serve only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and make thee supercilious and haughty, and selfish?

St. Cyril of Alexandria

Permission to Fail

I want to encourage all our readers here this month to give themselves and others the permission to fail. It seems that just about every commandment from the Ten is now an option but this 11th contemporary commandment: "*Thou shalt not fail!*" remains rigid and unbending. Consider what the consequences of not giving ourselves and others the permission to fail are:-

- (1) A sense of total inadequacy and social ostracism when we do fail.
- (2) A dishonest covering up of our lives so that we appear not to fail.
- (3) A belief that others should be as successful as we claim (or deceive) ourselves to be.
- (4) A belief that success is the measure of our worth and the worth of every other.
- (5) A writing off of a considerable part of our lives as unproductive.
- (6) A restless dissatisfaction of what we are when compared with what we think we should be.
- (7) A self esteem that barely registers when failure strikes.
- (8) An inability to forgive ourselves and others.
- (9) A failure to see the significance of sacrifice ... and by extension for Christians the full depth and power of the Cross.
- (10) A overestimation of human powers to the eclipse of God.

That's a pretty damning list when the spiritual implications are taken on board; yet this is the measure of our culture. It leaves precious room for those who don't fit in of course, (and to some extent, we *all* don't fit in). It creates a society where bad things can be magicked away by superficial palliatives targets, rewards, motivation. In truth this perverse "gospel" of success is a terrible burden. So why don't we shake it off this Great Lent and become like the Publican rather than the Pharisee, who, would not even raise his eyes unto heaven and yet was justified by his cry:-

"God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Fr. Gregory

St. John Chrysostom on Fasting

Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see a poor man, take pity on him.

If you see a friend being honoured, do not envy him.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all the members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice.

Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful.

Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip.

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism.

For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?
May HE who came to the world to save sinners strengthen us to complete the fast with humility, have mercy on us and save us.

ANGER AND SLOTH

The Lent 2004 course of addresses on Wednesday nights start by looking at the seven capital sins and we begin with Anger and Sloth. Its interesting to be asked to speak about two subjects with which you are, unfortunately, only too well acquainted !

Anger is a purely spiritual sin. It is usually a violent emotion to repel or punish someone who has provoked us. We are warned that anger can only be justified if it is tempered by reason and charity. It can never be justified if it is moved by either hatred, or the desire for revenge.

Most of us know well enough what anger is like and what it does to us. It over-excites us; it drives away any sense of reason or judgment, and when it becomes violent, it is driven by the devil. It is indeed a spiritual sin.

We are sometimes told that “people cannot help being angry” It is strange, then, that in His Sermon on the Mount, Our Blessed Lord went so far as to amend the sixth Commandment “thou shalt not kill” by putting sinful anger on a level with murder :- “But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Mt 5.22). St John Climacus in “The Ladder of Divine Ascent” say “Angry people, because of their self-esteem, make a pitiable sight, though they do not realize this themselves. They get angry and then, when thwarted, they become furious”

How do we deal with all this? The first stage of anger is usually impatience and so the way to deal with the prOur Blessed Lordem is by patience and meekness. To quote St John again:-

“So, then, anger the oppressor, must be restrained by the chains of meekness, beaten by patience, and hauled away by blessed love” And he is ever practical, and goes on

“I will never speak in an angry tone to anyone who speaks in anger to me. I will not answer back in kind” and we may extend that by saying “I will never speak in anger to anyone” = step one. Step two develops the idea : “I will not allow my mind to think angry thoughts about those who speak angry words to me” and then step three gets to the root of the matter:- “I will not notice those who offend me”.

Meekness of this quality requires much patience – patience, first of all, in trying to hide all outward appearance of distress and anger. And then, quickly, by our use of the Jesus Prayer or some other short prayer asking for grace, obtaining strength from God, because we realize we cannot fight this battle by ourselves. The devil is hard at work so we need help, and we need it quickly, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner – NOW” It is helpful to remember the joy of the Apostles at being counted worthy of suffering for Christ. St Paul’s injunction is also important “let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph.4.26); or, as Our Blessed Lord said, “agree with your adversary quickly” (Mt.5.25).

We often speak of “losing your temper” but when we do lose our temper, we lose possession of our souls. The best way to regain command is though patience, and the meekness to accept the will of God, and then to wait for Him in calmness of spirit.

SLOTH, by contrast, is half a spiritual sin but also, as we all know, it is half a bodily sin as well. It is so common that it hardly needs any description. It is a bodily disease of the will which shows itself chiefly in a lack of use of our physical energy, i.e. of wasting our life.

We all recognize bodily laziness in our everyday life – often putting off till tomorrow the things we should do today. There is also intellectual sloth when we take our opinions, without asking any questions, from the media; and there is moral sloth which stifles our duty to our neighbour, as defined in Our Blessed Lord’s story of the Good Samaritan (Lk.10.29). And, of course, there is spiritual sloth

We have all heard many sermons on our duty towards God, urging diligence in worship, prayers, dealing with what the Liturgy calls our “vain imaginings” and wandering thoughts during worship; good preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communions; also giving way to doubts and lukewarmness, and failing at least to aim at our Lord’s command to be perfect (Mt.5.48). The list seems endless.

Because our laziness is at least half a spiritual sin, again we can only begin to combat it by calling for God’s unlimited help. Once we become convinced that we can do all things, as St Paul says, through Christ who strengthens us, we have won half the battle.

But because we have failed to do the good works “which God prepared that we should walk in” (Eph.2.10), the other half of the battle is only engaged by working in the Lord’s vineyard NOW, while we have time (Mt.20.1,2).

St Benedict, in his Rule says, :- “Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Because this is so, the brethren are to be occupied at specified times in manual labour, and at other fixed hours by holy reading” . This rule is basic for the Religious Life, but is also a good guide for us as well. The Fathers warn us that, without some spiritual, mental and bodily work, the soul inevitably becomes soft and slothful, and has a distaste for both prayer and worship.

One aim of the period of Lent is to impress upon us how important it is not to waste our time in frivolous amusements and once we make the effort we will find that Christ does indeed strengthen us to do all things, as St Paul promised (Phil.4.13) Doing something positive in Lent can go a long way towards countering the devil’s constant temptation to indulge in the capital sin of sloth.

The Immortal Dies

"Thou hast given thyself for redemption:
Soul for soul, Body for body, and Blood for blood,
Man for man, and Death for death.
O strange and unspeakable mystery:
The Judge was judged;
He who loosed the bound was bound;
He who created the world was fixed with nails;
He who measures heaven and earth was measured;
He who gives creatures life died;
He who raises the dead was buried.
What is this new Creation?
The Judge is judged and is silent;
The Invisible is seen on the Cross and is not ashamed;
The Infinite is contained and does not complain;
The Impassible suffers and does not seek vengeance;
The Immortal dies and says nothing;
The King of heaven is buried and endures it.
What is this strange Mystery?"

St. Melito of Sardis

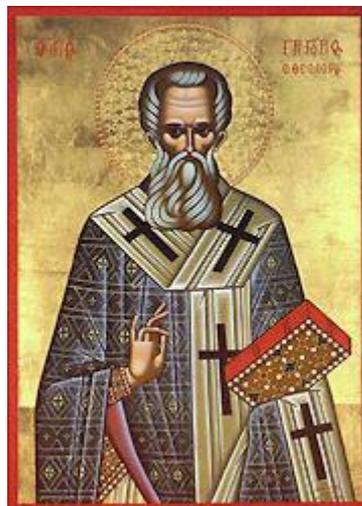
Looking for Life

The resurrection has, frankly, become something of an embarrassment to many non-Orthodox Christians today. Let's face it ... starkly put ... we claim that a dead man walked. This is not the every day sort of occurrence that one would expect to see whilst shopping, say in ASDA / Walmart. I doubt whether it was anything the disciples expected either yet it became the core gospel message preached as attested in St. Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22-24. The cultured Athenian philosophers of course scoffed at such a message, (Acts 17:31-32). The Church stuck by its guns, however. The witness was true, however, whatever men thought of it so in season and out of season the apostles and evangelists preached Christ crucified and risen. Slowly but surely and then with gathering pace the world arose from its slumber to capture something of the majesty and glory of a God who would not baulk at anything ... death included ... to deliver man from his ancient curse, the grave. The new era in human and cosmic history heralded by Pascha was eventually even to overturn the mighty Roman Empire and turn it from persecution to worship. This revolutionary power came and comes from God Himself who, in the face of death, can only raise the dead.

Today the post-Christian world looks weary and cynical. It looks at the Orthodox Church and rightly admires the tenacity of faith and joy in the resurrection manifest in its members who have gone through the crucible of suffering under both Ottomans and Soviets. It cannot bring itself, however, to embrace the same faith for it is too wedded to its own doubts. The world does not seem to manifest the spring buds of Christ's risen life. In Iraq, in Africa, in the terrorised West commentators see only dust and a grim determination to try and hold the line against the four diabolical horsemen of the apocalypse. This futile and all too predictable despair is a result of looking in the wrong place for life. When men and women look to the kingdoms of this world for salvation all they see is oppression, deceit and broken promises; yet they have denied themselves the prospect of looking elsewhere. We are witnessing here a debilitating grief at the handful of dust that marks the legacy of human aspiration without God. Sometime soon the world needs to wake again and taste the sweet air of Christ's risen life banishing the stench of death and human misery. For now, sadly, the dog has returned to its vomit. What is needful now is for the churches beyond Orthodoxy to rediscover with freshness and depth their First Love and guard the Holy Fire. As St. Augustine said:- "We are an Easter people and 'Alleluia!' is our song."

Fr. Gregory

Paschal Oration by St. Gregory the Theologian



Many indeed are the miracles of that time: God crucified; the sun darkened and again rekindled; for it was fitting that the creatures should suffer with their Creator; the veil rent; the Blood and Water shed from His Side; the one as from a man, the other as above man; the rocks rent for the Rock's sake; the dead raised for a pledge of the final Resurrection of all men; the Signs at the Sepulchre and after the Sepulchre, which none can worthily celebrate; and yet none of these equal to the Miracle of my salvation. A few drops of Blood recreate the whole world, and become to all men what rennet is to milk, drawing us together and compressing us into unity.

St. Gregory the Theologian

Orthodoxy and Europe

So, the British are to get a referendum on the new European Constitution anyway. After such a long time resisting the idea, the Government has finally conceded the point, probably for political reasons. The referendum will not in all probability happen before the next election but I suppose we should be grateful that we shall get our say. Having said that, most of us in the UK haven't a clue what's in the proposed new Constitution. Let's hope that's remedied in forthcoming months. The referendum isn't about the principle of being "in Europe" (whatever that meant, means and might mean in the future). Nonetheless I suspect that this is the fundamental question upon which many will vote. As things stand at the moment though, the Government has an uphill task persuading the public that European integration is a Good Thing.

All this has set me thinking about Europe again. Are we European or not? What has Orthodoxy to say historically about our place in Europe as Christians?

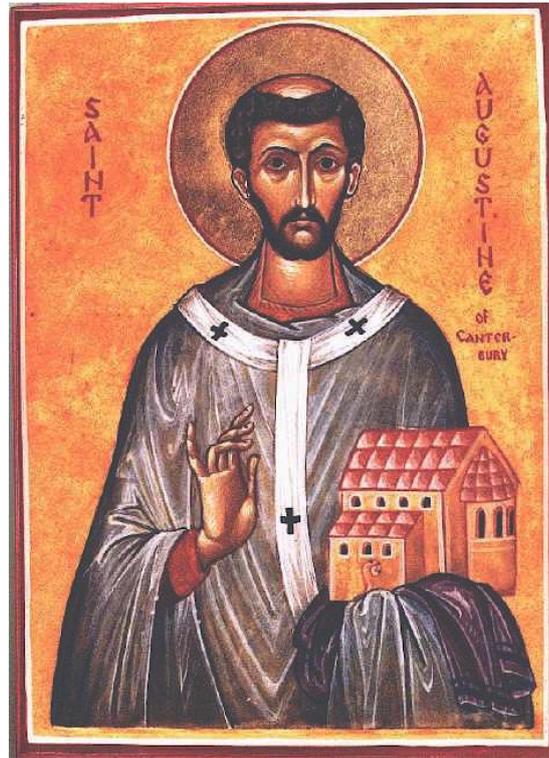
Of course there are some unworthy sectarian, "little England" attitudes around (usually Protestant in character) that regard the New Europe as a fiendish Papist plot. Mercifully these have been pared down by secularism and holidays in Majorca. Many if not most British people now like the idea of 'Europe as Shop' or 'Europe as Beach' but do they warm to the idea as 'Europe as State'? I suspect not. We have always had this ambiguous attitude toward Europe as an island race ... nice to visit, but not a place to stay; still less to be governed by. Of course it is possible to build a strong argument from economics and the politics of geography for integration within Europe and even market that as our "national" interest but I suspect that many people suspect that any advantage would accrue as a "state" within an eventually realised European Federal Union. It is this undisclosed often refuted goal that many suspect and resist; but why?

I think that there is something about British culture that is impossible to pin down and locate in any European political configuration. Whereas most people on the "continent" would unequivocally regard themselves as European it is not so with the British. Has this always been the case? It is difficult to say the earlier we travel back in time beyond the Empire, beyond the Industrial Revolution, beyond the Reformation.

It is in this context that Orthodoxy now finds itself as it struggles to recover and develop its indigenous Christian identity in these islands. Of one thing I am sure; in doing this Orthodoxy must not seek a cheap populist advantage in appealing to anti-European sentiment. In reality this would be very difficult to do without doing violence to Orthodox Christian history in Britain which is replete with examples of saints and missionaries going backwards and forwards over the Channel and the North Sea. However, whether this also means that Orthodoxy should sign up to a federal Europe lock stock and barrel is another question altogether. This issue is in parallel to my own reflection. I simply don't know but we shall need to decide pretty soon.

Fr. Gregory

St. Augustine and the Roman Mission



Christianity in Britain from Roman times onwards was a very mixed affair. There was, of course, an infant Romano-British Church, seeded no doubt by Christian soldiers and a few provincial governors who could afford protection to the infant church. The tradition of St. Aristoboulos as first Bishop of the Britons is an ancient and firm one, although we know next to nothing about him. By the time that the Pope, St. Gregory the Great sent St. Augustine to England to preach to the newly ascendant Saxons, the Church was well established in the North and the West; areas to which the Celts had retreated before the Saxon advance. Over the centuries these vigorous Celtic monastic missions had developed somewhat apart from the rest of the Church and it was unclear both how they would receive the new Roman Mission and how the Mission would itself relate to them.

St. Augustine, the Apostle to the English, was the Superior of the Monastery of St. Andrew in Rome and well esteemed by the St. Gregory. The Pope had himself wanted to embark on a mission to the Saxons in Britain but his election to the papacy had prevented it. Now enthroned, he sought and obtained St. Augustine's help together with 40 monks to make his dream come true. The traditional account of the Pope's encounter with the British youths in the slave market in Rome, ("not Angles but Angels"), is what most people remember about the Roman Mission and it speaks of the burning heart the Pope had for the great task.

On his way to Britain, St. Augustine and his monastic brotherhood rested in Aix en Provence where they were immediately discouraged by certain hand wringers and doom mongers who bemoaned the barbarity and spiritual intractability of the Angles and Saxons. St. Augustine was constrained to return to Rome to entreat St. Gregory to abandon the project whilst the 40 monks decanted to the famous monastery of Lerins. The Pope of course refused, elevated St. Augustine to the rank of Abbot and thereby gave him the authority to rally the monks and bring them round to obedience. No doubt with some grumbling and anxiety the party set off and landed at Ebbsfleet in Kent; not a very auspicious start to this great evangelistic initiative!

Enter Queen Bertha ... the real reason in the Holy Spirit for the success of St. Augustine's mission in the southeast. She was a Christian and had persuaded her pagan husband, the over-king of the English, Ethelbert to give St. Augustine a fair hearing. This he did and although he did not at first respond to the Mission's preaching he welcomed the monks, gave them the old Romano British Church of St. Martin

in Canterbury to worship in and afforded them provisions. It is recorded that when St. Augustine first met the King and his party with his own the monks advanced in procession carrying a silver cross and an icon of the Saviour. By this method they presented the gospel to the king in tangible and unmistakable forms. Later in 597 the king received baptism and promptly set about Christianising his kingdom alongside the monks. Russia had its St. Vladimir, the English had its soon to be glorified St. Ethelbert. In those days you did what the king did, (if you wanted to keep your head that is). No doubt to us, this rather unusual Church growth strategy was augmented by the ongoing teaching of St. Augustine and his brothers in the faith. Five months later St. Augustine was to be consecrated bishop in Arles by St. Virgilius and other French bishops and then installed in Canterbury as Archbishop to the great rejoicing of the king and his queen, St. Bertha.

It is sometimes thought that St. Augustine confined himself to the southeast. This is not the case at all. He made preaching tours around Yorkshire accompanied by miracles and greatly strengthened the Church there. Also, the western Church had been mindful of the isolation and, it must be said, the idiosyncrasy of certain Celtic traditions in the west of Britain for a long time. We all know about the dating of Pascha issue which some 70 years later was to come to a head at the Synod of Whitby. There were other matters though ... importantly the irregularity of Celtic baptisms and other traditions. St. Gregory it must be said was faultless in these matters. When St. Augustine asked him how he should deal with local traditions the Pope said that he should respect them as far as possible. On matters of the sacraments and the calendar, however, no such accommodation was possible. On his first trip to see the British bishops he required just three conditions for uniting the British Church. The first two concerned the aforementioned canonical irregularities, the third a commitment to evangelise the Saxons. Although we can have sympathy with the first two conditions, we can see here already a certain misunderstanding of the Celts which was later to become an entrenched assumption; namely that they had no desire to evangelise their Saxon oppressors. Although such reluctance could have manifested itself here and there the facts undermine the generalisation. Celtic missionaries were certainly concerned to evangelise in the north. Be that as it may the British bishops were reluctant to accede to St. Augustine's requests ... until they had a miracle contest to heal a blind Saxon wherewithal St. Augustine prevailed. Impressed, the British bishops played for time and St. Augustine had to withdraw. The second visit was famously disastrous and reveals something perhaps of St. Augustine's imperious character.

The British consulted with a hermit who counselled that they should listen to St. Augustine if he stood up to greet them thereby confirming his humility. He did not and the British bishops sent him packing delaying the resolution of these issues to the Synod of Whitby much later in the 7th century. It was also not until this time that the great Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Theodore, managed to unite the British Church at the Synod of Hertford in 672 A.D. Darkly, St. Augustine prophesied that the British would themselves suffer much more at the hands of the English for their refusal to cooperate ... a prophecy born out at the battle of Chester when the pagan king Ethelfrid of Northumbria went on to slaughter some 1200 monks at the great monastery of Bangor.

On his way back to Kent the saint passed through Dorset where the locals attacked him. Only when he moved from preaching to prayer and the hapless inhabitants were afflicted by ulcers did he have any success in bringing them to Christ. Toward the end of his life and with papal approval as sole consecrator, he installed bishops in those southeastern sees occupied by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes.

Following this brief journey through the life and work of St. Augustine of Canterbury we may ask what is to be learned for Orthodox mission today. It may be objected that we live in such a different culture and society now and any enduring principles must be slight. I don't think that this is necessarily the case. If one looks at the mission strategy of the Orthodox Church throughout all times and places certain common features emerge that are readily represented in a particular way by St. Augustine.

- (1) Mission is endorsed and supported by the leadership of the Church. The long term commitment and coordination of resources, spiritual, material and personal requires such input and endorsement.

(2) Prayer and sacrifice must accompany preaching; personal holiness and obedience must authenticate the message. For many missionaries in St. Augustine's time, Celtic, Saxon and Roman this involved monastics. Mission is possible without asceticism but without the mighty acts of God through men and women of total prayer, little will be achieved.

(3) It is not necessary that missionaries be paragons of virtue unmoved by human passions and frailties but it is vitally necessary that they be humble and honest; strength indeed but without a hint of arrogance.

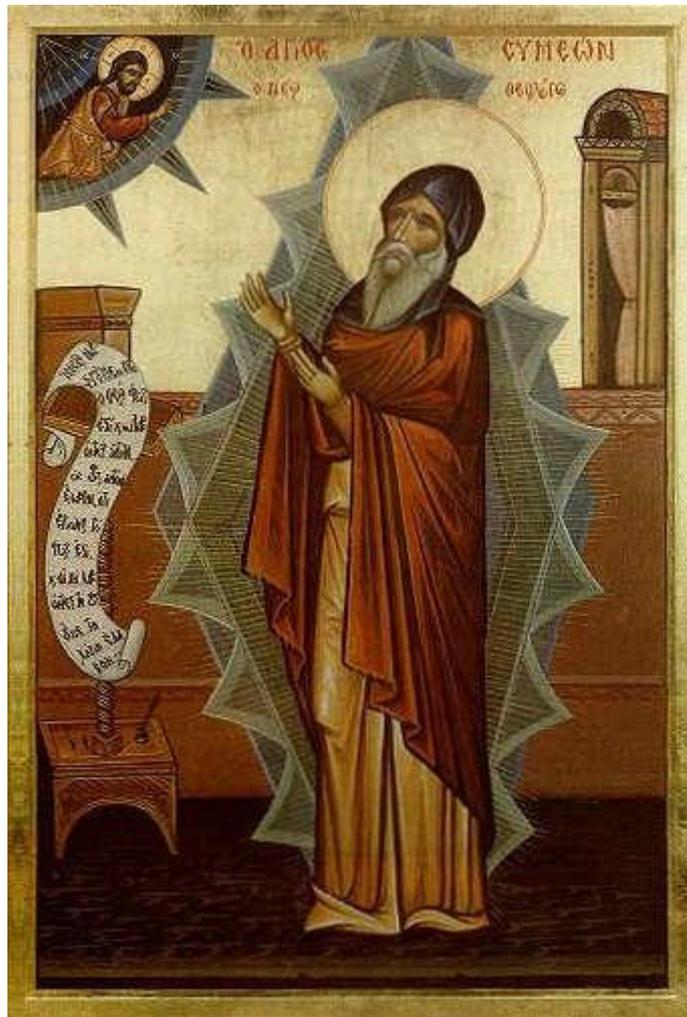
(4) Mission cannot neglect affairs of State. The leadership of a country must be brought to Christ as surely as the governed. Christianity can never become simply yet another religious option for personal choice.

(5) In preaching the Gospel every medium of communication must be used; every opportunity sought and responded to.

In many ways St. Augustine followed these principles. Since he was a sinner like you and me in some ways he did not. The Church venerates his memory, however, for what he was able to achieve in his love for Christ. We in our own little way can do the same by following the same principles.

Fr. Gregory

St. Symeon the New Theologian – Beatitudes on the Light



Blessed are they... who have received Christ coming as light in the darkness {Jn 1:5,12}, for they are become sons of light and of day {1 Thes 5:5}.

Blessed are they who even now have put on His light, for they are clothed already with the wedding garment. They will not be bound hand and foot, nor will they be cast into the everlasting fire... {cf Mt 22:11-13}

Blessed are they who hourly taste of the ineffable light with the mouth of their intellect, for they shall walk "becomingly as in the day" [Rom 13:13], and spend all their time in rejoicing...

Blessed are they who have kindled the light in their hearts even now and have kept it unquenched, for on their departing this life they shall go radiant to meet the Bridegroom, and go in with Him to the bridal chamber bearing their lamps... {cf Mt 25:1-13}

Blessed are they who ever weep bitterly for their sins, for the light shall seize them and change the bitter into sweet {cf Mt 5:4}.

Blessed are they who shine with the divine light and who see their own infirmity and understand the deformity of their soul's vesture, for they shall weep without failing and, but by the channels of their tears, be washed clean.

Blessed are they who have drawn near the divine light and entered within it and become wholly light, having been mingled with it, for they have completely taken off their soiled vesture and shall weep bitter tears no more {cf Rom 13:12-14}.

Blessed are they who see their own clothing shining as Christ, for they shall be filled hourly with joy inexpressible and shall weep tears of astounding sweetness, perceiving that they have become themselves already sons and co-participants of the resurrection.

Blessed are they who have the eye of their intellect ever open and with prayer see the light and converse with it mouth to mouth, for they are of equal honor with the angels and, dare I say it, have and shall become higher than the angels, for the latter sing praises while the former intercede. And, if they have become and are ever becoming such while still living in the body and impeded by the corruption of the flesh, what shall they be after the Resurrection and after they have received that spiritual and incorruptible body? Certainly, they shall not be merely the equals of angels, but indeed like the angels' Master, as it is written: "But we know," he says, "that when He appears we shall be like Him" [1 Jn 3:2].

Blessed is that monk who is present before God in prayer and who sees Him and is seen by Him {cf Jn 14:21, Mt 5:8}, and perceives himself as having gone beyond the world and as being in God alone, and is unable to know whether he happens to be in the body or outside the body {2 Cor 12:2-3}, for he will hear "ineffable speech which it is not lawful for a man to utter" [2 Cor 12:4], and shall see "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived" [1 Cor 2:9].

Blessed is he who has seen the light of the world take form within himself, for he, having Christ as an embryo within {cf Gal 4:19}, shall be reckoned His mother, as He Himself Who does not lie has promised, saying: "Here are my mother and brothers and friends." Who? "Those who hear the word of God and do it" [Lk 8:2]. So those who do not keep His commandments deprive themselves voluntarily of so great a grace, because the thing was and is and will be possible, and has happened and happens and will happen for all who fulfill His ordinances.

("On the Mystical Life (Vol. 1)", pp. 166-169)



Flower Powers

by Fr. Gregory

This year sees the 200th anniversary of the Royal Horticultural Society and the highlight of the RHS year, the Chelsea Flower Show. The range of exhibits is staggering and this year includes an entry from New Zealand, the "Ora Garden of Well Being." This latter offering I suppose you could call: "Mystical New Age." Other gardens historically have revealed Zen or Islamic creative principles.

This got me thinking ... why is Christianity not reflected in such creativity? Has the gospel nothing to offer toward an ordered harmonious and renewed Creation of which the garden is a fundamental archetype? Surely it has. Both Genesis and Revelation characterise creation fulfilled in terms of a garden. Sadly though, many Christians and many Christian traditions do not, today, see human creativity as having any special significance in God's purpose. Creation itself is seen as merely the backdrop to some supposedly more significant salvation action in the foreground. This is not an authentic Christian ethos. Less politely; it's heretical. Salvation is not a regeneration apart from creation .. it is a renewal in and with creation. In Romans 8, St. Paul himself sees creation renewed through the liberation of our humanity from corruption, decay and death. In garden terms ... a blooming humanity ... a blooming creation.

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

If I were to design a garden on these, Christian, principles I would want to see exuberant growth bursting forth from dark and hidden places. I would want to see the sacred mystery of death and resurrection in contrasts of floral form and context. I would want to see trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2) Why is our sacred imagination so impoverished?

So, a challenge for Chelsea 2005. Let's see some effective Christian creativity. You never know, hearts might be inspired to make "gardens" of all our human wastelands ... at home and abroad. We seem to be quite good at making wastelands of our gardens after all. Time to kindle something different perhaps ... before it's too late!

Orthodoxy - Church and State



It would be incorrect to say that there has been only one normative pattern of Church-State relations in the history of faith. Many different political systems have prevailed from time to time across vastly

different cultures and geographies, from the era of the Judges in Ancient Israel to the age of the modern liberal democracy. Nor can we detect any evolution toward a preferred form, although it is fair to say that the Orthodox Church has always sought a cooperative yet distinct coordination of roles between itself and the State.

The legacy of the Enlightenment in the west has made that ideal symphony of action between Church and State much more difficult and in some cases impossible to achieve. In England, (but not Wales or Scotland), there is an Established Church but its impact in an increasingly secularised culture is now quite modest. In Russia there is a formal separation of Church and State and yet this is quite different in ethos from the militant secularism of the French State where Christianity lies at the margins of French culture and that of America where, paradoxically, Christianity remains at the centre of personal if not public concern. It is possible to see the Enlightenment as itself a reaction against all forms of theocracy in the West by an exalting of individual conscience and collective reason. Such a reaction against theocracy has its roots in the long historic struggle of the Catholic Church in the second millennium west for supremacy over competing temporal powers.

The Orthodox Church has never pursued such struggles because it has rarely if ever been antagonistic in principle toward the secular power. When the State has persecuted the Orthodox Church, it has usually been for reasons of its own; perhaps because godless men and women have resented the moral claims and political limitations laid upon the State by God or if they have considered the spiritual authority of the Church as dangerous ideological competition. It is grossly misleading then in the light of the relentless persecution of the Orthodox Church over time to claim that it has consistently rendered itself subordinate to State power. Of course, Orthodoxy has been set about by petty nationalisms in the aftermath of persecution but normal Church life has always tried to recapture the Byzantine ideal of critical cooperation between Church and State.

This model of Church-State relations has a pedigree going back much further than Byzantium. In the Old Testament period, nationhood does not become an issue for faith until the monarchy is established as a divinely appointed institution. The prophets and Samuel in particular see this development as a concession by God to human weakness.¹ The prophets idealise the past when Israel was a people led directly by God in the desert and not a nation ruled by a monarch.² However, they recognise the need for nationhood in the light of aggression from neighbouring states and so Israel must become as other nations and have a king. The Prophet Samuel makes it clear that the monarchy will only be blessed and be a blessing if it remains faithful to God.³ From hereon we embark on a long period of Jewish history from the First Temple and early blessing to invasion, judgement on idolatry and apostasy, exile and the building of the Second Temple. Finally Judaea and Samaria are overrun by pagan Greeks then by Romans and the monarchs are reduced to corrupt subordinates of the imperial power. It is into this environment that Christ is born ... most poignantly at the time of an Imperial census.

Jesus has very little to say about the State but what he does say hits home. Caesar has his due; so does God.⁴ Pilate has no power save that given by the God he doesn't worship.⁵ His kingdom is not of this world⁶ yet it is a sword⁷ and a fire⁸ turning this world upside down and inside out. The Temple itself is really his body⁹ that will be raised in three days. Condemned to death by an Empire, in less than 300 years that Empire will fall at his feet. It is hard to overestimate the importance of this connection between the world to come and this world ... a power not born of the flesh¹⁰ yet renewing all flesh. Little wonder that kings and lords have come to love or loathe, fear or respect this King of kings and Lord of lords, this Servant with a towel.

The early history of Christianity bears out this tension between submission to this worldly powers and their eventual submission to a greater power. Sts. Peter and Paul counsel obedience to God appointed sovereigns in all matters godly^{11,12} and instruct that prayers be offered for them.¹³ This practice continued even during periods of persecution.¹⁴ Gradually Rome came to see that these Christians were a blessing and not a curse. Rome submitted to the Crucified One.

Some Protestant Christians break agreement with Orthodoxy at the point of the Emperor St. Constantine's legalisation of Christianity by the Edict of Milan in 313 AD and later in 393 AD when Emperor Theodosios I banned pagan worship, thereby effectively making of Christianity a State endorsed faith. It is thought that this subtly transformed Christianity from its original persecuted purity to an increasingly persecuting monstrous version of itself. From an Orthodox point of view this is to read back into ancient history the bitter experience of the Reformation struggles against the western patriarchate of Rome which by then had ceased to be Orthodox on other grounds for over 500 years. The reality on the ground in succeeding centuries of the western and later eastern Imperium is much more complex and, from an Orthodox (and Catholic) point of view, on the whole, proved to be beneficial in terms of Church-State relations and the ordering of a Christian society. The legalisation of Christianity prompted the Church to develop her own antibodies against the potential for secularisation and corruption. This is the fundamental impulse for the rise of monasticism ... the practice of desert martyrdom of spirit for the sake of the kingdom, keeping every fresh for the Church the eternal values of the gospel life. With this witness and leaven in place, the Church was free to pursue its vision of a critical harmony between Church and State. What some Protestant Christians challenge is this very idea of a Christian society; not because such a thing would be necessarily undesirable but because of its inability to deliver a genuinely Christian spirit. For the Orthodox this seems either a counsel of despair or surrender to the idea that the State can function properly and in a godly, humane manner without specifically religious values at its heart. The test of such a claim lies with the evidence of history. Have secular States been any better than Christian ones in avoiding war or genocide or the abuse of human rights? Such questions are difficult to answer but by their plausibility they do, I contend, erode confidence in the notion of a superior strictly secular order even in terms of human rights as the recent debacle in France over the wearing of religious clothing and symbols in State schools has born witness.

Set against this model of strict separation between Church and State is the Orthodox ideal of *symphoneia* or the symphony of the State upholding law and the social good and the Church conferring spiritual blessing and moral leadership from the Heavenly Kingdom. This was the particular gift of the Byzantine world to the Church as a whole, worked out over one millennium of rise and decline. Both God-ordained orders complemented each other in the east through their distinct but cooperative functions. In so doing they made possible the idea of a Christian commonwealth and indeed, an internationalism of sorts at a higher level of human good. The weak link in this synthesis, however, was and is the security of the State in a fallen world as its vulnerability to corruption. The security of the Kingdom of God and its purity is never in doubt. The Orthodox Church has never been unmindful of this tension and how fragile the symphony can be. Those who like to criticise Byzantium for its alleged confusion of secular and sacred jurisdiction cannot explain how rapidly and, arguably, without any spiritual loss, the eastern Church rose to the challenge of living with and under a non-Christian conquering power. Of course it became more and more difficult to live out some aspects of the Christian life ... primarily those concerned with overt evangelism ... but these were difficulties no more serious than Christians had known before Rome had accepted Christ. Arguably the process began all over again. If Islam has proven more intractable than Roman paganism that might be because it owes not a little to heretical Christianity in its origins rather than something of a quite different order. It's always more difficult to return to something one has once known and rejected. Be that as it may, the Orthodox Church has shown itself to be as remarkably adaptable to differing political circumstances, whether its challenges issued from Ottoman Muslims or Soviet atheists. The enduring principle of qualified obedience, of critical prayer, of the power of the gospel to outlive and outwit anything thrown against it has always sustained the Church into better times.

We now come to our final and perhaps most challenging question and prospect. How will Orthodox Christianity adapt, flourish and transform societies where liberal, pluralistic and more or less secular ideas prevail? Will there ever be such a thing as a truly Christian society again where faith has an honoured place in the public as well as private domains?

Orthodoxy needs to work with other Christian churches in the attempt to build something better between Church and State in the west but the ability of the Orthodox tradition to help steer these relations away from secular hostility may be quite limited if it does not remain true to its own principles

and vision. We may be able to show the west how it is possible to have a truly Christian society which is also tolerant and inclusive of dissenting religious voices and other faiths. Such a project has not been tried before because, frankly, the west has not experienced these conditions before. In many ways, Orthodoxy will be strongest in its contribution from those societies where Orthodox Christians and those of other faiths have learned to work together over many centuries. I refer of course to the Middle East. Notwithstanding the sometimes troubled history between Christians and Muslims in this region, Orthodox Christians have much to offer by way of good practice. This may indeed be a wake up call for the Patriarchate of Antioch to play a new and seminally important role in the west. This contribution may be just what secular liberal democracies are looking for ... a new opportunity perhaps for symphony between the Church and the secular State. Who knows where that might lead!

Fr. Gregory

Footnotes

- 1: 1 Samuel 8:18-22
- 2: 1 Samuel 8:8
- 3: 1 Samuel 12:23-25
- 4: Matthew 22:21
- 5: John 19:11
- 6: John 18:36
- 7: Matthew 10:34
- 8: Luke 12:49
- 9: John 2:20-22
- 10: John 1:10-13
- 11: Romans 13:1-7
- 12: 1 Peter 2:13-16
- 13: 1 Timothy 2:2
- 14: Matthew 5:11-12

West Goes East

by Fr. John-Mark

Explorers 5th June 2004

Today we are giving thanks for the 2,500th anniversary of the Martyrdom of a great Englishman, St Boniface. We are used to hearing about the in-put of Christian missionaries to our Country and we praise and thank God for them all, starting, of course, with our own St Aidan. But we don't hear very much about the out-put from our country, and this topic concerns us today. In preparing for this talk, two things have struck me as important. At the present time we are being urged to "go into Europe" and the impression given is that this is the new and a most modern development. It is, therefore, very interesting to discover just how much to-ing and fro-ing in general there was between these Islands and the mainland of Europe in the second half of the first millennium. Many went overseas with the intention of helping to spread the Gospel and plant the Church, and many more went on pilgrimage to pray at the tombs of the saints. The reason for this is not hard to find: the Church was one in Faith and practice and visitors were sure of a hospitable welcome in the parts already evangelised – an aspect which gradually evaporated after the break between east and west in 11th century. It was only in the second millennium that Europe became, for us, a "foreign" country.

The second interesting fact is that then, as now, the missionary ideal was often family based, like father, like son, and sometimes daughters, too. In the 7th century, a man called Anna was King of the East Angles. His wife was called Heres-wytha and she was the sister of St Hilda of Whitby. Anna and his wife had seven children – two sons Adulph and Jurmin, and five daughters;-- Etheldreda; Sexburga; Ethelburga; Saethryda and Withburga. All their children are accounted saints of the Church and so Anna could reasonably be called the founder of a church missionary society.

Etheldreda (or Audrey as she is sometimes called) and Sexburga became nuns in this country and eventually abbess in turn of Ely. Perhaps we were then running out of vacancies here, because Ethelburga, Saethryda & Withburga all went over to France and founded a convent there at Faremoutier-en-Brie. The first-born, Adulph, according to John of Tynemouth, became Bishop of Maastricht in Holland. If this is right, it is a splendid record for just one family which flourished, truly, in the seventh century.

If we go back a hundred years to sixth century, we find a missionary from this country called St Rumon who is almost unknown in his homeland, though his head-less body now rests in Tavistock in Devon. Unfortunately, all records of his life are late and this has caused doubt to be thrown upon him. It does seem certain that, like St Aidan, he was a Scot who came over here from Ireland to be a monk, this time in hid case, at Glastonbury, and then became a bishop. He then went over to "Little Britain" ie Brittany, and spent his life in abstinence and virtue, and miracles were ascribed to him during his lifetime and especially after he had died.

Returning now to the seventh century, we come to the best-known of the overseas

missionaries from this country who were all connected in their work, St Wilfrid (634-709) was the first to preach to the Frisian people (ie northern Holland) en route to Rome in the winter of 678 and had some success. St Wilfrid had been responsible for the early training, at Ripon, of Saint Willibrord, who came from Yorkshire, and from Ripon went over to Ireland for 12 years and was ordained priest. In 690, a group of 12 monks left Ireland for Frisia led by either St Willibrod or St Swithbert who seems to have been St Wilfrid's choice for the position of leader but he appears to have met with political opposition and left to go over the Rhine and preach there.

Willibrod then went to Rome and was ordained as bishop of the Frisians in 695 by the Pope who also re-named him Clement. He returned to Utrecht and set about his mission, founding monasteries and churches in many places. A future important monastery and mission-base he began was at Echternach in Luxembourg.

In 720 he was joined by his fellow-countryman, St Boniface, for a period of three years and they worked together. He also preached in what is now Denmark; Heligoland and Walcheren Island and had considerable success at the time but later his work was devastated by civil war in the Kingdom of the Franks and he was forced to retire to Echternach, where he died at a great age in 739. Willibrod is commonly called the Apostle to the Frisians and rightly so, but he also evangelised many parts of Holland, Zeeland and the north and east of what is now Germany.

St Boniface(680-754) was probably born at Crediton in Devon and was baptised Wynfrith but later he, too, had his name Latinised by the pope to Bonificio, " Good works",=Boniface. Like others, Boniface felt a kinship with his pagan relatives in Northern Europe, and went first to Frisia where the political situation made mission impossible at the time and, as Willibrord was locked up in Echternach, he left and went to Rome. After a year, Pope Gregory sent him back with a new name and a general commission to preach to the heathen.

As soon as he reached Germany, he heard that the situation in Frisia had improved so he returned there and worked for three years with St Willibrord. He then went back into Germany, Christianising both the pagans and the nearly-pagan Christians, and in this he was so successful that he was summoned to

Rome and consecrated regional bishop with no fixed see, but a general jurisdiction in Germany, on St Andrew's day, in the year 722.

He then spent thirty-two years tirelessly building up the Church in Germany and re-forming the Frankish Church which was in a bad way. He had to fight heretical bishops and clergymen; "New Age" style holy men; and clergy who performed both

pagan sacrifices and the Christian mysteries. He arranged the first Synods in the Frankish Church for over 80 years and so helped to purify it. He inspired many Anglo-Saxon missionaries to come over and help in the evangelisation work and also the cream of Anglo-Saxon monasticism who helped build churches and monasteries. Just how many went from these shores is unknown but the numbers are certainly large. In 747, Boniface became Archbishop of Mainz which meant he was in a position to appoint Willibrord's successor at Utrecht.

Like most pioneer missionaries, a trial of strength is told of him. The Dutch claim it happened in their territory, but research now proves that it was at Geismar in Germany that he felled an enormous, sacred oak tree of the god of Thor, and then used the wood to build a chapel dedicated to St Peter.

In 753, at about 73 years of age, Boniface resigned the archbishopric of Mainz and decided to return to his original work in Frisia where people were lapsing into paganism after the death of Willibrord. The work was successful at first but while Boniface was waiting to Chrismate some 30 candidates, he and his companions were attacked and killed on the day of Pentecost 754. So Boniface's life ends in martyrdom, and his body rests in the Abbey of Fulda which he had founded. He was never well revered in this country, but is still venerated in Germany and Holland. His feast day is today, 5th June which is the day of his death, 1,250 years ago.

Let me end, by going back to another church missionary family, this time in the eighth century. The brothers Willibald and Winnebald had a sister, called Walberga, and, yes, you've guessed, she was a nun, who helped Boniface with his mission.

It is said that Willibald was the most-travelled Anglo-Saxon monk of his time – Rome, Cyprus, Syria and Palestine were all on his itinerary, and he had a long spell in Constantinople. In 730, he returned to Rome and chose to live at Monte Cassino, where he, and his brother, helped to reform that most important of all Benedictine communities.

Then Boniface asked the Pope to send him to Germany where he was ordained a priest and later, a bishop for the see of Eichstatt. At Heidenheim he founded a double monastery for men and women, in the English tradition, and put his brother Winnebald in as abbot and after his death – of course, he made his sister, Walberga, abbess. Willibald was a bishop for forty-five years until he died in 787, at Eichstatt where his remains are still venerated.

In this survey of Church-life in the 6th to the 8th centuries, Fr Andrew Phillips comments:--"The circus-like religious world of St Boniface reminds us of our own. We Christians are faced with both non-Christians religions and with a bizarre collection of semi-Christian sects. Our task with the first is to show them the way to the truth.. Our task with the second is to provide (and here he quotes St Willibald) "words of spiritual exhortation, recalling them to the true way of knowledge and light of understanding, which for the greater part they (have) lost". To do this is no easy task -- we must avoid the extremes to being non-committal or of being obnoxious. Rather we must find a proper balance as St Boniface did.

Fr Andrew goes on:- "It is also to be remembered that the missionaries represented a superior form of culture. We must strive to do just that. In an age of scepticism and relativism, we must incarnate eternal truths. In an age of purposelessness, we must show hope. In an age of decadence in the arts, we must show what beauty really is. In an age of sexual libertinism and the consequent disease of body and soul, we must show the beauty both of the virginal life and of Christian marriage. In a violent culture, we

must show the beauty of Christian love. We have the tools to show forth a superior educational, aesthetic, and moral culture than does the dominant culture. We must now find the will to wield the tools, for the cost will be very high. However, the missionaries were also very charismatic – and charisma is necessary to maintain institutions of unity in a healthy form. The missionaries are inspiring characters whose lives and approach we need to study and emulate. May God give us the strength to fulfil this task !"

Orthodox in England are constantly being urged to ask our local saints like St Werbergh and St Aidan to aid us in the conversion of England in our day. In a similar way, we should ask S Boniface, and the other saints mentioned, to help in the return of the continent of Europe to the one-ness of the undivided Church.

So help us, Lord !

The Importance of Preaching

Pray, are you ignorant that that Body is subject to more diseases and attacks than this flesh of ours, and is marred more quickly and cured more slowly? Those who treat the human body have devised manifold medicines, and divers kinds of instruments, and forms of diet suited to the needs of the sufferer; and the character of the climate has often been sufficient by itself to restore the patient's health. There are occasions also when seasonable sleep has relieved the physician of all trouble. But in the present case none of these devices is of avail; but one only means and one way of cure has been given us after any trouble, and that is teaching of the Word. This is the best instrument, this the best diet and climate; this serves instead of medicine, this serves instead of cautery and cutting; whether it be needful to burn or to amputate, this one method must be used; and without it nothing else will avail. By it we rouse the lethargy, we allay the swelling, we remove the growths and make good the defects of the soul, and in short we do everything which tends to promote its health. To help a man to order his life aright it is true that the life of another may excite him to emulation; but when the soul is suffering under spurious doctrines then there is great need of the Word not only for the safety of those within the fold, but also to meet the attacks or foes without.

St. John Chrysostom

WHY DO WE STAND TO WORSHIP ?

by Fr. John-Mark

Perhaps the most commented on difference between Eastern and Western styles of worship today is the fact that the Orthodox mainly remain standing throughout, and this is a constant source of wonder to the outsider. But it is not easy to explain this to Western minds, so how best to go about trying?

Perhaps the first thing to say is that standing in our worship is something we have inherited from our Jewish forebears. To the Eastern mind, to sit in the presence of any superior was unthinkable and so it never occurred to the faithful followers of the Old Covenant to do any other but stand when they were consciously in God's presence. " All the Levites.. ..arrayed in fine linen.. ..stood at the east of the altar with a hundred and twenty priests" and a few verses later - "Then the King faced about, and blessed the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood" (2 Chronicles 5.12 & 6.3)

In the New Testament, there are plenty of indications that this attitude still applied in the Temple worship of Our Lord's day. He portrayed both the Pharisee and the Publican as standing to pray even privately in the Temple (Luke 18:9-14) and He commanded the Disciples:--"When you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone" (Mark 11:25). Justin the Martyr writing about the Liturgy in 160AD says:- "Then (after the readings and the homily) we all stand up to offer prayers."

Reverence before God, then, is the first reason. The second is more personal. St Basil puts it like this:- "We are risen with Christ, and are to seek the things that are above. This is the grace we call to mind when we stand in prayer on Sunday, but we stand also because this day (Sunday) is in some manner, the image of the era to come," and he means by that the Parousia, or the Second Coming of Jesus.

At the end of the Liturgy, the call goes out:- "Stand upright! Having received the divine, pure, immortal, heavenly, life-giving and dread Mysteries of Christ, let us worthily give thanks unto the Lord." We are called not just to stand upright physically, but to be upright in our souls as well. And not just on Sundays but also through the week. Our posture during worship is designed to help bring this home to us.

But, of course, in the final resort, like beards for the clergy, the practice is customary, not compulsory. There are always those who for genuine reasons cannot stand for long periods. The Church merely draws our attention to the difference between the sick or lame, and the lazy, and then leaves the decision to us. Most people choose to break themselves into the habit slowly, and soon find that there is really no problem.

Our freely-made desire to stand for worship, then, is an important reminder to us that we are risen people; forgiven people; upright people; free people; God's people who are waiting to hear His Word and to obey His call. "Here am I Lord: send me !" Our standing to pray shows that we have confidence in His presence and await His return. Come, Lord Jesus !

Kefalonia (sometimes called Kefalinia or Cephalonia)

Fr. Gregory's vacation this year was in Kephalaria. This article about the island and its saint is much better than anything he could have written! It has been kindly supplied by a friend and namesake, Gerasimos Letts.

"If you decide to take a Priest out for the day, make sure you let him decide where you are going, because he might take you on a journey which you will never want to forget!"



Kefalonia is the largest of the seven Ionian Islands, nestled beside Ithaki and just 80 minutes boat ride from Zakynthos. On a calm summer's morning, on the approach to Kefalonia, it might be possible to see dolphins leaping out of the water and it is understandable when you see the majesty and beauty of the island. Originally named after the Athenian, Kefalos, the island suffered its major catastrophe when it was hit by an earthquake in 1953, killing 600 people and injuring thousands more. Only a few small villages survived in the far north and this resulted in many survivors moving abroad while the island was rebuilt.

The highest mountain peak on the island is Mount Ainos, rising to 1628 metres and commanding spectacular views across the island. To reach the peak is by no means an easy journey, as the tarmac road soon gives way to an uneven dirt track. Though, in fairness, there is one further small stretch of tarmac, certainly worth counting how long it lasts! At the top of the mountain are a number of masts and it is quite awesome to stand at a distance from the mountain, look up and see the masts and claim to have been to the summit with a Priest.

Argostoli is the capital of the island, and like so many other ports dotted around the shores, it commands some of the most spectacular boats you might ever hope to see. Also, there is a market, selling fruit and vegetables, and a row of restaurants against the water's edge where, if you are lucky, you might catch a glimpse of the turtles, but certainly the many shoals of fish who swim back and forth snatching food from the water. More importantly, Argostoli is the seat of the Greek Orthodox Church on the island and is neighbour to the town of Lassi, owing its importance due to the association with Agios Gerasimos, the patron Saint of the island.

At the far north of Kefalonia lies the beautiful town of Fiskardo, where the rich berth their expensive boats and just a little further south, Agios Efimia, a smaller port but very picturesque with its bobbing masts and colourful restaurants. For many, though, Kefalonia will be known for its filming of Louis de Berniere's *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, which portrayed the island in all its beauty.

Overlooking the village of Peratata, south east of Argostoli, sits the castle of Agios Georgios, 320 metres above sea level, commanding an excellent view over a large area of coastline. Believed to have been built by the Byzantines, 394AD to 1195AD, the castle was used as an observation post to warn

against imminent attacks from pirates, as well as protection for leaders and the people against enemy attacks. Under Venetian rule, in 1500AD, the castle served as the main headquarters for the island's rulers and gentry, requiring the improvement of fortifications and the building of the enclosing wall and three great bastions. As numbers grew they moved beyond the walls, creating suburbs. Up until 1757 it served as the island's capital but then Argostoli took over.

Between the castle of Agios Georgios and the coastal town on Sami, near the village of Valsamata, lies the majestic Monastery and church dedicated to Agios Gerasimos. It is built on the flat plain in the valley of Omala, which extends to the foothills of Mount Ainos. Behind the Monastery is a small church, home to the silver sarcophagus which carries the body of Agios Gerasimos. Towards the back of the church is a small hole in the floor, leading down to a small cave, which in turn leads to another smaller chamber where the Saint lived. To pass from one chamber to the other seems impossible but evidence has shown, no matter the girth of the faithful, anyone can enter the smaller chamber if that is their wish.

Gerasimos Notaras was born in 1507 at a place called Trikala, on the Peloponnese. From an early life he had decided that he wanted to live a monastic life and left his family to study at a school on Zakynthos. In 1537, he travelled to Jerusalem and remained there for 12 years, where he was ordained a monk and served at the Tomb of Christ in the Holy Sepulchre, before returning to Greece. He first went to Crete and then spent the next 4 years in Zakynthos, where he baptised Dionysios, now the patron Saint of Zakynthos, and decided in 1554 to travel to Kefalonia. When he asked for help to cross the water, the villagers of Anafonitria refused to help and he told them, that from that day, they would *never* have a Priest in their village. (To this date, the prophesy has remained!) When he reached the water's edge, he asked local fishermen for help but was refused. Taking his rascion, Gerasimos laid it upon the water, climbed upon it and floated across to Kefalonia, where he awaited the arrival of the very same bemused fishermen!

Making his way to Lassi, Gerasimos made his home in a cave for 6 years and finally settled at the site of the Monastery in 1560AD. From the cave, he helped local farmers to sink wells and taught the children. He also rebuilt the local church and locals persuaded him to start up a nunnery. Renowned for being able to cure the mentally ill, he also exorcised people who were possessed by evil spirits. Even today, visitors can be witness to possessed people who visit the church in the hope that Agios Gerasimos will cast out the evil possession within them.

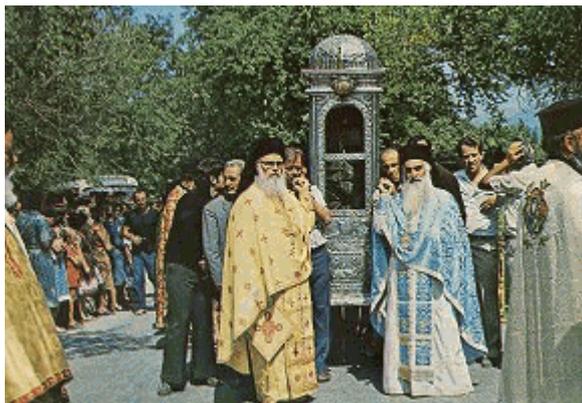
On August 15th, 1579AD, Gerasimos died. Two years later, his body was exhumed but appeared not to have undergone any change. Eight months later, his body was exhumed again but still there was no change, except for the pleasant odour the body emitted. The ecclesiastical authorities of Kefalonia petitioned the Patriarch of Constantinople, who declared Gerasimos Notaras a Saint.

Two festivals are held each year to celebrate Agios Gerasimos, August 16th, the date of his death (which was the 15th, but this coincides with the dormition of the Virgin Mary and so was set a day later) and October 20th, the date his body was exhumed. The festival days are commemorated with processions, which involves carrying the Saint's body to the well, which he is said to have dug with his own hands and is now known as the Holy Well, and when his body is placed on the well, the water level is said to rise. On the return journey, people lay down on the ground and the sarcophagus is passed over their bodies as they hope for his miraculous powers to touch them and cure them of ailments.

The Dormition of the Virgin Mary is also another miraculous time, as snakes appear from the base of the Bell Tower, situated at the town of Markopoulo, and are used to bless the faithful and held by Bishop Spiridon during the service. Although on the decline over recent years, the snakes are known to venerate the icon of Theotokos, bearing a small cross on their forehead.

The Monastery of Apostolos Andreas at Milapdias, Peratata, is also another very special place. It is home to the foot of Apostolos Andreas and when the faithful step forward to venerate the foot it is impossible to miss the beautiful scent which is exuded.

Kefalonia is not just a picturesque island, it is a spiritually refreshing island which has many other iconic treasures waiting to be discovered by the traveller...

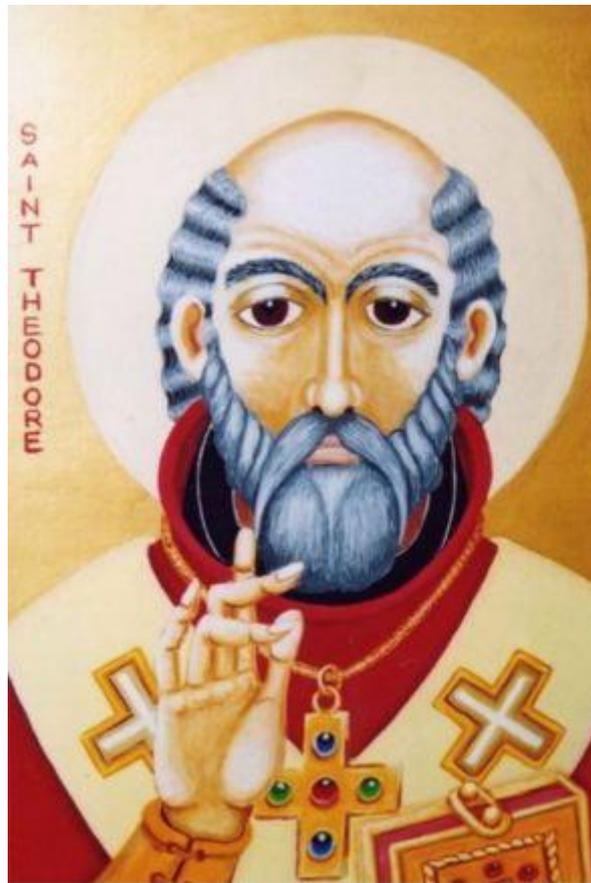


The Procession of Agios Gerasimos



The Holy Well dug by Agios Gerasimos

ST. THEODORE OF TARSUS



by Fr. John-Mark

St Theodore has several other claims to fame besides having a famous bookshop named after him. First he is the only Greek speaker to be elected Archbishop of Canterbury.

Secondly, he was born in the same city, Tarsus, as was St Paul and thirdly, and much more importantly, he succeeded in bringing together into harmony all the scattered jurisdictions of the Church in seventh century England. And that, certainly, was a mammoth task for a man who, like Pope John XXIII, was chosen, late in his life, as a "caretaker archbishop".

Most of what we know about St Theodore comes from Bede's "Ecclesiastical History" but that is largely concerned with his career in England, though he does give the year of his birth, 602, and he tells us that the monk Theodore was learned in a variety of subjects "both in sacred and secular literature, in Greek and in Latin". Scholars have worked out that it is probable that he went to study in Antioch, as his theological commentaries, though written in Canterbury, are of the Antiochian type. Later, because of both Persian and Muslim invasions, he went to Constantinople, and because of this influx, for a while in the first half of the seventh century, the Byzantine capital became an important centre of learning.

Theodore is also reputed to have studied in Athens but our next sighting of him is in Rome where the Pope, Vitalian, was searching for a monk of learning to be Archbishop of Canterbury. First he chose an African named Adrian who turned the job down but put forward Theodore's name instead. He accepted, but he asked for Adrian to be allowed to accompany him, as he was bi-lingual and familiar with the Church in France, if not in England, and no doubt, a sixty-five year old man felt he needed a lot of support.

Even so, there was no rush to arrive. Theodore, still a monk, was ordained sub-deacon, waited four months for his hair to grow so that he could have a Roman form of tonsure instead of his Greek one – a culturally sensitive move – and eventually he was ordained deacon, priest and then, at last, a bishop on 26 March 668. Even then it took another fourteen months to walk to England, though in all fairness, he would be learning a lot about the Church here, on his visits to monasteries in France en route, and, no

doubt, picking up some English as well, from his travelling companions, who included the famous St Benedict Biscop of Wearmouth fame, as well as the patient monk, Adrian.

In no way could it be claimed to be a plum job. The See of Canterbury had been vacant five years, and in the rest of the country, there appeared to be only four other bishops, but in twenty years, Theodore was to change all this beyond recognition. How did he do it? Well, he started with the power-house, the monastery at Canterbury, by making St Benedict Biscop, Abbot, until Adrian could take over in 671. He then travelled round all the dioceses, gathering information and gaining the respect of all. This was quite possible, as he was not an Angle, nor a Saxon nor a Celt: he came without prejudice and was able to treat all alike.

Then, slowly, with care and prayer, he began to fill the vacant Sees, choosing disciplined and holy monks until, by 673, he felt in a strong enough position to call the first Synod of the English Church at Hertford. Even so, it was not a large gathering. Bede only lists five other bishops besides Theodore, though, of course, there were supporting priests and religious present as well. You may think the canons passed were not earth shattering and certainly not innovative. The importance of the Synod lay in the fact that it happened at all, as it drew together, for the first time, bishops of different languages and sometimes, warring kingdoms. Little did Theodore and his assistants realise that they were, in fact, laying the foundation for national unity in this country, and its importance cannot be exaggerated.

But Theodore still had problems. One was, that his dioceses were all too big and he began a policy of subdividing them, something which is never easy. To this day, the boundaries of many Anglican dioceses in the Southern Province remain as he drew them.

Here, we are only about ten miles from Glossop which is still in the Anglican Province of Canterbury, and in Theodore's day in Lichfield, but now in the Diocese of Derby, only created in the 20th century but still following Theodore's boundaries and still in the Province of Canterbury. He was careful not to create new dioceses which were co-terminus with old kingdoms. Instead he went back to the older practice of placing the bishop's seat in an important town. Usually his innovations worked well, but he always seemed to upset St Wilfrid. His over-large diocese of Northumbria was sub-divided, over his head, into four new dioceses but St Wilfrid objected and appealed to Rome. His appeal was upheld there, and Theodore eventually had to back down, though he did reduce the size of Wilfrid's See.

At the first Synod at Hertford, there were only five bishops present. There was then a synod every year at a place called Cloveshoo, though no one now knows just where that was. The Synods held at the end of the 670s brought together twelve bishops, all selected by Theodore and reliable holy, monks, whereas over on mainland Europe, married bishops were still common. This trend set by Theodore continued in England until the invasion of 1066 after which Norman practices were usual.

It will be seen, then, that Archbishop Theodore was a gifted administrator who had a long-lasting effect on the Church in this Country. Bede tells us:- "the churches of the English made greater progress during his pontificate than they had ever done before".

But he was also an astute politician whose aim was to bring peace to a troubled land.

His view has been contrasted with that of the first Archbishop, St Augustine, because, it is said, Theodore had more of a national vision. He was able to travel further across the land than his predecessor, and also, though he was strict on doctrine and the observance of the Church canons, he was more flexible with regard to customs. He had three factors in his favour which helped him to unite the English, Celtic and Roman parties in the Church. He had the wisdom which comes with age; he was a Greek; and had lived in various Mediterranean cities which had exposed him to a wide variety of cultures, and this probably saved him from being biased towards any one culture here in England.

But if he is really wise, the administrator and politician will also want to lay a foundation for the future and Theodore did this by establishing places of learning in the land. One of his first tasks was to build

up the school at Canterbury under his trusted monk, Adrian, and we know that the Archbishop taught there both Greek and Latin. Bede is careful to acknowledge his own learning to the foundation of Theodore at Canterbury, who also encouraged St Hilda with her school at Whitby which, in turn, produced five bishops.

Bede+ tells us that through the school at Canterbury "knowledge of sacred music, hitherto limited to Kent, now began to spread to all the churches of the English". This was helped by Pope Agatho sending over the lead-singer from St Peter's in Rome to go with St Benedict Biscop "to teach Benedict's monks the chant for the liturgical year as it was sung in St Peter's". He taught the monks the theory and practice of chant and liturgical reading, and wrote down the typicon, or way of celebrating the church's calendar. It is interesting that modern tapes of this type of music have been made and people are surprised by the similarity to Byzantine chant.

"Archbishop Theodore of blessed memory" as the Venerable Bede called him, reposed on 19th September 690 at the age of 87 or 88, and we can look back to his reign as a golden age when the unity was established in the land which was fully achieved by St Edgar and St Dunstan in the tenth century. St Theodore made peace between warring kingdoms, and peace between the Roman and Celtic traditions by combining Roman scholarship with Celtic pastorship and spirituality. He appreciated the holiness and humility of St Chad but could also use the organizational zeal of the restless St Wilfrid. It was Theodore who consecrated Cuthbert, the celebrated heir to both Anglo-Saxon and Celtic traditions; and he encouraged the Anglo-Saxon Benedict Biscop, to collect manuscripts and icons, thus helping to create possibly the finest library in Western Europe outside Rome. So it is, that Theodore is behind the great Northern renaissance, symbolized by the book of the Lindisfarne Gospels, which was adorned by Anglo-Saxons with Irish decorations and the names of the four evangelists written in Greek but with Latin letters. Theodore was also responsible for St Wilfrid's conversion of the South Saxons in Sussex, and this in turn led to Wilfrid's missionary work among their fellow-countrymen in Frisia.

Fr Andrew Phillips sums up* his life by describing St Theodore as the "Arch-Pastor of the English Nation, born in the city of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, his name signifying 'the gift of God'.....He had given everything of which the Church had most need – unity, organisation, learning, the firm confession of the Faith, true pastorship and above all, prayer – all proved by his life's work and the incorruption of his holy relics. He found a nation divided and left it united. He was indeed, a gift of God, a second Paul, Announcer of the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

Holy Archbishop Theodore, pray to God for us !"

+ All quotations of Ven. Bede from article by Adrian Hart in "Orthodox Outlook" XII.4

*"Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition" page 316.

Fr. John-Mark

Orthodoxy in the West, Today and Tomorrow

a report by Pam-Mary Riley



An Orthodox Conference took place recently at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire. Over the weekend of 6th to the 9th August, approximately 150 years from various jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church and other Christians met at the Hayes Centre for stimulating fellowship, worship and discussions under the guidance of Bishop Basil of Sergievo and Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia.

The Hayes Centre is set in beautiful countryside with peaceful walks in the extensive grounds. The rooms are en suite with very comfortable beds and the staff coped very well with our fast.

At the first keynote address Bishop Kallistos spoke on: "The Shape of Things to Come, our Future in the West." Fr. John Breck brought us up to date with the second keynote address entitled: "The Challenge of Medical Ethics with reference in particular to the law on abortion, euthanasia and genetic engineering. The third keynote was jointly presented by the sisters Esther Hookway Banev and Rebecca Hookway on "Being Orthodox in Britain Today" and was very amusing.

All those attending seemed to benefit greatly from the discussion groups and worship and catching up on old friendships as well as meeting new Christians were the highlights of my visit. It is good to talk!

Pam-Mary Riley

David Melling



David Melling (1943 - 2004)
Memory Eternal!

The repose of David Melling in the Lord will be an occasion of hope and sadness for the hundreds of people who knew him in the Manchester area. David was a tireless worker for Christ and the Orthodox faith in the city and his sympathies and range of interests were impressively broad. Not only could he expound the Orthodox biblical and patristic position on many contemporary issues but was also well versed in Hindu literature and philosophy. In consequence, Orthodox Christianity has become better known in the city through his erudition and good humour amongst the adherents of many different religions and none. This was partly also attributable to his former position as Dean of Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University and his continuing role in that University in helping to organise the extra-mural lectures in Orthodox Christianity.

David served as Psaltis at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Salford where many will remember with thanksgiving his considerable musical gifts and beautiful voice. His presence in that community as well will be sorely missed.

We should also thank God for his work to bring the different Orthodox jurisdictions together in the City in common endeavour and mutual support. This task has not always been easy but David's indefatigable spirit and good humour always pulled him and the rest of us through. This is the hope of his passing; that others may continue to build on his foundation.

Finally we recall perhaps his most enduring legacy for those who knew him ... his kindness, wisdom and generosity of spirit. In this man indeed the Holy Spirit dwelt in the richness of His gifts.

David's funeral was served at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation on Bury New Road, Salford by His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain, assisted by Archimandrite Nikolaos Serghakis and several clergy from all jurisdictions on Tuesday 28th September 2004. He was buried in the Orthodox section of Southern Cemetery, Chorlton, Manchester, later that day.

Memory Eternal!

Icons and the Material World



St. John of Damascus

The Iconoclastic controversy lasted from 726, when Emperor Leo III (717-741) began an attack on the use of the holy icons until 843 when The Empress Theodora allowed their restoration. The two periods of Iconoclasm were separated by the reign of the iconodule Empress Irene, under whom the Second Council of Nicaea 787 was held. A number of defenses of Icons were made: based on the existence of Divinely approved images in nature and Scripture; based on the reality of the incarnation; and based on a Platonic metaphysics of ascending images which participated in the prototype. Foremost contributor to the debate at the time was St. John of Damascus, Orthodox defender of the holy icons. St. John was able to write freely since lived under Muslim rule outside the boundaries of the Byzantine emperor. One of his arguments concerned the holiness of matter and it is to this we now turn.

From St. John of Damascus (On the Divine Images, First Apology no. 16)

"In former times God, who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who willed to take His abode in matter; who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease honouring the matter which wrought my salvation! I honour it, but not as God. How could God be born out of things which have no existence in themselves? God's body is God because it is joined to His person by a union which shall never pass away. The divine nature remains the same; the flesh created in time is quickened by a reason-endowed soul. Because of this I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with His grace and power."

This is the Orthodox Christian approach to the material world, veneration. Orthodox often find themselves in western post-Christian cultures where there is a very different approach to matter; or rather two approaches, both of them heretical.

The first we might characterise as matter stripped of spirit. Here, the material world loses its contact with the divine. The material world may safely be plundered and human bodies effectively treated as so much "meat" or even genetically determined machinery to be tinkered with at will. The second heresy concerns the worship of the material world in the perspective of hedonism or the religiosity of the pantheistic aspects of the New Age movement.

By contrast, Orthodox Christianity venerates the material world as grace-bearing; first and foremost in the sacred Person of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate (enfleshed) Word of God and by extension toward all disclosures of the divine energies under physical form ranging from the Holy Mysteries to the poor whom we serve; from the lowliest speck of dust to the whole Cosmos.

The celebration of the restoration of the holy icons which we mark in October's feast of the Father's of the Seventh Ecumenical Council is not only a liturgical matter but a lifting up of matter as holy. Fundamentally, the Fathers were articulating a full bodied creation theology at this Council. They looked upon matter as God's handiwork and declared it "good." In honouring them and their witness, Orthodox Christians must do all in their power and by divine grace to be priests of God's creation. By word and deed we honour matter when we cherish each other and the whole earth as vehicles of God himself.

Fr. Gregory

OCTOBER 20th 2004 (a contribution from Dwynwen East)

Today is the 8th anniversary of the consecration of our church of St. Aidan by the hand of His Eminence, Metropolitan Gabriel of Great Britain.

We have been blessed throughout these years with God's presence in our church and we pray that we will continue to enjoy the bond of peace, love and fellowship which has grown and developed in this place, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, for many more years to come.

As Matthew the Poor says in his book, "Orthodox Prayer Life" –

‘The right to enter into God's presence was gained when Christ opened the way for us. It was consecrated on the day He was crucified and inaugurated on the day He rose and ascended’.

Yesterday was the feast day of St. John of Kronstadt and I quote from his book,

"My Life in Christ"-

‘In the Temple, in the arrangements and parts, in the icons, in the Divine service, with the reading of the Holy Scriptures. The singing, the rites, the entire Old Testament, New Testament, and Church history, the whole Divine ordering of the salvation of mankind is emblematically traced, as upon a chart, in figures and in general outlines. Grand is the spectacle of the Divine Service of our Orthodox Church for those who understand it, who penetrate into its essence, its spirit, its signification, its sense.’

There are echoes here of Fr. John Mark's sermon last Sunday on the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The gospel as it was revealed to Paul through Jesus Christ, not according to man. The one true church as handed down to us through the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council who warned us of the dangers of division and schism if the discipline of Holy Tradition is not upheld.

May God grant us many years of worship in this, our Church of **SAINT AIDAN**.

Dwynwen

England - Mary's Dowry



(Much of this article is taken from research put together by Fr. Peter Bristow, to whom the author is indebted!)

The tradition of holy places being dedicated to the Virgin Mary goes back a long way. We are perhaps aware that the Holy Mountain of Athos, the seat of monks for a millennium at least but with a tradition going back far further than this is a case in point. The story goes that at the time that St. Lazarus was the bishop on Cyprus, a miraculous storm carried the Mother of God in her ship in the opposite direction to Holy Athos, which was then the site of a pagan shrine to Apollo. At the place where the Iveron monastery was later built, the Virgin Mary received divine instructions to preach the Gospels to Athos: *"This place shall be your garden, and a haven of salvation for those who desire to be saved"*.

It might come as more of a surprise that England itself has received similar divine favour as Mary's dowry and that this is a tradition that we can trace back AT LEAST to the 14th century. There are of course later references. The most significant of these perhaps occur only a little afterward in the reign of Henry the Fifth of Agincourt fame.

We know from the writings of a contemporary monk named Thomas Elmham that Henry V, the victor of Agincourt, consecrated England to the Mother of God. He says as follows:

"O Virgin sweet, England is made thy dower by royal Henry, keep it by thy power."

However, the well-known statement of Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, made in 1400, at the beginning of the reign of Henry V's father, Henry IV, shows that the former was not the first king to consecrate England to Our Lady. He says in a letter addressed to his suffragan bishops:-

"The contemplation of the great mystery of the Incarnation, in which the Eternal Word chose the holy and immaculate Virgin, that from her womb He should clothe Himself with flesh, has drawn all Christian nations to venerate her from whom come the first beginnings of our redemption... and we English being the servants of her special inheritance, and her own Dowry, as we are commonly called, ought to surpass others in the fervour of our praise and devotion."

It is clear from this that the words "Dowry", 'of Mary" were already commonly known and used throughout the Kingdom, and therefore, we have to go back still further to discover their origin. And so we come to Edward III. By a curious irony we get to this evidence via the depredations of the Reformation. The palace of Westminster, now parliament, originally had two chapels, a royal one dedicated to St. Stephen and the other, adjoining and curiously to:- *"Our Lady of Pew."* In 1800, during a refurbishment a painting was discovered behind the Speaker's Chair but covered by a panel since the reign of the Protestant 16th century boy king, Edward VIth. This was a picture of the Virgin and Child

with St Joseph bending over them, and King Edward III and his Queen and his sons and daughters making an offering to Our Lady. Such a public consecration of the realm to the Virgin Mary, prominent in Parliament until the Reformation attests to the antiquity and significance of the dedication, yet, for 400 years the memory of this has been ruthlessly obliterated from the minds of hearts of the English along with so much else.

However, once consecrated, England has never been deconsecrated. Can the promise of God be revoked? Surely not! Men can desecrate it but the promise remains. The interesting thing is that Our Lady, far from being a source of division amongst non-Orthodox English Christians in recent times, has become a focus of unity and even renewed devotion. The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary for example was a Society created in 1967 and has an active Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist participation. Arguably there has been more agreement and quiet commitment to the Mother of God amongst Christians of many different traditions over recent years that it might not be too fanciful to suppose that the English are now happily rediscovering the role of Mary in our Christian lives if not yet our national life.

How should the Orthodox regard such developments? With great joy of course! Bishop Kallistos for example is very active in the Society and Walsingham continues to provide a much needed focus for unity amongst those many Christians who long to rediscover authentic English Christianity which is as much Orthodox as anything happening in Greece, Russia, Eastern Europe or the Holy Mountain itself. Maybe one day England will reassume formally the blessing bestowed upon her by God. Orthodoxy must and will be part of that rediscovery. Until then we strive to honour her who through obedience to the Divine Word from an angel became higher than the angels herself in bearing the Divine Word made flesh, Our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Fr. Gregory



Historic Handover, New Challenges

[BBC article](#)

The historic return of relics of St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory the Theologian (Fr. Gregory's saint) pillaged in the Fourth Crusade by the Pope to the Ecumenical Patriarch is both a significant event and a welcome act of goodwill and goodness. By itself the return will not solve the continuing serious theological disagreements between Rome and Orthodoxy. By itself, it won't heal the divided cultures and memories of both churches but it will signal to many the utmost seriousness and hope that should characterise relations between both churches. It is another gesture in the process of a deepening friendship in Christ ... not, it must be said a friendship that is welcomed by all sections of the Orthodox Church ... particularly in Russia and on Mount Athos. Be that as it may, the return of the relics is, arguably, an important development.

Where do we go from here then? This is a but a personal view of the author...

There is, I think, a tendency in the Roman Catholic Church to minimise the outstanding disagreements between both Communion. It seems to many of us Orthodox that Rome is too tolerant of theological diversity (which will strike many Protestant Christians doubtless as extremely ironic if not incredible!) It seems to us that Rome can encompass quite a wide range of theological positions PROVIDED that the central authority of the magisterium and the papacy itself is accepted. Indeed many Roman Catholics justify the papacy in its present form on the grounds that central control is necessary to reign in the centrifugal tendency of all those movements that have long characterised the Latin Church in the Second Millennium. It is well known that the Orthodox Church does not have monastic orders but, rather, simply monks and nuns living out the consecrated life in different styles and circumstances. Renewal movements are relatively unknown as well, although Zoe in Greece might be an exception to that rule. This means that for us, central authority in the manner of Rome today is both without precedent, authority and usefulness. Here perhaps is the most difficult issue between Rome and Orthodoxy. It is matter of both churches radically different models of common life and structures developed to sustain that.

If this is a significant issue then the existing emphasis in ecumenical dialogue on doctrine and ecclesiology needs to be complemented by greater attention to such differences in both churches' common life. Rome is extremely unlikely to abandon its support for internal differentiation in renewal movements and monastic orders. Too many vested interests are at stake even for the papacy to tackle. Likewise, Orthodoxy is not about to introduce a similar model for its own common life. It simply isn't necessary. So is a tempting case of "live and let live?" Maybe. Perhaps, though, if there is to be any future in an enlarged Catholic-Orthodoxy (choosing my words with care!) then there needs to be a greater convergence in those elements of Church life that take the centre to the periphery (Rome) and the periphery to the centre (Orthodoxy). Perhaps this process will at a stroke resolve the issue of both the papacy and Orthodox unity. Maybe we really do need each other after all ... not because we judge ourselves lacking anything as to our strengths, but, rather that we need each other for our weaknesses. The strengths will be then be part of a potentially greater whole; the weaknesses points of learning and growth together in Christ for did not the Apostle St. Paul say:-

"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Life in the Lord:-: From "Sinship" to Sonship



Our goal in life is to participate in the life of God rather than to draw God to participate in our lives. That is to say, we seek to participate in the life of the Trinity rather than to demand that God empower us to implement our current wishes. The difference is rather profound as far as our understanding of religion is concerned: God becomes the focus of a desire to be with Him. The difference is also striking as far as our understanding of self is concerned: We begin to live for others rather than for ourselves. Such statements have a primary validity as existential experiences open to every human being rather than as theoretical propositions of enlightenment available to a few.

What does it mean “to participate in the life of the Trinity?” With a single phrase, the search for God becomes a living quest of believing Christians rather than a frustrating critique of how religion is lived (or not lived) in the world or even a concern with contemporary Christian life. Life in the Trinity is a fellowship in which the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit draws us into the life of God, away from a focus on our own personalities and hopes. The old prayer, “Lord, I give to you today everything I think or do or say,” becomes an entry point into the full form of The Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Our “sinship” becomes a valid point of entry to God’s creation, sonship and spiritual gifts.

Is such a perspective realistic? Can a denial of self and an awareness of our sins be a legitimate standing place in which to begin to experience living with the Lord? My limited experience suggests that the opposite perspective—seeking to be sinless is both impossible and debilitating. Instead of offering to God who we are, we are tempted to pretend that a self-help perspective will somehow move us through life’s problems. Yet in all honesty what we need is merely sufficient awareness of our problems to know that we are not capable of solving them by restructuring our personalities, but rather, must rely on God to implement changes in our lifestyles.

An experience of participation in the life of the Trinity is made readily available to us in communion at the eucharist. Such daring to be drawn into God’s presence, such willingness to experience the extent of God’s love for us, enables each of us to be alone with the Trinity and yet also alive to every other human being and to creation itself. By focusing our lives on how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit relate to each other we are drawn into that relationship through the doorway of confession in which we acknowledge we are sinners.

by Bob Kahn