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ΤΕΥΧΟΣ Β'

CONSTANTINOPLE AND CANTERBURY *

From

the Most Rev. and Right Hon. Archbishop
of Canterbury Dr. M. Ramsey.

I count it a great privilege to be the guest of the University of Athens and to be allowed to speak to you as a scholar to scholars. As with so many English scholars my debt to Athens is deep and almost lifelong. It was from the Greek tongue that I learned to love the beauty of words and the meaning of clear thinking. I remember as a boy being told the saying of an English historian of the last century, Sir Henry Maine, «except the blind forces of nature nothing moves in the world that is not Greek in origin»; and while this dictum is palpably an exaggeration its existence shews how great has been the influence of Greece upon our English culture.

Tonight, however, I speak also as a theologian to theologians, as an Anglican to members of the Holy Orthodox Church. In my own Church we cherish supremely the Holy Scriptures as the supreme standard of doctrine, and we believe that nothing may be taught as of necessity for eternal salvation save what may be proved from these Scriptures. In the Holy Orthodox Church it is no less evident that the Holy Scriptures are cherished, for whoever studied or expounded the Scriptures with more care than the Fathers of the Church? But the Fathers themselves also are cherished by you since you do not sever the Holy Scriptures from the Holy Tradition. He who sees the Holy Orthodox Church from without feels that the ancient Fathers are still alive in you. They are your teachers still, unfolding to you the Scriptures and the mysteries of the faith; and while you have your theologians all down the ages until the present time these bow their heads to the ancient tradition and let the Fathers speak through them.

My own Church has its own history, strangely different from yours; and the differences are, I cannot doubt, as apparent to you as they are to me. Yet the debt of my Church to the ancient Fathers is very great, and I would speak in the first part of my lecture about the place of the Fathers in our own Anglican theology.

* Lecture given at the University of Athens, May 7, 1962.

The English reformation

Let me remind you of our history. The Church of England was and is a part of Western Christendom. Created partly by Celtic missionaries from Ireland and Scotland and partly by Latin missionaries from Gaul, it was, together with the rest of the West in the early centuries, a part no less of the one undivided Church. We like to remember that one of the great Archbishops of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus, who sat in Canterbury's throne from 668 to 693, was a Byzantine Greek, trained in the schools of Athens. Yet of course even then the predominant influences were Western, and after the great schism of 1054 our English Church was subject to all the influences of the Western Papal Church with which it was bound up. How different was this from the history of your Church of Greece. And how different also from your Church of Greece was it that our Church of England underwent the violent experience of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century. Passing through the Reformation our Church was the same Church. We hold that its identity and continuity remained. It still remained, so we believe, the Church of St Augustine and St Theodore of Tarsus; it possessed still the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Sacraments, the mystery of the threefold Apostolic Ministry, the faith of antiquity. But though the same Church, it was a Church reformed. Its communion with the Papal See of Rome was now broken.

Whereas in the East the Holy Tradition had remained in essence the same, in the West the Tradition had been complicated by the accretion of many false traditions in the Middle Ages. It is part of the historical experience of our Church that there had to be rebellion against false «traditions», and when those «traditions» grip tightly the rebellion has to be violent. I beg you to understand this fact in our historical experience. Because there were, for instance, very false ideas about purgatory, the departed and the saints, there was a tendency of Reformers to depress the meaning of the Communion of the Saints unduly. Because there were very false ideas about the Sacrifice of the Mass, it was inevitably hard to grasp at first the conception of Eucharistic Sacrifice in a balanced way. But the Reformation cast aside false «traditions»; and it did so by asserting the supremacy of Holy Scripture. Side by side with the rejection of the Papal authority this recovery of Holy Scripture was the supreme fact in our English Reformation. The Bible was translated into English: it was put into the hands of the people. It was the guide to the true and primitive faith.

Understanding the Holy Scriptures

Yet how are the Holy Scriptures to be interpreted? That is a question from which theology cannot escape. It is impossible to interpret them as in a vacuum. It is possible to interpret them in the light of the controversy of a particular age, or in the light of one particular doctrine such as justification or predestination. But from the early years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and increasingly in the subsequent reigns, we see in the divines of our reformed Church of England an insistence upon the study of the ancient Fathers as a guide to the understanding of Holy Scripture in the context of the ancient Church.

Archbishop Parker of Canterbury at the Visitation of his Cathedral in 1550 made it an article of inquiry «whether there be a library within this Church, and in the same Augustine's works, Basil, Gregory Nazianzene, Hierome, Ambrose, Chrysostom». In the Canon on preaching issued in 1571 preachers were required to preach only what is found in the Holy Scriptures and «what the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops have collected out of the same». A typical Anglican statement of the respective rôles of Scripture and the Fathers is that of Francis Wite, Bishop successively of Carlisle, Norwich and Ely. «The Holy Scripture is the fountain and lively spring, containing in all sufficiency and abundance the pure water of life, and whatsoever is necessary to make God's people wise unto salvation. The consentient and unanimous testimony of the true Church of Christ in the primitive ages is *c a n a l i s*, a conduit pipe, to derive and convey to succeeding generations the celestial water contained in Holy Scripture. The first of these, namely the Scriptures, is the sovereign authority, and for itself worthy of all acceptance. The latter, nemely the voice and testimony of the Primitive Church, is a ministerial and subordinate rule and guide to preserve and direct us in the right understanding of the Scriptures*».

The «Caroline divines»

We can notice a development in the mode of interest in the ancient Fathers as between the Anglican divines of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and those of the subsequent reigns. In the earlier phase the concern was to use the Fathers as evidence for the primitive faith, to prove that some of the later Roman doctrines were unknown in antiquity. In the later phase, Anglican divines tended to use the Fathers not only for

* Francis White. *A Treatise of the Sabbath Day* 1635. p. 11.

evidence as to what doctrines were, and were not, primitive, but as the medium for their own theological thought and exposition. This was characteristic of the divines of the reigns of Charles I and Charles II, commonly known amongst us as the «Caroline divines». In them we see appeal to Scripture and antiquity, which the Reformers had made, being pursued with maturity, depth and balance. Their use of the Fathers led them particularly in two directions.

1. They were led away from being absorbed with the matters which had been the absorbing concern of the Continental Reformers, namely Justification and Predestination, and became instead influenced by the proportion of the theology of the Fathers for whom the central doctrine was that of the Incarnation of the Word made flesh, the Person of Jesus Christ, God and Man. For the Caroline divines, as for the Nicene Age, the Incarnation of the Son of God became the heart and centre of theology. Such was the teaching of the great divines of the Caroline period, such as Lancelot Andrewes and Jeremy Taylor, as it had been the teaching of Richard Hooker in the period before. Such too was the teaching of great divines in the subsequent centuries, William Law and Waterland (different as they were) in the Eighteenth Century; Pusey, Maurice and Westcott (different as they were) in the Nineteenth; Gore and Temple in the Twentieth. In every one of these divines the Incarnation was central, and in every one of them the debt to the Fathers was constant and profound.

2. The second trend in the Carolines, caused by their use of the Fathers, was this. Because they found in the Fathers the contrast of Greek and Latin theology they were saved from Western narrowness, and were conscious that just as the ancient, undivided Church embraced both East and West so the contemporary Catholic Church was incomplete without the little known Orthodox Church of the East as well as the familiar Churches of the West, Latin, Reformed and Anglican. Hence there begins, in the heart of Anglican theology, a yearning towards the East. I quote Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop first of Ely and later of Winchester, whose *Præces Privatae* are a classic work of Anglican devotion. He prayed:

«for the Catholic Church, its development and increase; for the Eastern, its deliverance and union; for the Western its adjustment and peace; for the British, the supply of what is wanting, the strengthening of what remains in it».

In both these ways the use of the ancient Fathers helped the divi-

nes of our English Church to realise in depth, width and balance the meaning of the appeal to Scripture and Antiquity which our reformers had made. The meaning was this; not only that the Church of England looked back to the undivided Church as a guide or pattern, but that the Church of England claimed to be one with the undivided Church in actual continuity. When our divines saw the Orthodox Church of the East making the claim to be the very Church of the holy apostles, the Church of St Athanasius and St Chrysostom, they believed that they could claim no less for their own Church of England.

Varieties of outlook

You know, of course, that within our Church there have been many varieties of theological type and spiritual outlook, and I am sure that you will understand how our history explains these. There have been those who dwell with exclusive emphasis upon the gifts which the Reformation immediately brought: the supremacy of Holy Scripture and the doctrine that salvation is of God's unmerited gift and not earned by human merits. There have been those who cherish specially the intellectual gifts of the Holy Spirit and delight to relate the Christian faith to contemporary culture. There have been those who have most of all cherished the Church's continuity, with the undivided Church. Pragmatism is a common English tendency, and often the members of our Church have given themselves to the urgent tasks of Christian duty finding inspiration in the discipleship of Jesus Christ, without a precise concern for theology. The school in our Church which is called Evangelical has been marked specially by the use of the Bible, gratitude to our Lord for his atoning death, the power of the Holy Spirit in personal conviction, and the impulse to win souls to Christ in eager missionary work.

Yet varieties of opinion amongst us have never altered the firm and certain fact that the mysterious life of divine grace and the primitive orthodox faith have continued. The mysteries of Holy Baptism, Confirmation (which is among us not an anointing with oil but a laying on of hands as the means of spiritual unction), Absolution, Holy Order, Holy Eucharist, Holy Marriage, the Ministration to the Sick (by unction or by laying on of hands) have continued. The Liturgy unite heaven and earth, for Christ once crucified and now risen and glorious is present. The apostolic succession of bishops, priests and deacons is continued and cherished, and we do not form plans of Church Unity without it.

We recite the ancient Creeds in adoration of the Triune God. And God has given gifts of spirituality within our Church beyond our deserving. Not only have these gifts been in the lives of Christian families, fathers, mothers and children; but there have also been gifts of monastic vocation, with monks, nuns and friars, who in poverty, chastity and obedience serve God both in activity and, like the monks of Mount Athos, in prayer and contemplation. Deeper than the voices of controversy of the Church's many human defects has been this continuity of life, mystical and sacramental. Is this not itself the essence of «holy tradition»?

Doctrine of the Logos

I mention one more aspect of the Church of England, which belongs especially to the modern phase of its history. It is another example of the influence of the Greek Fathers. The greatest of our modern Anglican divines, such as Bishop Westcott of Durham, Bishop Gore of Oxford, and Archbishop Temple of Canterbury, made the Incarnation the centre of their teaching. But more especially they used the doctrine of the Logos to shew that all that is good and true in philosophy, in science, in civilisation, is caused by the divine Logos who is at work in all the world as the light that lighteth every man. In the last century the Church in the West was embroiled in the problem caused by modern scientific study. There was the theory of Evolution taught by biologists. There was the rise of historical criticism, with its corollary in the criticism of the Holy Scriptures. There was the rise of new forms of scientific culture. In the midst of this scientific revolution the Church had an anxious task, and I think that this conflict was felt more acutely in the West than in the East. What was the Church to do? It was possible to try to defend the faith as inside an ark, and to regard all science and philosophy outside the Church as an enemy. That was the method of Tertullian. But it was also possible to invoke the doctrine of the Logos as taught most notably by St Irenaeus, and the attitude and temper seen most notably in St Clement of Alexandria. That was the method followed by some notable Anglican theologians, such as Bishop Charles Gore in facing the new discoveries of science. Using the doctrine of the Logos they were able to show that modern scientific studies, are no enemy but have within them the working of the divine Logos who is ever in the world. Such was the task attempted by some mo-

modern Anglican divines. Their work could seem strange and modern, and no doubt it could make mistakes; but it was a work at heart orthodox, patristic, Greek in spirit. It is the work of a St Clement in the modern world, just as those who rebuke injustice between classes or races do the work of a St Chrysostom in the modern world.

So our debt to Greece, as Anglicans, haunts us in modern, no less than in older times. Is it surprising that, to borrow the words, of the Apostle Paul, we yearn after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ?

Tasks of unity

Now I turn to our tasks of unity. After centuries of division the tide in Christendom flows, however slowly, towards unity and not away from it.

As a man cannot jump out of his own skin or borrow the spectacles of another, I look on the scene inevitably as an Anglican. But the heritage of history causes us as Anglicans to look in many directions, for many forces have pressed upon our history. We remember of course that from the Church of England there has come into existence the widespread family of Churches of the Anglican Communion on every continent, Churches which see in Canterbury an undefined and yet very real symbol of their unity.

We see the Church of Rome. We reject the claim that the Roman Communion is itself the whole Catholic Church in the world, for we cannot deny the claims of the Orthodox Church even before we speak of ourselves and of others too. We reject adoption of new dogmas as being *de fide* and as binding the faithful. But on a deep level we can learn from the lives and the spiritual teaching of Roman Catholics. We would strive to learn from St Theresa, St John of the Cross and many others in the life of prayer, and from the self sacrifice and love of Roman Catholic missionaries. If we are less at home often with Latin scholastic theology we feel kinship in the patristic strain in Roman theology and in the inner life of liturgy. We thank God for the recent awakenings of charity and friendship fostered by His Holiness the Pope. We pray that the forthcoming Vatican Council may serve charity and may serve truth. We do not of course expect that the dogmas of the Roman Church will be altered. Yet we may pray that in proportion and perspective those dogmas may stand out which belong to us also, and which make for peace as Christendom faces the powers of unbelief.

Example of South India

We see the non-episcopal Protestant communions, not least those which share with us such gifts as the open Bible which the Reformation recovered for us. The unity we shall, in God's good time, have with them will come through our humility together in the face of God's undeserved gifts to us. These gifts will include the mystery (I use the word of Greek theology) of the ministry handed down to us from the ancient Church. In South India a wonderful act of unity was wrought, and into it many diverse gifts were brought to be joined with those which the Anglican Church has held in trust from the undivided Church. This shews what, under God's hand, is possible. It would be premature to speak now of the discussions which the Church of England is having with the Methodists in England. The Methodists, a movement of spirituality and mission brought into existence by the preaching of John Wesley, were separated when in the Eighteenth Century the Church of England was cold and formal. There is a great longing for unity, as it was a sad separation. In our striving for unity with all the non-episcopal Protestant communions we have to combine the recognition of the divine grace manifested in them with fidelity to that which we have received as having an authority not merely Anglican but Catholic. We have to practice acts of «economy» (to use the Orthodox term) while not obscuring the principles for which we stand.

In Athens, however, it is of the relations of the Anglican Church and the Holy Orthodox Church that I must chiefly speak. Many hearts were stirred by the great conference in Rhodes in September 1961 when the West looked and saw orthodoxy re-asserting its own unity and returning to face the world like a giant refreshed with wine. This rejoiced many hearts. So too did the entrance of more parts of the Holy Orthodox Church, including the Russian Church, into the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in November 1961, and the vigorous participation of the Orthodox there.

The Communion of Saints

I have said enough of our Anglican history to explain why Anglicans have a feeling towards the Orthodox. There is our debt to Greek theology, for Greek theology helped us to discover the meaning of our position and vocation. That debt began before there was more than the smallest personal contact between our Churches. Now that per-

sonal contact has become frequent we have come to know Orthodox theology not only as a collection of books but as it is alive in living persons and in the Holy Liturgy. That Liturgy conveys to us the glory of the Resurrection. If in the West we have tended to think of the Liturgy as the infinite condescension of the Lord of Heaven in coming to earth to be the food of our souls, in the East we find that the Liturgy lives and moves in heaven, where Christ is, and the Church is lifted into heaven with Him. So too the Liturgy of St Chrysostom makes vivid to us the Communion of Saints. We Anglicans, through the experiences of extreme corruption and violent reaction in the West, are hesitant about devotion to the Saints which might even seem to impugn the unique glory of the Son of God, the one Mediator and Saviour. But the Eastern presentation of the Communion of Saints shows the saints not as individual mediators but as members with us and all the departed in the one family of God, and as it is Christ's own glory which is reflected in the Saints to honour them is to honour, supremely, Him. We see you Church as the Church of the Resurrection, the Church of the Communion of Saints.

If we warm towards you, you have shewn warmth indeed towards us. Just over forty-one years ago, in 1920, the Oecumenical Patriarch issued his Encyclical Letter, Unto all the Churches of Christ wheresoever they be. To read it now is to see the realism and the prophetic vision which were in it. Three years later, in 1923, the Oecumenical Patriarch declared Anglican orders to be valid in the sense that the orders of Rome and of the Church of Armenia are valid. Grateful for that declaration, we yet realise now-what some were slow to realise - that validity of orders is a thing entirely secondary to agreement in Orthodox Faith. Two years later, in 1925, a remarkable concourse of Orthodox prelates attended the commemoration of the Council of Nicaea in London. Five years after that, in 1930, there met in London the Anglican and Orthodox theological commission. Its Report, issued in 1931, is a fine analysis of the theological issues. In 1935 there came the conferences in Bucharest between the Church of England and the Church of Roumania, and the valuable report which came from it. The war disturbet these growing relations, and prevented contacts. Since the war there was in 1956 the conference in Moscow in which it was my privilege to lead the Anglican delegation in discussion with representatives of the Patriarch of All Russia. Today I am, like my predecessor in 1960, on my way home from recei-

ving the gracious hospitality of the Oecumenical Patriarch.

Let me dare to suggest some considerations which seem to me important in our coming theological task, not forgetting that the theological task is blended with the work of practical relations and spirituality.

Historical difference

1. I plead that in all our discussions justice is done to those differences of historical circumstance which condition our theological expression. Take for instance the question of the filioque clause which the West inserted into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Inevitably the Orthodox Church resents the insertion of a cause into the Creed. But let it be explained that when we of the West say the filioque we have intention of asserting that there is more than one aitia or pēge (I use your Greek terms) in the Godhead, and that the filioque was valued in order simply to uphold the homoousion amid controversies in the West which you in the East did not experience. Take also some of the phrases in our Thirty Nine Articles: these phrases result from the necessity of rejecting certain corrupt doctrines which had so equivalent in Eastern history. We need to examine the historical circumstances in order to have mutual understanding.

2. The question of Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition looms large in our discussions. I believe that the Holy Tradition is living in our Church: for what is Holy Tradition but the continuous stream of divine life, which is the very life of God Incarnate and of the Holy Spirit within the Church? This divine life is in the Scriptures, the preaching of the Gospel, the Sacraments, the lives of Christians, the fellowship of the Saints. Such is the Holy Tradition. In our Anglican theology we do not speak of it precisely as you do. But it is there, with us and in us. We ascribe to Holy Scripture a supreme right to check and test what properly belongs to Holy Tradition and what does not. Here perhaps is a path along which we may move towards understanding.

3. We Anglicans realise that you Orthodox see Orthodoxy as something one and indivisible, one indivisible plenitude of faith, worship, and customs. It is like a beautiful picture. If even a small smudge is cast upon the picture, or one small injury done to it, the whole picture is spoilt. I think that this is perhaps the biggest difficulty of all in some of our theological discussions. It concerns the nature of Orthodoxy, and the way of accepting it. Here, I think that we need to

give thought to the relation between the Church as eternal and the Church as embodied in the movement of history, and also to the relation between divine Truth and the world in which divine truth is embodied. This latter question is not a new one created by modern desires for lack of precision: it is an old question with which some of the Fathers were concerned. I recall words of St Hilary, «We are compelled to attempt what is unattainable, to climb where we cannot reach, to speak what we cannot utter. Instead of the bare adoration of faith, we are compelled to entrust the deep things of religion to the perils of human expression». (De Trinitate II. 2.4.)

I modestly suggest these few considerations for the future of our theological task, the task to which theologians, Orthodox and Anglican, are together called. It is a task which bears not only upon our own Church relations but upon the general problem of Christian Unity - for what might not be the wider effects of a growing unity between our Churches of East and West? Theological work, prayer, liturgy, friendship and action together to meet the world's distresses, all these are part of the way to unity. The Holy Tradition is God Incarnate living and moving in the whole life of Christians.

Challenge of scientific culture

While we discuss the theology and the Church life of Constantinople, Canterbury, and Rome too, there is around us the modern world wherein is terrible rejection of divine truth and indifference to it. The task of unity among ourselves is inseparable from our bringing the Everlasting Gospel of God to the Nations. No less necessary is it for the Church to meet the contemporary scientific culture, and to go out to succour those who are in hardship and distress.

1. There is the presence in the world of a modern, scientific, technological culture, so different from the older culture of Athens, or Oxford or Cambridge. Can our theology ignore the scientific culture? I can think of theologies whose nature it would be to say «Yes, we can ignore it». But such is not the nature of Greek theology or of Anglican, wherever the Greek spirit has influenced it. The divine Logos, working in all the created world, the author of all truth, the inspirer of all knowledge properly so called, is working within the scientific methods of

our time. If we shrink from saying this we may be in danger of being false to the teaching of the Fathers. If we do say this, then theologians will be conversing not only with one another in the ecumenical exchange but with every sort of other academic discipline, not least those which seem most modern. The theologian will best teach when he is ready to learn and to receive wherever the Divine Wisdom is the teacher.

2. There is the distress of Nations through poverty and hunger, and the distress of races through the lack of brotherhood between them. Here we can listen again to the prophetic words of St Chrysostom that it is vain to come to the altar in the Eucharist unless we go out to find the altar which is identical with the poor brother: «This altar thou mayest see everywhere lying both in lanes and market-places, and thou mayest sacrifice upon it every hour. When thou seest a poor brother reflect that thou beholdest an altar». (Homily XX, on II Corinthians), St Chrysostom knew the very rich and the very poor within his own city. Today there are countries relatively prosperous and countries of deep poverty. The succour of the homeless and the refugees is a very part of our search for unity in Christ.

The Church of God will therefore go out both to learn and to use whatever the divine wisdom discloses in the modern world, and to meet the agonies which are in the world. It can do this with conviction, because it knows the truth about the world and the truth about itself. The world is a place where Christ by His death and resurrection has won a cosmic victory: it is in His hands already, and all unseen His power draws it into unity: that is the orthodox Faith of Christ Victorious, as the Fathers and the Liturgy attest. The Church is a body where, amidst its many sinful and fallible members, Christ is present as the Church's inward life; and the portion of the Church on earth is ever one with the Church in paradise and heaven.
