

A Report on the Forward in Faith/UK Assembly, October 21-22, 2005

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OUR ANGLICAN PATRIMONY

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The Diocese of the Holy Cross brought forth eight representatives to the Assembly this year: two bishops, two priests and four of the laity. Bishop Timothy Farmer from Spartanburg, SC, was also with us. There was the largest representation ever from Sweden, with more than a dozen attendees, as well as a fine group from Norway.

What we had to share from the U.S. was our experience of division, with steps taken now to overcome this through partnerships, fellowships and federations. We are working toward a new paradigm that entails one province for us all. On the positive side, we have hard-won experience of

- (i) effective mission, in learning how to travel light and in setting up hundreds of new parishes,
- (ii) training, through seminaries, youth camps, Sunday Schools, and preparation of men for the diaconate in the local parishes, and
- (iii) discipline, of beginning to accept the New Testament standard for marriage for bishops, clergy and laity.

In England, three ways forward are on the table:

- (i) a code of practice (the gnostics' proposal to respect the orthodox, already a shambles and doomed to failure),
- (ii) continuance of a structural solution (having flying bishops, a practice which will not work once women become bishops), and
- (iii) the new province.

This Assembly above all else resolved to insist on the new province as the only possible way forward. The second part of the book *Consecrated Women* is the legislation that FiF will put to the General Synod. We are closing in fast on D-Day, when the legislation will be presented. The stakes are high, and both sides need the new province.

The new province is an earthenware vessel, a container for the orthodox members of the Church of England. Aiden Nichols, OP, has asked us "to specify what it is about [our] distinctive patrimony that [we] wish to safeguard" (*New Directions*, October 2005, p.9). In other words, can we say what we want to put in the container; can we sum up what makes us unique as Anglicans and what we want to offer the rest of the body, without loss-by-absorption?

For the first six centuries of her life, the Celtic and British Church had close ties with the eastern or emerging Byzantine Empire through the tin trade. The British Church would have had ready access to the works of the eastern fathers. It may not be a coincidence that C.S. Lewis wrote a foreword to an edition of Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*. Although we have eminent Thomists in our ranks like Eric Mascall, it is typical for our theologians to be completely grounded in the eastern fathers, so much so that Michael Ramsey once called Anglicanism an outbreak of Orthodoxy in the West. We tend to see dogmas not so much as things to define, as holy mysteries into which we enter. Cranmer's post-communion prayer is an example of this. That Orthodoxy is deep within the marrow of our bones has given us a unique ability to relate to the churches of the East.

There is something else that reveals a deep affinity between Anglicanism and Orthodoxy. Sometimes in Anglican chant there is almost a sense that the canticle or anthem could have been composed in Russia. There are more than one or two settings in Anglican chant of the *Nunc dimittis*, for example, whose resonance with Russian chant is amazing. Some of John Tavenor's work in our time makes this resonance explicit.

In his book *English Spirituality*, Martin Thornton focuses on the role of the Benedictines in the formation of the Anglican ethos. The family is the model for life in Christ. The continental churches would tend toward the Ignatian model of the *militia Christi*, the Church as the Army of God. In English spirituality, and with our smaller parishes, there is a tendency toward family relationships between priest and layman, monk and secular. Authority and spiritual direction are by and large sacramental, familial and empirical rather than juridical. From the Reformation onward, the bishops and clergy will usually be married. The bishop is father-in-God, and the confessor is *pater familias*. The parish family is rooted in one place, for stability and for the conversion and transfiguration of everyone and everything in it. The combined sense of rootedness and transfiguration has given rise to a strong sense of mission.

The foundation of the Christian life is the Liturgy, seen as both the Mass and the Office, from which flows personal devotion based on the Bible. When Anglicans assemble, they usually say the Office together, whereas our Roman brethren will tend toward para-liturgical devotions like the Rosary.

The Book of Common Prayer is not so much a series of services as it is a system, a *Regula*, with the same pastoral spirit and domestic emphasis as Benedict's Rule. There is a domestic flavor to spirituality, and what Thornton calls a unique humanism and optimism. The Anglican is less interested in formal mediation and more prone to habitual recollection, constant meditation on Christ's presence, as what links up the

Offices with the Eucharist. As with the Orthodox, there tends to be an "affective-speculative synthesis," a wedding of head and heart, theological and emotional, doctrinal and devotional, fact and feeling. The Prayer Book makes possible a total Christian life in the world, supported by the Liturgy.

Having lived in England for over three years, I discovered a metaphor that illustrates the difference between the Anglican and the Continental way. The Roman roads go from A to B in straight lines. The Romans, and the Christians who inherit this ethos, love efficiency, order, organization, administration and precise code law. English roads also go from A to B, coming to the same destination but following the contours of the land or some old cow path. The longer it takes to go from A to B the better, because here efficiency is not the priority. The experience of the journey is what is important: the mystery of discovering, for instance, some fabulous little pubs or inviting inns in the villages along the way.

So, too, with gardens. Continentals prefer precise, mathematical gardens. The English go for more spontaneity, perhaps the casual look of a garden tended by an ordinary family.

So, too, with music and the arts. We have the example of the folk tunes that inspired some of Vaughan Williams' lovely hymns. Obviously, the different emphases are two sides of the same coin, and in our crisis today we see how much we need one another.

God has allowed the English people and the English Church to be unique in the world. Because England sustained so many migrations and invasions, the language has the largest vocabulary in the world. As the Anglo-Saxon peoples settled in, they took on vocabulary from their Celtic and Latin predecessors. But with the subsequent invasions from the Scandinavians and the Norman French, the natives absorbed massive amounts of new vocabulary to be worked into and absorbed into English. The English language developed an amazing capacity to absorb and be enriched

by new influences without overthrowing the original order. English remains a Germanic language. This ability to understand and absorb gives the Anglican churches the gift of understanding deeply and working closely with the Roman, the Protestant and the Orthodox. This gift may help explain why the devil has attacked our community with such ferocity.

I like to teach our confirmands that in order to understand and be grateful for our Christian Western heritage, one must know whence it came. It has a founder, St. Benedict. And in order to understand our mother tongue, one must know the three great masterpieces that most influenced its modern form: the Book of Common Prayer, the King James Bible, and the works of William Shakespeare.

The English are the first people in the West to develop a parliamentary system of government, a strong sense of personal freedom, a growing middle class, literacy, and a people often taught to think things through for themselves. The Anglo-Saxon sense of freedom gave the army something to make it flexible, creative and effective: the sergeant.

The way in which Church and State have interrelated in England has unique features which helped give rise to the British Empire. Church and State cooperate to reinforce values like personal initiative, responsibility, duty and hard work. For all its faults, the British Empire is arguably the best there ever was, tending to promote good local administration, justice, dignity and basic freedoms. There are people in Uganda and India who wish they were still part of the British Empire. There were Roman Catholics in the 19th century who regretted that the Church in England separated from them in the 16th. There are Roman Catholics today who would like to be able to enter into and experience the Church that produced the theological and liturgical treasures of the Caroline divines and the many luminaries that followed.

JRH Moorman chronicles some of these Anglican worthies in his Anglican Spiritual Tradition, describing the

role of the English Bible and the Book of Common Prayer in their formation. With the reformed catholic tradition, and with the old interest in the eastern fathers, there is a flowering in Anglicanism from the 17th century onwards of a new awareness of the Holy Spirit...what John Zizioulas calls, in his book Being As Communion, "pneumatological conditioning." Everything in Christ's life, everything in the Kingdom, is pneumatologically conditioned, or is in the Holy Spirit. This perspective enables us to transcend much of the theological conflict of the 16th century regarding sacraments, authority and the nature of the Church, the Church as the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit. Vatican II began to open the Roman Catholic Church to more of this perspective. Someday we may see courses in pneumatology preceding the ones on Christology. But pneumatology has been deeply embedded in Anglican theology and so it is no coincidence that the epiclesis was first restored to the Western Liturgy with the Prayer Book of the 17th century non-jurors in Scotland, which passed to the United States through Samuel Seabury and the American Prayer Book of 1789.

Zizioulas also talks about eschatological conditioning (everything in the Kingdom is from above, from the Father) as this relates to apostolic continuity and succession. In Anglicanism, as in Orthodoxy, we tend toward the eschatological approach to apostolic continuity: the apostles and their successors are in heaven, standing as a college, in a circle, around the Lamb and His Throne. The Roman Church tends towards the historical approach to succession, and sees the succession in linear terms, coming to us in an unbroken succession from Peter to the present. Zizioulas describes a synthesis of the historical and eschatological approaches, and the consequences of this synthesis for the life of the Church. Rome and Orthodoxy are called to rediscover one another at the deepest levels. In the West, we need more of the East's understanding of pneumatology and eschatology. The East needs more of the West's historical approach, of the Church living and ministering in the present, and in the long progression of time.

If Rome is the shoe and Orthodoxy is the foot, we Anglicans can be the shoehorn. All through the centuries, Anglicans have had warm relationships with the Orthodox, never more so than in the United States after World War II. Many Greeks were immigrating into the United States and were welcomed into our Episcopal churches, as members and as communities forming their own new congregations. The Greek bishops said to their people that they should even receive Holy Communion at our altars, if there were no Greek parishes nearby. The sincere friendship and rapport the Episcopal Church had with the Greek Orthodox was grievously shattered in 1976 with the purported ordination of women. The Greeks were betrayed. It is up to the orthodox Anglican remnant in the United States to re-build the relationship with the Greeks, and perhaps we are the only ones who can do it. If we can make some headway here, it may be the most precious gift we bring to Rome when the time comes.

Here is how we might sum up the Patrimony we as Anglicans want to protect and continue, through full communion with the sees of Rome and Constantinople:

- (i) In matters of theology, our model is the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium.
- (ii) We allow for the genius of simple canon law, self-governance and personal freedom that grew out of the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon experience in Church and State.
- (iii) There could be a Book of Common Prayer, revised locally for the provinces of the orthodox Anglican re-alignment, that is consistent with the historical Books of Common Prayer as a Benedictine regula, and reflects our union with the Holy See.
- (iv) The re-aligning orthodox Anglican provinces, including the new one in England, gather as an orthodox Anglican Communion. This kind of gathering is now occurring for the provinces of the "global south."
- (v) We continue our emphasis on the Church as the Family of God, expressed in the sacramental exercise of authority by our bishops as fathers-in-God.
- (vi) We continue a married clergy and, if possible, episcopate.
- (vii) Our calendar includes our "Anglican worthies."

(viii) Anglican theological colleges throughout our provinces can be identified or established.

(ix) We have the freedom to build bridges with the Orthodox.

As we sum up the unique heritage that needs to be preserved and offered as a gift to enrich the rest of the Body, we see that a large part of our vocation is ecumenical, to help reveal the essential unity of the Body, to help the two lungs, East and West, breathe together again. By and large, Anglicans are uniquely the Christians who have a foot in the Roman, the Orthodox and the Protestant camps. The life of each of these flows through our veins and is in our spiritual genes. God can use us to discover one another at deeper levels and broker understanding and rapport throughout the Body.

The hosts of hell have worked overtime to savage our community. The Holy See may want to ask us how we expect to keep our act together as an Anglican uniate body, after having lost so many provinces to the gnostics. Alexander Solzhenitsyn gives us the big picture in August 1914, the beginning of Europe's 30-year-long civil war, ultimately against the forces of gnostic barbarism. Basically it was Anglicans who won WWII: Churchill and Roosevelt, and the great generals - Patton, McArthur, Mountbatten, Montgomery - and the Canadian, Indian and Australian cohorts, and all the Anglican bishops who gave spiritual support. Of course, the Russians were in there, too, and the Free French.

After the victory, Solzhenitsyn says, a spiritual exhaustion settled over the next layers of leadership, who were not ready for an even more subtle demonic onslaught of the more insidious and damaging gnostic feminism. The Episcopal Church took the first wave of this deadly new onslaught and was shattered. Canada fell next, then New Zealand, Australia, various African provinces, and finally, England. We are about where England and the West were in 1943. The orthodox remnants who have risen up (with the massive orthodox provinces like Nigeria) are weighing in, battle

hardened, willing to share our experience with our sister churches. As the Jews were forever cured of idolatry by exile in Babylon, the orthodox Anglican remnants are never going to accept an ecclesiology that allows local synods to vote on doctrine or to act without any real accountability to the wider Church. To do so is insanely presumptuous.