

Constantinople Lecture 2015

By Dimitris Salapatas

The Anglican and Eastern Church Association (AECA) organised its annual Constantinople Lecture, which took place on Thursday 19th November 2015 at St Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral in London. The evening began with Orthodox Vespers, followed by a lecture given by the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, on 'Patriarchy and Dispersion.' Bishop Christopher has supported Anglican-Orthodox dialogue for a number of years, 'and has enabled many western Christians to gain an understanding of eastern Christianity through pilgrimages to Tur Abdin and the Holy Land,'¹ as stated by the editor of *Koinonia*, Fr Stephen Stavrou, in the latest issue of the journal.

Fr William Taylor, Chairman of the AECA introduced the speaker. Bishop Christopher wished to explain the similarities and common mission of both the Anglican Communion and the Orthodox Church, pointing out that mission is from everywhere to everywhere. Interestingly enough this mission is not only towards other people but to the whole of creation, which was emphasised by Bishop Christopher. The similarities of both Anglicanism and Orthodoxy is evident also in the dispersed authority and that both the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Archbishop of Canterbury are *Primus Inter Pares*, in their respected ecclesiastical bodies. The speaker pointed out that 'neither Anglicans nor Orthodox have a centralised and centralising authority in their global Communion and must rely on consensus and the "bonds of affection" to hold them together, especially at times of tension and division, which all Churches experience.'² Moreover, the principle of autocephaly is a characteristic both Orthodox and Anglicans maintain. The speaker even touched upon the issue of nationalism within the Church. The fact that today the Christian Churches also have a growing diaspora, is an interesting reality, which allows for further and better understanding of the other Christians around the world, progressing in theological dialogues and in the official relations. However, the current political situations in the Middle East have resulted in the enforced dispersion, where millions have been forced to leave their homes. The speaker wished to also point out the centrifugal and centripetal forces, giving a further exegesis of the issues which trouble the Anglicans today. The speaker concluding by quoting from the Buffalo Statement (2015), which is the Fourth Official Statement between the Anglican Communion and the Eastern Orthodox Church, showing the continued progression of the relations between the two traditions. The lecture given by Bishop Christopher is also published in *Koinonia*.³

After the excellent lecture, Fr Stephen Stavrou thanked the speaker, giving him a present from the Association. He also advertised the new issue of *Koinonia*, which was given to all the participants of this event. The event was well attended, including members of both the Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion, such as Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain and many priests and laity. The evening ended with a reception, where we all had the chance to exchange thoughts on the lecture with the speaker and interact with others on matters concerning the relations between the Anglicans and the Orthodox, the recent visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch to Britain and about the AECA. The next Constantinople Lecture will take place in November 2016.

¹ Stavrou, Stephen, 'Editorial,' *Koinonia*, New Series No.66, Allsaintstide 2015, p.1

² Chessun, Christopher, 'Patriarchy & Dispersion,' *Koinonia*, New Series No. 66, Allsaintstide 2015, pp.9-10.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.7-16.