

# AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE ANGLICAN & EASTERN CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

By the Reverend A. T. J. Salter

It was a cold and windy night, the rain pelted down stair-rod like, whilst two Anglican clergymen met under a railway bridge in Lewisham in 1906. They were the Reverend Henry Joy Fynes-Clinton, an Assistant Curate at St Stephen's, Lewisham, an aristocrat; and Canon John A. Douglas, Vicar of St Luke's, Camberwell, from a middle-class engineering family. One cannot begin to understand the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association without taking into consideration these two characters, both of whom I knew in their latter years; and who were to fall out dramatically in 1933.

Under that railway bridge in 1906 the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, in its present form, was born. A thorough search of the archives of the Association has, however, failed to unearth any evidence of this meeting, so it could be part of the Anglo-Catholic mythology of the period. Nevertheless, there was a definite merger of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Union and the Eastern Church Association. The latter had been founded in 1864 on the initiative of John Mason Neale and others, supported by Pusey, Keble and Liddon, the Union was in some part the child of the layman, Athelstan Riley, seigneur de La Tinite, a leisured Anglo-Catholic layman. Mr Henry Fynes-Clinton had been put up for membership of the Union on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1897 whilst an undergraduate at Trinity College, Oxford, whilst still a layman, by no less an ecumenist than William Birbeck, secretary of the Union, who had spent some time travelling in Russia. Despite the prestige in Anglican and Orthodox circles of his sponsor, it seems that Fynes-Clinton was not at first accepted as a member, for we find him proposed again for membership when he is a tutor in a noble family in Imperial Russia on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1899. He was still a layman and resident at Smolensky Boulevard, Moscow, in the house of a Mr Morosoff (Dom Morosoff).

Some twenty seven years after 1916 Fynes-Clinton and Fr Robert Corbould, Rector of Carshalton, on one side and J. A. Douglas and Athelstan Riley on the other were to clash (of this later) and from that row (catalogued in the archives of the Association as "The Great Fynes-Clinton Row") began the decline of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association after 1933, into which they had put so much of their energy and expertise.

A hundred years ago the Anglican and Eastern Churches' Association met with phenomenal success. Why was this so? A hundred years ago English society was very unlike our own today, politically and ecclesiastically. When a great deal of the world atlas was coloured pink to indicate the extent and power of the British Empire, any trouble in the Balkans and a British gun-boat could work wonders. This often to the benefit of the Orthodox. Ecclesiastically it was the golden age of the leisured Anglo-Catholic layman, personified in such figures as

Athelstan Riley, Lord Halifax, Sam Gurney and Sir Hubert Miller, Bart., the feudal squire of Froyle, whose gamekeepers, valets, butlers and parlour maids were chosen on their ability to serve solemn High Mass in the village church of The Assumption at Froyle and to sing a passable Schubert in G at 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning; and Diarmid, Duke of Argyll, a bachelor who sang Evensong to himself and God in a falsetto voice in his chapel at Inverary Castle, and who became one of the Founder Guardians, along with Fynes-Clinton, of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

The clergy, for their part, were also largely leisured, they had, by present standards, very little to do; curates were two a penny. One of the earliest members of the committee and a Vice-President, Fr Suckling, Vicar of St Alban's, Holborn, writing the first decade of the twentieth century in his parish magazine stated: "Fr Hogg and Fr Stanton ... '(the senior curates-among the junior curates was Constantine Charles Henry Phipps, Earl of Mulgrave, later to succeed as 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Normanby, it was that sort of milieu!)' were last heard of in Venice, whether they will be back for Pentecost or not we cannot say ...". The clergy at St Alban's only lived in the clergy house in Brooke Street, Holborn, when they were 'in residence', they had West End houses or apartments. Stanton died in the same room in his family's Gloucestershire Manor House in which he had been born.

The leisured layman and the leisured dilettante priest had heaps of time to devote to Church societies and often founded societies to cover what was already covered – hence the societies working for reunion with the Eastern Churches. Societies were often duplicated. The sad fact was that leisured, dilettante laity and clergy, waited on hand and foot in their manors and vicarages, loved a good row. Vestiges of this linger on even today, generally in the closes of our cathedrals. The 'Lincolnshire Handicap' where the Dean and Canons scrap is an unhealthy sign of too many clergy, fixing their own stipends, with too much time on their hands in a tiny town.

Another reason for the Association's success after the Russian Revolution and later the fall of European monarchies was an English phenomenon, snobbery. Exiled Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses abounded. For the socially upwardly mobile laity like Athelstan Riley and name-droppers like Canon Douglas ("As I was saying only yesterday to Queen Marie of Rumania", that sort of thing) friendship with Imperial and Royal personages only began for them when the Tzarist glory days were over. Tsarskoe-Selo, the Winter Palace, Kotrocheny Palace, Tatoi, Mon Repos, Sofia and Belgrade had never known them, unless amid an enormous assembly in the state apartments. The Association members welcomed them to Wilderness House and Nashdom. But Association life was by no means entirely social climbing; amid the Romanoffs, the Galitzines, the Karageorgevitches and the Glucksburgs-Sondeberg-Glucksburgs, it had a social conscience about human rights, refuges and genocide as it entered the most genocidal century of the human race. The Association took a stand over the Armenian massacres. Douglas had rescued, when he was Chaplain in

Constantinople, the then carpet merchant Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, during an attack on Armenian homes, and was thus instrumental in creating 'Mr 5%', when Gulbenkian went into oil in Persia. As a token of the Armenians' gratitude, Douglas was invited in the 12920's to consecrate one of the pillars supporting the baldachino over the altar in the exquisite church of St Sarkis in Inverna Gardens, Kensington, which Calouste had built in memory of his parents. The church is a copy of a church on Lake Van. People in high places were lobbied by members of the Association over the massacres, which the Turkish government still denies ever took place. The Association knew differently.

When our smallest ally of World War I, the Assyrian Christians' force, was let down very badly by the British Government in 1918, which left them to the mercies of the Turks and Kurds, it was people like the Reverend Claude Beaufort Moss and his mother, who established a fund for aiding the Assyrians, which raised a considerable amount of money, and enabled the Patriarchal Family to be housed in exile in West Ealing.

Fr Fynes-Clinton's adoption of the cause of the theological students of the Serbian Orthodox Church met with great success and many were educated in Oxford with money raised by Fynes-Clinton and his rich and influential friends. His cousin, the Duke of Newcastle, a devout Anglo-Catholic, was patron of the church of St Philip, Buckingham Palace Road, and Fynes-Clinton helped to secure it for Russian Orthodox worship until its demolition in 1958. Fynes-Clinton, a Founder Guardian of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, encouraged Orthodox prelates to make the pilgrimage to the shrine, and among the earliest visitors were Bishop Velimirovitch and Bishop Irenej of Dalmatia of the Serbian Church and Father Najdanovitch, another Serb, who established an Orthodox Chaplaincy for displaced persons based at the Anglican Shrine. Archimandrite Nicholas Gibbes, former English tutor to the Tzarevitch Alexis Nikolaivitch and the Grand Princesses, backed up Fynes-Clinton and brought Archbishop Nestor of Shanghai to Walsingham. Eventually an Orthodox Chapel was consecrated by Archbishop Savva of Grodno, Chaplain-General to the Polish Orthodox servicemen in exile. This Chapel was designed by Archimandrite Nicholas Gibbes.