



Photo of members of the Anglican Orthodox Commission with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Rowan Williams, 24 June 2004 (© ACNS/Rosenthal)

KOINONIA

THE JOURNAL OF
THE ANGLICAN AND EASTERN
CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

New Series No. 49 Summer 2004

ISSN No.
0012-8732

**The Anglican and Eastern
Churches Association**
Founded 1864

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CONTENTS

A Week in the Life of the Pilgrimage Secretary	2
The AECA Pilgrimage to Athens, Delphi and Patmos	6
An American on Pilgrimage	9
Theological challenges facing the Church of Greece	11
Anglican-Orthodox Commission	21
The Desert Dry and Damp: Eastern Monasticism and the Celtic Fringe	23

Editorial

This edition of Koinonia centres on pilgrimage. Fr David Bond gives an illuminating insight into his work as pilgrimage secretary. Not all of it will be as exciting as his article might lead us to believe. Alice Carter and John Thorne, both members of the pilgrimage to mainland Greece and Patmos have provided an account of their experiences.

In light of last year's pilgrimage, we are delighted to have secured an article by Dr Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, who is Editor-in-Chief of the Greek theological journal, *Synaxe*. His article looks at some of the challenges facing the Church in Greece.

This issue is completed with publication of Bishop Michael Jackson's splendid 2003 Constantinople Lecture.

I trust that you will find it a stimulating edition.

Kevin Ellis
Editor

STOP PRESS

As the edition is going to press, we have learnt that Father William Gulliford is to stand down as General Secretary of the AECA. There will be opportunity in the next issue of Koinonia to pay tribute to him. The Revd Dr Peter Doll will

take over from Fr William in due course. In the next issue, we hope to carry an interview with Fr Peter.

A week in the life of the Pilgrimage Secretary

being an account of a reconnaissance visit by Fr. David Bond accompanied by Fr. William Taylor the Association Chairman as guide and mentor.

Wednesday 26th September 2003

Ten days before the Association's Pilgrimage to Greece and Patmos and with sundry arrangements for the pilgrimage remaining outstanding we flew to Amman in Jordan arriving at midnight.

Thursday

After sleeping overnight in Amman we hired a taxi to take us to Damascus where we were to begin our reconnaissance in preparation for a pilgrimage to Syria and the Syrian Orthodox Church in September 2004. After initial negotiations in which we rejected the offer of an ancient American "gas guzzler" whose doors would not shut properly, whose driver was almost asleep before we even started and which looked more fitted for a stock-car rally than a means of carrying one middle aged and one elderly clergyman on a 200 kilometre journey across the Jordan-Syria border to Damascus, we hired a taxi whose driver was excellent and who helped us considerably later in our visit.

Cross border taxis are only permitted to take their passengers to a central tax-park in Damascus; any further travelling within the city has to be by local taxi. This is an activity not recommended for the faint hearted. Taxis drive fast and dangerously with fingers constantly on the horn. The amazing thing is that they don't hit each other and they usually get you there. We booked in at St. Paul's Convent.

By taxi to Jasmin Tours, a Syrian Travel Agent known to us and whose advice regarding our itinerary we were seeking. There were difficulties in finding Jasmin Tours which were not helped by the fact that we did not have an address (only a telephone number), the streets are rarely named and we had managed to hire a taxi whose driver could not read.

Friday

By taxi to the Monastery of St. Ephrem at Sadayana about 20 kms outside Damascus to meet H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, The Patriarch of Antioch and All the East whose blessing on our pilgrimage we wished to obtain. Met on arrival by his staff Bishop and the young and newly consecrated Archbishop of Australia (who was having some difficulty in accepting his recently acquired exalted status) and ushered into the presence of His Holiness. We had a very worthwhile discussion and received his blessing on our forthcoming pilgrimage. We were invited to be his guests at lunch. A short drive with him to a magnificent restaurant. This was the first of several occasions when we were lavishly entertained and found it difficult not to eat far too much. Presented on departure with two books and a fine medallion.

Walked Damascus old city in the evening. Then taxi to bus station. We had tickets for the 23.00 overnight bus to Hassake, about 700 Kms via Palmyra and Deir ez Zor. General chaos at the bus station; dozens of buses but no certainty, which was ours, and no "official" to ask. Our bus turned up eventually and we left at 23.50 with about 8 passengers aboard including ourselves.

Saturday

Arrived Hassake 07.00; taxi to the church where no one was expecting us despite contact by phone with the Bishop the day before! General uncertainty – offered seats in reception room and told breakfast would be prepared shortly. After a brief interval ushered into a bedroom to rest; no breakfast but informed that taxi would come for us in 15 minutes. Half an hour passed, then escorted downstairs where taxi awaits for ten km drive to the new Monastery of St. Mary where Bishop Matta (His Eminence Mor Eustathius Matta Roham, Archbishop of Jazirah and the Euphrates) and an elderly retired bishop were standing at the entrance to greet us. Breakfast waiting; the two bishops and the two of us waited on by two young men; vast quantities of food and constant offering of dishes. There is a serious danger that if we eat as pressed we will become incapable of movement. Shown into our rooms; excellent accommodation.

Returned to Hassake with bishops. Bp. Matta to his office; we to visit a local school of 750 children age 5/6 to 13/14. Teachers were young women

several of whom were deacons. Retired Bishop led us into nearly every classroom; children bright and very responsive. We were clapped and sung to – often in English – classroom by classroom. We were weakening but retired Bishop (79 and small) showed no signs of flagging. Then on to another, smaller nursery school – only visited two or three classes this time. The off with Bishop to St. Mary's church, St. George's church and back to join Bp. Matta in his office where various supplicants were making their various cases and receiving the episcopal answer. Back to Monastery for lunch – varied and substantial as always. Brief rest, vespers at 5pm and then a long talk to Bp. Matta about forthcoming pilgrimage. He is very enthusiastic. Will accommodate group in the monastery. Suggested pilgrims should stay three nights which would give us two full days. Day one would include a half-day visit to Qamishli (we discovered during our visit to Syria that everyone seems to have come from Qamishli at some stage in their history) and day two to the border of Syria, Iraq and Turkey where the Tigris River flows. This north east area of Hassake – Qamishli – Malkiye is where the Syrian Orthodox church is very strong. We enquired about the possibility of crossing the Turkish border to visit Tur Abdin but the only border crossing point would sadly involve too much travelling to make it possible in the available time. Dinner in his quarters with Bp. Matta and his friend Simon (big in gas stations in the States) who had just arrived. Bp. Matta offered us a lift to Aleppo (325 kms) in his car with Simon next morning; the car would return to Hassake with the bishop's mother.

Sunday

After an early morning walk down to the river behind the monastery followed by breakfast with Bishop Matta we left by car at 08.30. We wound down the screens covering the rear seat windows, as we did not wish to claim episcopal seclusion. The journey is best forgotten. The driver drove at excessive speeds (200 kph through a flock of sheep I am reliably informed by Fr. William – I was dozing at the time) overtook recklessly, used his mobile phone while driving at speed. We arrived in Aleppo at the church complex safe but fragile.

Met and greeted by Bishop Yuhanna Ibrahim who had just finished celebrating Mass and followed him to an upper room where a large gathering of members of the congregation were chatting and drinking tea and coffee. Various Syrian Orthodox clergy from America present including Fr. John whose second son was to be baptised by the bishop at 8pm that evening. We were invited to the baptism and the celebration to follow. We walked to "the best Armenian restaurant in Aleppo" (per the bishop) where he joined us with Simon who seems to be everybody's friend.

Discussed pilgrimage over lunch. Bishop keen and suggested an ecumenical buffet in the evening we were there. Invited us to walk back to his office with him. On the way he paid a visit to a small town hospital – in and out within 5 minutes – very impressive. Back in his office he invited us to attend a rally at 5.30 at which he was to speak. In the evening we attended the baptism (en-stoled together with about 6 Syrian Orthodox priests) by the Bishop. Very spectacular, impressive, joyous occasion. With the prospect of another 350 kms bus journey to Damascus at 08.00 the following day we were minded to forgo the celebration. We explained to the Bishop that we needed to check out our hotel accommodation for the pilgrimage – which we did. Returned by 10pm to find Bishop still in his office relaxing with a small group of his clergy and their wives. We were clearly expected to accompany him to the celebration. He decided to drive and explained on the way that attending such events involving his clergy "went with the job" but he would only stay an hour or so as he was leaving for Damascus by car at 04.30 next day!

The baptism celebration was held in a huge restaurant with a large swimming pool in the middle. It appeared to be a joint celebration for several families who had had children baptised and for a couple who had just become engaged. Loud band, small middle aged crooner with moustache who looked rather like a bank manager who sang enthusiastically – but with only polite applause from the diners – particularly when it came to the engaged couple who processed in arm in arm, cut a cake with an enormous curved sword, lit a rocket-like candle, all to the crooner's rendition at full volume of "happy engagement to you" to the tune usually appropriate to birthdays. An experience not to have been missed. Driven back to church complex by Bishop and so to bed.

Monday

Coach to Damascus arrived just after mid-day. No room in St. Paul's Convent so booked in at St. Elias Monastery (Greek Orthodox) which is literally next door. Further visit in the afternoon to Jasmin Tours to discuss pilgrimage.

Tuesday

Brief visit to house of Ananias (now a Franciscan church) just off a street called Straight. Final call on Jasmin Tours and taxi to taxi park where, by arrangement, we met our driver from day two who would drive us back to Amman. We turned off the motorway to visit St. George's church, Ezraa a 5th Century church still in use today. Across the border and back to Amman for the night.

Wednesday

Flew back to Heathrow. Home to tie up the remaining details for the Greece/Patmos pilgrimage next Monday! Nearly 6 full days in Syria, over 1200 kms covered, met and entertained by one Patriarch and two bishops whose co-operation and encouragement willingly given was essential to the success of our visit and to the pilgrimage planned for 2004.

David Bond

The AECA Pilgrimage to Athens, Delphi and Patmos 6th – 16th October 2003

Forty-four Pilgrims caught the late afternoon Olympic Airways flight to Athens. After a comfortable night's sleep in our luxury hotel, we visited the new Hellenic Centre for Biomedical Ethics, run by Father Nikolas, a priest scientist, who gave us a talk, in perfect English, followed by a lively discussion on the fast changing subject of genetic engineering.

Very wisely, the Orthodox Church is being very circumspect before making any pronouncements in this area of morality. After a short break in our hotel we set out to visit the very modern Convent of the Mother of God, recently founded in a down town area of Athens.

Father Gabriel spoke very movingly of his own history and how he came to fund this inner city mission station, surrounded by high rise flats. After Vespers we were lavishly entertained, with cakes, pastries and soft drink, to the sounds of a violin and songs from the Isles, by two priests.

The next morning, we set out at 9.00 am for the Church of Marina, a lady martyr from the time of the Diocletian persecution. This church, set in a fashionable area of Athens, was built in ornate Byzantine style in 1890. The priest who showed us around was the personal assistant to the Archbishop. In excellent English he explained the outreach work in this busy parish, where about eighteen baptisms and weddings are carried out each Saturday, some of them at 11.00 pm. We were again given generous refreshments by ladies from the parish. A delay in the arrival of the coach gave us a chance to visit the University nearby the Chapel of the Mother of God, known amusingly as the tobacco church, because of the tobacco factories which used to exist nearby. The priest is a University Professor and the Chapel Choir is reputed

to be the best in Athens. Less energetic pilgrims, such as myself, had a three hour rest before departing for the Pendeli Monastery, where we were shown the Secret School, where during the long Turkish rule about one hundred and twenty children were educated, fed and housed. Although now closed, visual aids still covered the walls. The Abbot, Bishop John of Thermopoli who had just returned from serving on a high powered EEC meeting in Brussels, greeted us in excellent English. He explained that there were one hundred and seventy monks on the books but all but seventeen served in parishes. The monastic buildings were in typical Orthodox style, with monastic cells round a courtyard and a free standing church, founded in 1587 but only completed in 1955. Attractive Byzantine frescoes were painted in 1971. We were shown a beautiful gospel with an icon of the resurrection on the cover and also a large icon of the falling asleep of the Virgin Mary, lying dead in her coffin before being taken up to heaven.

We departed on Thursday for our new hotel in Delphi, calling at Oropos Convent, an offshoot of the Urban Mission Convent in Athens. This has accommodation for about forty young people, who came regularly from inner city Athens. It is gradually being embellished with oaks, pistachio nut trees and cyclamens. We were again lavishly entertained to lunch. In the afternoon we set out for Osios Lukas Monastery, founded in 1014, before the great schism. It is situated on a hillside with wonderful views of the Parnassus Mountains and is a great pilgrimage centre. It has four churches but only seven monks. We stayed for Monastic Vespers before continuing to Delphi. Early next morning we set out for the Monastery of the Exultation of the Holy Cross. It is a modern convent but has a congregation of thirty nuns, most of whom came from the English speaking world. Bishop Kallistos celebrated the liturgy bilingually and the nuns sang beautifully. We all received the blessed bread at the end. We then had a good meal of squid and macaroni with the nuns and Bishop Kallistos sat in the place of honour, vested in a special robe. Grace was sung and the meal taken in silence with a spiritual reading in English. After speeches were made, we looked round the church grounds and library. A very interesting question and answer session took place over coffee and Turkish delight. Sisters of all ages from 18 to 80 years were allowed to join. No ageism here! The nuns rise at 3.30 am for the first monastic service at 4.00 am. Besides the thirty nuns in residence, they have over thirty novices, most of whom are studying in higher education. We all found a joyful spiritual atmosphere and one female pilgrim said she would like to stay. As in many other places we were given icons and in this instance an Orthodox Monastic calendar for 2003 which makes extremely interesting reading. On our return journey we stopped at a war

memorial in the mountains, commemorating the place where one hundred and thirty five Greek men aged from 18 to 72 years were shot by the Germans in the Second World War.

On Saturday, after visiting the very important classical ruins of Delphi, we drove to Piraeus for the ten-hour voyage to Patmos. Our Pilgrimage now took on a more devotional and meditative theme. On Sunday Bishop Kallistos celebrated Matins, followed by the Liturgy in the cave of the Apocalypse, where St John fell asleep and was taken to heaven. After coffee and refreshments with the monks, an equally moving open air Anglican Eucharist taken by Bishop Anthony, just above the cave. After a well-earned siesta, we walked a short distance to a seaside chapel that marks the spot where St John is said to have baptised the people of Patmos. At 6.00 pm Bishop Kallistos gave a very interesting and informative talk on the long history of Patmos, where St John is said to have written his Gospel, Epistles and the Apocalypse. The Apocryphal Acts of John from the second and third century describes St John's activities on Patmos. Bishop Kallistos, who is a monk of the monastery, also described the very long and unbroken history of monasticism on Patmos, dating from the time that the Eastern Emperor Caminius gave the island in 1088 to found a monastery there. On Monday pilgrims went by bus, taxi or on foot to the great monastery which looks like a castle perched on the top of the island. The interior was in the Orthodox Monastic style. The seventeen monks rise at 2.30 am for midnight office and Matins, Vespers and Compline are sung daily and the liturgy celebrated three times a week. Abbot Antipas, a native of Patmos, received us in his hall and spoke incisively about the pressures human beings are under in the modern world. We returned to our hotel after the usual exchange of presents had taken place.

At 6.00 pm Bishop Anthony Priddis, our Anglican Leader, gave us the first of two excellent biblical exegesis on the Book of Revelation. On other days we visited a number of hermitages, where monks and nuns live, including the Hermitage of Alikies, where Bishop Kallistos usually lived when on retreat.

On Tuesday Bishop Kallistos gave a moving account of the life of a modern 20th century Saint, Father Amphilokios, a joyful man with "kind eyes". Perhaps the most moving incident in his saintly life was that as much sought after confessor; he used to do himself the penances he gave out to penitents. Space does not permit me to describe in detail our many profoundly spiritual activities on Patmos.

I can say with honesty that this pilgrimage has been one of the highlights of my spiritual life. We are all hugely grateful to Fr David Bond, our hard working organiser, to Bishop Kallistos and Bishop Anthony our very able spiritual directors, for making this wonderful spiritual experience happen. Space also prevents me from describing in full, the beauty of the Greek countryside, the happy communal meals and worship activities, which also took place on many occasions.

John Thorne

Since leading our pilgrimage, Bishop Anthony has of course been translated to and enthroned as Bishop of Hereford. We remember him in our prayers.

An American on Pilgrimage (Greece and Patmos)

As an American Orthodox travelling with English pilgrims for the first time, going to Greece for the first time and meeting Bishop Kallistos for the first time, was a triple in baseball parlance. As many of my fellow pilgrims know these are parlous times in the USA, both in its Christian neighbourhoods and the secular halls of government. So when I met up with the pilgrims gathered at Heathrow on October 6th, I was ready for a real holiday from the American mentality, as well as an opportunity to be with fellow Christians both Orthodox and Anglican, as we explored the Orthodox world in Greece. Just to be with an ecumenical group, the Anglican and Eastern Christian Association was also an exceptional experience. There is nothing like it in the USA and alas, now most likely never will be. Bishop Kallistos and Father David Bond proved to be wonderfully wise guides to the Orthodox world in Greece. Before leaving the USA I had inquired about whether we might be visiting the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and was delighted to find out that we would be going there. One convert, who was chrismated in my home parish of Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, was there and we all met her, Sister Aemiliane, the able translator and guide. But I am getting a bit ahead here. I had, until our lifestyles diverged at those hotels which gave us but one key, a faithful Anglican room mate in Daphne Maskell who gave me an on-the-ground description of the difficulties faced by one who remains in a parish not especially favourable to those who are orthodox in theology, devoted in serving and gracious (and humorous) in adversity. In Daphne I met an Anglican faith which before I had only read about in C. S. Lewis. Daphne is the assistant warden of her parish, where one of her tasks is preparing the church for a funeral; she needs no book of rubrics for her work. She knows how it should be done and does it. Like many of the other pilgrims, who have travelled together over the past years, Daphne had many friends in the group.

Those of us who were first time pilgrims gathered together as a small sub-group and tended to socialise with each other rather more than with the larger group, who were by no means exclusive or uninterested in us. For someone like me whose real life for the past solitary five years has been reading books and then writing about what was read, this social life had the appeal of a brand new red Maserati in which I could drive to the ball. I enjoyed the activities, which we participated in together but even more, gathering for the evening ouzo or Metaxa and conversation about the day's doings, as well as every other topic under the sun. Others who might not have had the socially anorexic life of a graduate student seemed to enjoy it just as much. In fact it was particularly during these evenings that I realised these English pilgrims simply were not experiencing the current cultural dilemma of the USA, and thus were measurably more light-hearted, but not dismissive, vis-à-vis Iraq. For as long as I was on pilgrimage with them all I could share to some degree in a different way of looking -- or not looking -- at the war. So if united in camaraderie, were there some things besides "eastern" and "western" which differentiated us? There were indeed. Not least what is meant by "Orthodox." For some it seemed to suggest a more rigorous and rule bound ethos than that of Rome. During our visit to the Mother of God of Vourla Monastery in Athens Father Gabriel narrated a story about the Armenian community of which he and his parents were members, a story which illustrated the best of the personal and non-judgemental approach of the Orthodox. It was here during and after Vespers that I first experienced the witness of the lively Orthodox faith in Athens, which has been my path for the past fifteen years in Boston. While we were visiting Orthodox monasteries and churches we were not deprived of the experience of Anglican faith. In the mornings as we departed by bus for the day Bishop Anthony Priddis of Warwick led us in prayer. Along with many others my age, his presentation of the Coventry crosses to the abbots, priests and gerondas (abbesses) we visited brought back memories of the blitz in World War Two, when Coventry Cathedral was almost totally destroyed. As a former Episcopalian, baptized in the faith by my New England grandfather, I found the services of Compline, and the services of Holy Communion reminders of the bonds of faith, which unite us. I wondered how Anglican pilgrims felt about the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross near Thebes where Bishop Kallistos celebrated a hierarchical liturgy with the sisters and with us. I was especially curious about their experience of eating lunch in total silence while one of the sisters read the life of Elder Amphilochios, since the pilgrimage seemed to run on the energy of solid chatting. The hospitality of the sisters, their community and the vibrant energy of their faith nearly pulled me off the bus for good (remember the academic hermit here)

A return visit to the Monastery is in my plan for next year. There was a sad side in the pilgrimage, the outcome of Greek history, in seeing the impact of the nationalisation of the Church. This development was really the desire of the Bavarian powers at the time of the emergence of the Greek State, but the Greek Orthodox hierarchy has never rejected it. It is a devastating attack on the faith and life of the Orthodox Christians in Greece, and I hope and pray that it will end. Much of what I treasure about this pilgrimage came, not surprisingly, through the companionship we shared, particularly on Patmos where we began to settle down more. Vincent Elliot, an Anglican pilgrim, was an excellent companion during a long walk in Athens, and at lunch at the Benaki Museum as well as many of our evening gatherings. David Forrester and Alisdair Cross, both Orthodox, and I were privileged to have a long morning conversation with Bishop Kallistos on Patmos. The luncheon group after the first liturgy in the Cave of the Apocalypse with Fr. Kevin and Jennifer Ellis, David, and Alisdair was particularly serendipitous. Bishop Anthony and his wife Kathy Priddis (also first time pilgrims with AECA) Fr. David Bond and his wife Joan Palmer joined us for several times for dinner. At other times I was happy to join the English Serbian Orthodox pilgrims, and was most particularly delighted to meet Eva Kyprianou and Nina Sansome both of whom epitomise for me the Orthodox spirit. The last day in Patmos they were part of the walking tour to Lampi beach with Bishop Kallistos. If I had known what a happy reward awaited the completion of my thesis I would have grumbled far less during those years in which libraries were the institutions that I most often attended

Alice Carter

Theological challenges facing the Church of Greece

Anyone embarking on an investigation into the ecclesiastical world of present-day Greece faces no danger of getting bored. The theological environment offers an abundant variety and diversity of views. Trends, for example, that serve theological study in a meaningful way contend with those that flirt with a mysticism suspicious of knowledge; one can meet trends of dehydrated academism, as well as those that appreciate theology as a vivid dialogue with real life, and so on and so forth. Thus, the reader of this paper is kindly asked to keep in mind that the observations set out in the following pages must be understood within the framework of this multiplicity.

a. Challenge One: Ecclesiology revisited

One could quote numerous excellent studies of Greek theologians on Ecclesiology, following the biblical and patristic tradition¹. The meaning of the Church as the Body of Christ conditioned by the Holy Spirit and functioning in history as a sign of the Kingdom is well attested. A certain parameter of Ecclesiology is, of course, the acknowledgment that all believers (that is, clergy and laity alike) are members of the same Body. Nevertheless, a careful study of various texts produced by churchmen on several occasions (e.g. encyclicals, press releases, articles, etc.) will reveal some ambivalence as far as the notion of the term "Church" is concerned. How, for example, can the phrase "The faithful support their Church" be interpreted? This expression has frequently been used to comment on the fact that, in cases of conflict between the government and the Holy Synod, the latter is very much backed by a significant proportion of the Greek people. Nevertheless, it reveals a belief that dissents from the theoretical clarity of Ecclesiology: that the "Church" on the one hand and the "people" on the other constitute two distinctive subjects, in so far as the one can enjoy or be deprived of the support of the other!

Many bishops are sincerely willing to organize an active local church and welcome the participation of laity in many sectors of ecclesiastical work (e.g. in Sunday schools, charitable activities, parish committees). However, in many cases, this dynamic is based on a theology of "attribution of roles", which can well be questioned from an Orthodox point of view. By this term I mean the belief that the bishop is he who concentrates in himself all the charismas (gifts of the Spirit) and diaconias (responsibilities for the church work) and, insofar as he cannot afford the time needed to perform all his own duties, he entrusts some to other persons, of a somewhat inferior status (e.g. to priests, to lay catechists, etc.). Very often this attitude is understood as a benevolent initiative, since it appears as an act of sharing. Nevertheless, behind this attitude lie two major misconceptions linked with the very understanding of the Church event. First of all, it assumes that the Church has two kinds of members: those endowed with gifts and responsibilities *ex officio* and those

¹ On a desirable balance between Patristics and biblical theology in modern Greece, see Petros Vassiliadis, "Greek Theology in the Making", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 45.1 (1991), p. 33-46. Note, please, that in the present essay I try to refer the reader only to some indicative works written by Greek theologians in English or accompanied by an English summary. Also I would like to thank Rebecca Hookway for her proof-reading.

lacking them; if the latter acquire some, it is by dispensation by the former. Second, taken seriously, such an attitude will lead to a consequence of nightmare proportions: if all the gifts and responsibilities are assumed by one member alone (the bishop or, within the parish, the priest), then the entire Church will consist of one member only! All the others will seem unnecessary for the construction of the Church. In this case, however, the fundamental theology expressed by St Paul in 1 Corinthians that the Church resembles a body with various members and that each one member bears its own, unique characteristic and responsibility is simply distorted.

What needs to be understood as a matter of urgency, is that, according to the very synodal ethos of the Orthodox tradition, the person who presides over the eucharistic gathering (that is, the bishop) is the member who has the precious gift and responsibility to reveal the uniqueness of Christ and to take care of the other members and their gifts, in order that none of them becomes cut off from the Body and lost². Even the fundamental Orthodox liturgical principle that a bishop or a priest alone (that is, without the participation of at least one lay person) is not allowed to celebrate the Eucharist, should be a reminder of the simple truth that every member of the Church is a contributor to the Church event, that none (cleric or lay) is self-sufficient and none can usurp the gift of the others.

The Church has also to think about the way celibacy functions in her administrative network³ and how it affects the understanding of the Church. According to the Ecclesiastical Charter of the Church of Greece (which is a state law), only celibate priests can have access to the rank of bishop. Sometimes this reinforces the conviction that marriage is a compromise and that celibates are the nucleus that compose the real Church. I do not have the slightest doubt that this may appear naive and deprived of sound theological criteria, but everyday life can contradict theory. Try, for example, to judge the widespread custom according to which, in the celebration of the liturgy and in other gatherings, a recently ordained archimandrite (that is, a celibate priest who has been granted by the bishop honorary office) takes precedence over

² See, for example, bishop John Zizioulas, "Communion and Otherness", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38.4 (1994), pp. 347-361. – See also Fr Nicolaos Loudovikos, *An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2002 (in Greek; see the main topics in English pp. 357-384).

³ Here we do not refer to monastics and the valuable role of monasticism in general.

an earlier ordained married priest, though both share the same rank of priesthood! It is noteworthy that the very title "archimandrite" has been pointed out by many theologians as indicative of the fact that the right place for a celibate cleric is in his monastery, not in the parishes and headquarters of the dioceses. As a matter of fact, the Greek term "archimandrite" means the leader ("archon") of the enclave ("mandra" that is, the monastery). But nowadays the *raison d'être* of "archimandrites" is the capacity to cease being archimandrites – that is, the capacity to be candidates for bishops! By no means should one deny that many archimandrites are brilliant persons who experience their life in Church as a continuous self-offering. Yet, the problem does not have to do merely with the quality of individuals, but – more than that – with the implications of institutions upon ecclesiastical life and consciousness.

These misconceptions result in a further theologically abnormal and canonically unacceptable institution: titular bishops – that is, bishops who have not been appointed a bishopric⁴. Even the fact that they are usually placed as assistants of an ordinary bishop, unveils an odd conception, according to which the episcopal rank is highly esteemed as the leadership of the Body of the Church, but the Body of the Church is not recognized as the *sine qua non* of this rank. This is why, after all, many churchmen take it for granted that the "Apostolic Succession" is merely the uninterrupted episcopal chain of ordinations (that is, the ordination of a bishop by bishops who had been ordained by canonical bishops and so on⁵), ignoring the fact that the continuation of the believing community and the acceptance of the doctrine are also constituent parts of the Apostolic Succession. The bishop, the altar and the congregation belong all together to the building material of the Church⁶ – not simply to its decorative elements.

b. Challenge Two: Consider the "Return of God"

The age-long tradition of the Orthodox Churches to embrace local cultures is especially vivid among Greek people. Through the ages, the Christian faith

⁴ For example, the 6th canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (451 AD) explicitly states that ordinations attributing priesthood without connecting the ordained with a certain community (parish or diocese) are invalid.

⁵ Needless to say, only bishops are the electors!

⁶ See Panayotis Nellas, "Episcopal Collegiality: A new problem?", *Diaconia* 3 (1966), pp. 154-165, and "Sacerdoce Royal. Essai sur le problème du laïc", *Kleronomia* 8A (1976), pp. 149-162.

has been dramatically interwoven with the mentality and the customs, the adventures and the hopes of the Greeks. Since its establishment in the early 19th century, the Greek state has been enjoying a religious and denominational homogeneity, almost 98% of its population being Orthodox. A relaxation of ecclesiastical self-consciousness among the people in the late 1970s and 1980s (that is, after the military dictatorship of 1967-1974, which had the support of certain churchmen at the expense of the Church's reputation) has already given way to an impressive strengthening of pro-church feelings, possibly related to the global phenomenon that has been called the "Return of God" in public life, following the postmodern decline of the Enlightenment imperatives. In any event, it is not so much professed atheism that may be a problem; on the contrary, it is rather several types of religiosity under the same umbrella of "Orthodoxy" that should be theologically questioned.

It is my intention neither to speculate on the motives of certain persons' membership in the Church, nor to feel dubious of the fact that humans can meet God through peculiar paths. Yet, one is justified to note that, in modern-Greek reality, outside of (or intermingled with) a conscious acceptance of the Christian metaphysical truth, there is another factor contributing to the invigoration of religiosity: the understanding of Orthodoxy as a major keystone of Greek identity. In such cases, Church-membership seems to be justified predominantly for the sake of the preservation of ethnic self. In certain circles the attitude towards Globalization is conceived mainly as struggle for the preservation of a certain cultural identity as if the Church does not have a mission towards all cultures and all the unexpected futures. Sometimes it is really difficult for theologians who oppose such a cultural understanding of the Church (let alone sheer nationalism) to explain that they do not envisage a Church stripped of her historicity and her cultural flesh (such an un-historical Church cannot exist), but rather a Church that can be neither monopolized by certain cultural forms nor imprisoned in any "sacred" past.

At the same time, another characteristic of the "Return of God" phenomenon should attract our attention: the re-emergence of magic. Participation in sacraments and other ecclesiastical celebrations is often understood as a means of acquiring what the world acknowledges as values. Health and social success are elevated to goals metaphysically sanctified, which actually marginalize the yearning for the Kingdom. A feeling that the performance of certain pious activities and the use of certain religious objects ensure divine help in an automatic and inevitable way tends to replace the understanding of Church life as an exercise in existing in communion, as repentance, as the risk of responding to Christ's invitation. Ultimately, it is a distortion of Orthodox tradition, according to which God's grace can embrace everything (soul, body,

bread, wine, water, oil, etc.), but it neither acts irresistibly nor can it be secured automatically.

As Greece entered the modern age with considerable delay in comparison with other western European countries, it was not easy for the Church leadership to keep up with the changes and respond fully to them. For some, no problem really exists, since the traditional religiosity of agrarian societies remains the proper paradigm of ecclesiastical presence. For others, however, a painful question has already broken through: do our churchmen live really in the world, or perhaps in *their own world*, ignoring the needs of real life and speaking a religious jargon irrelevant to everyday people's language? The issue of a liturgical reform lies within the framework of these queries. Though it should be discussed as a return from ill praxis to Orthodox criteria, it has met the fundamentalist opposition of those who strongly believe that the present liturgical status, in every detail, is sacred and untouchable. The question of the translation of the liturgy into modern-Greek has been opposed from two perspectives. First, from a serious one which foresees a danger of semantic impoverishment, arguing that Orthodox hymnography has not a sentimental, but rather a profound dogmatic content worked out through the centuries. Second, from an ethnic-minded thesis that welcomes the maintenance of the linguistic shape of the liturgy for the sake of national identity and continuity.

c. Challenge Three: Between the devil of "Life" and the deep blue sea of "Ethics".

It has been approximately four decades since the new reality of Biogenetics and consequently Bioethics entered human arena. Both terms derive from Greek works. The latter, in particular, reveals what the perspectives of this new reality are. "Bio" is the English rendering of "vios", that is "life". "Ethics" renders "ethike" that is, "morality". This wordy pair forms the semeiotics of the predicament of the Church as she faces the danger of replacing her mission of bringing new meaning to human life with a moralistic and legalistic manipulation of it.

Some churchmen try to resist a "vulgar biologism", that is, the claim that every single human function coincides with a chemical procedure. Thus, in order to defend the spiritual dimension of man, these churchmen often lapse into a dualistic anthropology - that is, the notion that humans consist of two ontologically different elements, the soul and the body. The body is understood as the earthly shell of a celestial nucleus. Within this frame of mind, one may approach the body either warmly and consider it as the partner or tool of the soul or one may approach it more reservedly and actually reject it as the jail of

the soul. In either case it is implied that the real "self" is the soul, probably made up of an extraordinary, non-material stuff (e.g. a fragment of the divine substance)⁷

What seems to happen here is a new invasion of Platonism into Christian thought, invasion that obstructs the encounter of the Church with the modern world and its questions. Ontological dualism violates the biblical and patristic anthropology - that is, the belief that everything belongs to the great family of the "created", in contrast to God who alone is "uncreated". Even the so called spiritual entities (souls, angels, etc.) belong to the category of the created and share in the created substance. In other words, the great advantage of biblical and patristic anthropology is that it has no problem in acknowledging that what we call "soul" and what we call "body" are ontologically relatives. Platonically conditioned theology inevitably finds itself challenged when facing scientific conclusions on the impossibility of a clear distinction between the psychical and physical functions. Christian anthropology, on the other hand, offers great scope for a serious dialogue with modern anthropological data. It does not focus on a part of human existence, but on the whole of existence as it is invited by God to an eschatological transformation. It understands the human being as a personhood in the making - that is, as an existence which is going to reach its fulfillment not thanks to a special ingredient of its own making, but thanks to its relation with an ontologically different entity (the uncreated God). This approach can set theology free from the fruitless conflicts over the component parts of the human being and the meaningless fight against evolution theories etc.

On the other hand, the Church has to be especially skeptical about the weakness of many people for an obscure morality, which gives precedence to a vague sense of "good". For example, some tend to welcome with uncritical enthusiasm every application of medical technology and scientific means that can satisfy one's desires and demands, such as pre-birth intervention in genetic material so that the future parent can determine the characteristics of the fetus as he / she likes. Attitudes like that seem morally justified on the ground of "good": the intervention is done not to harm anyone, but to benefit the parents. But, in reality, whenever individual happiness is elevated to a position of supreme value, freedom is dramatically diminished; the child is not conceived as a unique person, but as something along the lines of a desirable asset that facilitates or embellishes our life. Theologians have to beware of

⁷ See Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, *Religion, Ideology and Science*, Alexander Press, Montreal 2004, pp. 20-28.

demonizing technology and its interventions in general, but should clarify the criteria of every option. While a medical intervention may be very good for the restoration of health, it may equally degenerate into a fascist act when it boosts the morbid role of parents as proprietors.

d. Challenge Four: At the crossroad of ideas

To a great degree, established theological language was once created in admirable accordance with world-images in past centuries. But the very essence of the Church is the continuation of the Incarnation in history, until the Eschata. It is not about falsification of the eternal truth, but – quite the opposite – about loyalty to it. Eternal truth has to meet the data of the present and assume them as its flesh. Thus, it is of special importance for the Church to realize that theology is not only the repetition of what had been put forward once, but also a reply to the present world-image.

It is not always easy for clergymen and theologians to be informed about the struggle of theological thought in our neighbourhood, Europe. The Church of Greece has always had an important official participation in the ecumenical dialogue; besides many scholars keep in touch with heterodox theology. Nevertheless, systematic information is necessary insofar as it is necessary to risk making an exit from our shelter and hazard an encounter with what is going on around. Sometimes we complain that theologians of other denominations know very little about Greek theological production; and we are not far wrong. But we easily commit the same. Our information about non-Orthodox trends is often not updated and we miss recent developments in the field of ideas. Sometimes these developments may surprise those Orthodox who have kept a static image of the western Christian in mind.

Though contact with our European neighbourhood is vital, it is also of major importance for the Church to avoid the trap of Eurocentricity or Euromonism. The experience of the last five centuries (since the discovery of the new world) has shown that ecclesiastical consciousness is heavily damaged when losing its ecumenicity and its opening up to all cultures and traditions. Here the history of the Church of Greece bears some special characteristics⁸. From the

⁸ For a detailed presentation of what follows, see Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, *Missionary Experience and Academic Quest: The Research Situation in Greece* (paper delivered in the international conference "European Traditions of the Study of Religion in Africa", Bayreuth, Germany, 4-7 October 2001. Proceedings are soon to be published).

middle of the 15th c. to the early 19th c., the Greeks were subject to the rule of the Muslim Turks. Due to this difficult situation, the opening-up beyond the national limits seemed excessive and the missionary consciousness declined. Nonetheless, for the same reason, Greece had the special blessing to remain outside the western religiously oriented colonial invasion in the Third World.

The decisive turning point came almost one century later. The International Orthodox Youth Association "Syndesmos" decided on the establishment of the Inter-Orthodox Missionary Centre "Porefthendes" ("Go Ye"; Matt. 28: 19). From 1959 until 1969 the Centre published a pioneering periodical under the same title. Numerous articles elaborated the Orthodox concept of Mission and brought information about the then infant Greek Orthodox missionary work. A fresh theological trend appeared to be emerging. The individualistic and semi-platonic theology that laid emphasis on individualistic moralism and the salvation of the soul alone, seemed to be replaced by a theology that stressed salvation as an eschatological cosmic event and insisted that the Church has to infuse the whole human being that is, soul, body, civilization. The understanding of Mission as the continuation of Christ's Incarnation resulted in a positive attitude towards "foreign" civilizations, which were now conceived as the potential flesh of Christ. Nationalism, the permanent worm in the bowels of the Orthodox Churches, seemed to be rejected and the question of Inculturation began to be timidly posed.

In the following decades (1980s and 1990s) missionary work continued to develop. Missionary theology, however, as well as research, not only was not strengthened, but – quite the opposite – suffered a series of severe shocks. Despite the fact that the idea of Mission had now been widely spread among religious Greek people, the said important criteria seemed to weaken in the face of romanticism, sentimentalism, exoticism and mysticism.

For the time being, a missionary theology that focuses on the quest of Inculturation clashes with a missionary concept that promotes Greek-centred cultural monism. We are merely standing before a meaningful bet.

e. Challenge Five: Remember Kenosis

I have already mentioned several aspects of the task of the Church to connect with the world in order to offer it the Good News. But this task is haunted by a major question. What can one rightfully do in the name of this goal? The desire to be accepted by the world may drive us either into flattering the mind of the

old world⁹ or into assuming a role which may well have the overall acceptance of the society, but only for reasons actually deviating from the essence of the Church. Many, for example, may be enthusiastic at the idea of a powerful Church. It is not accidental that many tend to regard a monastery as "successful" so long as it is wealthy and glamorous; the ideal of monastic flight away from all worldly securities seems to enjoy low esteem. It is true that a minority of intellectuals and politicians hold an apparently anti-church position and overlook the cultural heritage of the Greek people. But it is a real temptation for the Church to answer them by acting in an authoritative mentality or longing theocratic models. Her great power is actually her willing refusal to function as a secular institution, even of a modern form. Her true glory is Kenosis (cf. Phil. 2: 7); not glamour provided by and marketing. It is not enough for the Church to be present in society. What counts, is the kind of presence. Will it be following the model of Chalcedon (that is, a *real* incarnation and sharing of people's pains in order to lead them to the Resurrection)? Or will it – on the contrary – resume the way of Docetism (that is, a divine presence that only *pretends* to have become human)?

Let me quote the words of the late John Panagopoulos, former professor of New Testament theology at the Theological Faculty of Athens University: "A Church which is not missionary, that is, which is not the servant of the world and its salvation, does not have any relation with the Kingdom and, consequently, does not pursue the goal Christ asked her, but a different one. Yet a missionary Church is always astir. She is the Church of the Exodus and the desert; a Church that unrestrainedly proceeds forward, with no historic or social security, without being attached to historic or social institutions; her only guide being the pillar of fire and her only security being the manna from heaven"¹⁰.

Athanasios N. Papathanasiou

⁹ A liturgical practice, for example, motivated by the desire to make the Church attractive in terms of a show that fascinates crowds of fans, should be theologically doomed as mere demagoguery.

¹⁰ Ioannes Panagopoulos, *Eschatology and Mission* (offprint), Athens 1972, p. 27 (in Greek; my translation).

The International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue met in the International Study Centre, Canterbury Cathedral, in the United Kingdom, from Monday, June 21st - Friday, June 25th, 2004.

The Commission wish to record their gratitude to the staff of the Centre for the warmth of their welcome; to Canon Richard Marsh who gave the Commission members a guided tour of the Cathedral by candlelight on the Tuesday evening, and to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who hosted a dinner for the Commission on the Thursday evening.

The Commission is composed of representatives of the Orthodox Churches and of the Anglican Communion. The Dialogue began its work by exploring theological and doctrinal issues of concern for dialogue between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches in 1973. Agreements reached in its first two stages were set out in the Moscow Agreed Statement of 1976 and the Dublin Agreed Statement of 1984. In its present third phase, which began in 1989, the Commission has been examining ecclesiological issues in the light of our faith in the Holy Trinity, the Person of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

In 2001, at Volos, Greece, the Commission focussed on the ordained ministry of the Church and approved an Interim Agreed Statement on Episcopate, Episcopos and Primacy. This was followed in 2002, at Abergavenny, Wales, by another Interim Agreed Statement, Priesthood, Christ and the Church. There the Commission began to concentrate on an examination of the issues surrounding the ordination of women to the priesthood. The discussion of non-ordained ministry was also begun. Discussion on both issues continued in Addis Ababa in 2003.

In Canterbury, the Commission received the first draft of an Agreed Statement on lay ministries in the Church, and on the question of the ministries of women and men, including the question of ordination to the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate. Consideration of this latter topic was postponed until further work could be completed on the presentation of Orthodox understandings of these matters.

Papers on Heresy and Schism were received from Professor William Green (on the Anglican side) and Bishop Basil of Sergievo (on the Orthodox side) and discussed by the Commission. The Commission went on to receive and discuss papers on the theology and practice of Reception from Professor John Riches (on the Anglican side) and Metropolitan John of Pergamon (on the Orthodox side).

The Commission will meet again in 2005. At this meeting, draft Agreed Statements will be discussed on both the issue of the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate and Episcopate, and on Heresy, Schism and Reception, in addition to the completion of work of Lay Ministries and the Diaconate. The goal is to bring together all the Interim Agreements since 1989 in a Report for publication in 2006.

Commission Members present in Canterbury were:

Orthodox

Metropolitan John of Pergamon (Ecumenical Patriarchate) (Co-chair)
Metropolitan Petros of Aksum (Patriarchate of Alexandria)
Fr Michael Harper (Patriarchate of Antioch)
Bishop Basil of Sergievo (Patriarchate of Moscow)
Professor Dr Mircea Ielciu (Patriarchate of Romania)
Bishop Gerasim Sharashenidze and Archpriest Giorgi Zviadadze (Church of Georgia)
Bishop Vasilios of Trimithus (Church of Cyprus)
Professor Constantine Scouteris (Church of Greece)
Bishop Ilia of Philomelion (Church of Albania)
Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki (Church of Finland)
The Revd Dr Vaclav Jezek (Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia)
Fr Matthias Palli (Church of Estonia)
Fr Christos B Christakis (Co-secretary)

Anglican

Bishop Mark Dyer (Co-chair)
Bishop Max Thomas (Anglican Church of Australia)
Bishop John Baycroft (Anglican Church of Canada)
The Revd Dr Timothy Bradshaw (Church of England)
The Revd Dr Donald Ross Edwards (Anglican Church of Australia)
The Revd Dr John Gibaut (Anglican Church of Canada)
The Revd Canon Jonathan Gough (Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative)
The Revd Canon William Green (Episcopal Church of the USA)
Bishop William Gregg (Episcopal Church of the USA)
The Revd Canon Livingstone Ngewu (Church of the Province of Southern Africa)
The Revd Dr Duncan Reid (Anglican Church of Australia)
The Revd Prof John Riches (Episcopal Church of Scotland)
The Ven Dr Joy Tetley (Church of England)

The Revd Canon Hugh Wybrow (Church of England)
The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron (Co-secretary)

Metropolitan John of Pergamon

Orthodox Co-Chairman

Bishop Mark Dyer

Anglican Co-Chairman

The Constantinople Lecture 2003

THE DESERT DRY AND DAMP – Eastern Monasticism and the Celtic Fringe.

(1) Introduction

The relationship between Eastern and Western Monasticism is one, which has for a very long time fascinated scholars of church history and religious people alike. Many of us, I suspect, have recollections of parallels and overlaps of expressions of asceticism, of the flowering of monastic life whether it is lived in the common or in the solitary way. We think of it in the Celtic West and we think of it in the Eastern Desert as a life with Christ, or indeed a life of Christ, in and beyond the human body and mind, spearheaded and pioneered in fourth century Egypt by St Antony and St Pachomius and rapidly developing in Syria, Palestine and Asia Minor. We are aware also of how a quite different landscape: Wales, Western Scotland, Northern England and Ireland became a fruitful field of monastic development in the Eastern style. Perhaps we go further to wonder how coherent this overlap and influence are, how it might have happened and what relevance it might have today to our own grappling with the Christian experiment in living the life of Christ in quite a different world and time. For there is no doubt that the insights of a lived call and a vowed life do influence for good the life of service in which the rest of us stumble often and progress betimes as we walk with Christ the modern way of the cross and the path of resurrection.

The centres of monastic strength do not often accord with what today have become the centres of political, civic or religious power. Oxford once was home to the third largest monastery in England, Osney Abbey. As you walk now from Carfax to the Railway Station you will find to your left a field with an artist's impression on a notice board together with four large stones marking out the extremities of this once mighty monastery. The world has other

priorities, a quite different agenda but there still is a substratum of need for what is properly religious. The huge growth in interest in the Celtic past can draw us into an uncritical nostalgia about an era, which is gone. Somewhere in all of this too there is the idea that its innocence and simplicity, its seamless correlation of worship of God and respect for nature can be transplanted to rejuvenate our complicated, materialistic, tired and irreligious age.

Let us first pause and travel in our mind's eye and tonight on a winter evening to a pair of islands off the South West coast of Ireland, the Greater and Lesser Skellig, off the Kerry coast. The Great Skellig, Skellig Michael, seems to rise sheer out of the sea, not out of the land, but somehow reminiscent of Mount Sinai or Mount Athos. It is peopled by small monasteries and individual cells, what the textbooks call: coenobitic (shared) and anchoritic (solitary) life, side by side on a very small and uninviting piece of rock. Beyond this towering mass of rock, however, is the Little Skellig. One theory advanced is that in fact the Lesser Skellig is in some ways more important than the Greater Skellig.

The battle, so the argument goes, is over the souls of the dead because this very place is where the non-Christian Irish launched their dead on to the sea. By battling it out at the edge of the world as they knew it the Christian monks were at what today we call the cutting edge, the coal face of salvation, winning souls for Christ at death. We meet an assumption of the early monks about which our own age is more than quizzical: death is where life happens, really begins and we should want to bring its insights, its resurrection into our own lives today.

These monastics speak openly and normally about death as resurrection, in a way, which we characterize as Orthodox, and with which we now instinctively associate the names of Derwas Chitty and Donald Allchin. From Chitty's own account of his first visit to Jerusalem in 1925 as Liddon Student, Canon Allchin draws out this important and transformative diary entry:

'My Passion-centred western outlook was a bit shocked to find Calvary seemed pushed to one side of the Church and the tomb central. It was the first suggestion that came to me of Orthodox Eastern teaching. I had not then realized that what we call the Church of the Holy Sepulchre they regularly call the Church of the Resurrection, not the place of the death, but the fountain of New Life. Death is swallowed up in victory.'

Canon Allchin quotes this in his first Chitty Lecture of 2001. He goes on to draw out from Chitty the intensely Christ-centred understanding of

monasticism characteristic of the fourth and fifth centuries in what I might be permitted to call the oscillation of monastic life living side by side with itself: the hermit, the community, the small group of solitaires supporting one another. Chitty, however, did not have to abandon in its entirety the 'Passion-centred western outlook', which was so seriously challenged. Through the suffering of Christ Jesus in isolation on the Cross, he argues, the way into life and communion for all is made clear. This comes about through response to the words of Christ Jesus on the Cross in discipline of spiritual life. The Stylites, pillar saints, of Syria mirror the crucified Christ. In Chitty's own words: '...the pillar of one who is as fixed to his place as the Lord is fixed to the Cross, there is no going back.'

This solitude takes the monk in the power of the Cross into the quiet of the tomb, which is the place of new life. Here there is no heightening of individual and personal salvation but rediscovery of community and communion. Chitty expresses this with characteristic clarity and exuberance all in one: 'The closest of human attachments must always recognize if it is honest the clear line of separation which sets the boundary between two souls ... but there is a shorter way from my soul to my brother's, the Christ by his Holy Spirit is in the innermost shrine of your heart and mind. There, where I do not penetrate, in the Holy of Holies where the Holy Spirit is enthroned in our baptism, there he is ...' Through turning inwards in prayer to Christ and finding him there 'we are enabled to look out and see them (our brothers and sisters in everyday life) and see the Christ in them and see the Christ looking in upon us through the eyes of those around us.'

I dwell on this aspect at the onset because the ultimacy (seen through the Skelligs example) and the intimacy (Chitty's discernment of the Desert and his twentieth century Celtic implementation of it in Bardsey Island and the Llyn Peninsula) are important in understanding the motivation of monasticism, its derivations, parallels and developments as we seek to understand the discovery of the Desert of the East on the seaboard of the West.

The creation and the development of Eastern Monasticism owe a great deal not only to the impact of the desert on Abraham (Genesis 15.12) and Jacob (Deuteronomy 32.10) but the national experience of Exodus in the wilderness was formative both of community and obedience. It is clear also that the desert was the place towards which people looked for renewal and reform from what we know of Isaiah and John the Baptist. The Dead Sea Scrolls now enable us to see the Jesus Movement, which is Christianity as taking its place in terms of solitude, community, ascetic eschatology and spiritual formation within this development.

The definitive theological influence on desert spirituality is the ambiguously powerful figure of Origen of Alexandria. In a systematic way he drew together the Biblical stories, the experience of the saints and martyrs with a Platonic philosophy and allegorical exegesis of Scripture. The soul journeys through the wilderness, experiencing trial, temptation and difficulty. Both the experience and the overcoming of these leads to holiness. Allegorical interpretation of Scripture enables Origen to have Scripture say more than its literal, immediate text records. In this way Origen is able to weld his own theological presuppositions with the revealed purpose of God in Scripture. A strong immateriality, an abstraction from the world, a conviction that the ideal form which is cerebral or spiritual is more real than the physical manifestation has often left subsequent generations hostile to claims of Origen's orthodoxy. One has only to look at the problems caused by the theology of Evagrius and the anathematization of Origen in 553. The following extract from his Exhortation to Martyrdom shows us how allegorical exegesis works and also how the intense loyalty to God and the church manifested in the red martyrdom of the Persecution could be funnelled, channelled into the white martyrdom of the desert as something awaiting every soul. This gives what today we would call a user-friendly spin to the monastic ideal:

'Before the soul arrives at perfection it dwells in the wilderness where it is trained in the commandments of God and where faith is tested by temptations. When it conquers each temptation and its faith has been proved, it passes, as it were, from one stage in development to another, through which an increase in virtue and holiness is achieved ... until the soul arrives at the goal of its pilgrimage ... namely the highest summit of virtue and crosses the River of God and receives the heritage promised to it.'

This theology of asceticism for everyone was a powerful impetus to spiritual endeavour as Persecution waned after Constantine's Edict of Toleration in 315.

In a way no longer true today in the Christian world we find in the fourth and fifth centuries that theology, monasticism and public policy were interwoven in a very dynamic way. Athanasius, that great champion of Alexandrian theology and Nicene orthodoxy about the being of God and the persons of the Trinity, combated Arianism, another Alexandrian theology, throughout the fourth century. For Athanasius' great homecoming after his second exile on October 10th 346AD the authorities and the people travelled one hundred miles to greet him. He also wrote the biography of Antony who, with Paul of Thebes, was the

first Christian hermit to live in the Egyptian desert. In fact Pachomius' disciples remembered his saying: 'In our generation in Egypt I see three chapter-heads given increase by God for profit of all who understand – the bishop Athanasius, Christ's champion for the faith even unto death; and the holy Abbot Antony perfect pattern of the anchoritic life; and this community, which is the type of all who desire to gather souls according to God, to take care of them until they be made perfect.' Written in the 350s AD The life of Antony was soon translated into Latin and will have made its way to the West not least as there were exiles from the West resident in the East at times most notably Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius of Vercellae.

But even ruling out the particular Celtic fringe (or as the Archbishop of Wales prefers to call it: the Celtic crown) with which we are concerned this evening, Antony's own conversion had a significant impact on Augustine of Hippo's own account of his conversion from Manichaeism to Catholic Christianity. Augustine, let us recall, hears a child singing (psalms) in a nearby house (of God). Compare Athanasius' account of Antony's conversion from the world: 'Pondering these things as he entered the church ...'

Again thinking of the West, John Cassian (365–435) spent ten years in the Eastern Desert of Egypt. He visited the monasteries, collected teachings on the spiritual life directly from the hermits and published and disseminated as his Conferences such teachings in the West. He also founded his own monastery in Marseilles. Augustine throughout his stormy episcopal career at the heart of Imperial North African life and politics lived a coenobitic monastic life in Hippo – in fact he insisted on this before he would become a priest. He gathered around him those with whom he shared an asceticism which was the bedrock of his discernment and worship of God and which fuelled his writings. Of these even the most overtly doctrinal have deep spiritual resonances and a Platonism which reeks of asceticism.

(2) Eastern Monasticism

The origins of Christian Monasticism lie both with individuals and with locations, with particular insights and perceptions combined with the commitment to live the life of faith and of Christ in the desert. The concentration of asceticism, displacement, individualism and community issues in a particular holiness which is widely acknowledged to have come together into a style if not a system in the third and fourth centuries. Antony of Egypt through the eyes of Athanasius of Alexandria is our definitive way into all of this. The contrast between Porphyry's Plotinus – a man ashamed of his body – and Athanasius's Antony – a man physically and spiritually balanced,

as one governed by reason and standing in his natural condition – is telling. Antony's perfection in Christ is not dualistic. Instead it is the return of man's natural condition and the recovery of Adam before the Fall in a Christological anthropology. This Adamic motif is further evidenced by Antony's recorded relationship with animals, how he persuaded them not to ravage his little garden. It points us to an integration of human and animal life as known before the Fall and may indeed hold the key to the much-vaunted ecological environmentalism of contemporary Celtic spirituality. Antony's relationship, for such indeed it was, with the desert is beautifully described thus: 'looking on the place, he loved it.'

This, then, becomes the pattern of the true anchorite, the enthusiast (*spoudaios*) for Christ. The pattern comes under extreme pressure through the battle royal, which rages in Egypt and the Desert about the theology of Origen and the recoiling from any whiff of anthropomorphism in the theology of Christ. It undergoes changes and adaptations, a variety of institutionalisation's and, I suggest, makes its way to the West through the softening filter of John Casein's Conferences as well as through other avenues.

Bell's papyrus, dating from the 330s AD, is where first we find technical terms relating to monasticism: *monachos*; mone for monastery/cell/common abode; *apa* (*abba*) for the leading monk. Monasticism – and we shall see this creativity and adaptation continue in the later Celtic West – continues to owe something vital to the solitariness of the individual with Christ, even though around Antony and of course later with Pachomius various models are at work: the elder and the disciple, a cluster of cells close together and a common organization of daily life in all its facets. Withdrawal from but concern for the world is both very much part of the monastic reality. Pachomius expresses it potently: 'The will of God is to minister to the race of men, to reconcile them to Him.' It is to Pachomius that we attribute the sustained creation of the monasticism of the common life. A further development took place in Amoun's foundation at Nitria, which is where the world and the desert meet: 'Here first the monastic community was fitted into the parochial system of the diocese, with its own priests and other clergy. Here too the anchoritic and coenobitic paths are not sharply distinct and independent of each other as they are with Antony and Pachomius.'

The overlapping of the theological and the Biblical grounds for monasticism receives fresh impetus in the development of another aspect of monasticism, physical exile (*zenitea*) in the wilderness of Judaea with Jerusalem standing at

the head of the wilderness. Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist and the Temptation of our Lord come into play as foci of monastic expression. This was a foundation before the Peace of the Church in 315 AD and was Palestinian, from Anatolia, being quite independent of Egypt. Its layout was that of a row or cluster of solitary cells round a common centre. There was a church and a bakehouse. The monks came together for Saturday and Sunday, spending the rest of the week in their cells individually. The coming together at what we might today call 'the weekend' was for very practical reasons: bringing in their produce, worshipping together, transacting business, collecting enough bread for the next week prior to returning to the individual cell.

In Pachomius there is an uneasy relationship between monasticism and what the church now calls ministry. He was very convinced that there must be clear water between the community and the priest whom they invite in to celebrate the Eucharist. From Pachomius we have perhaps the most challenging text for an ordination sermon: '... ordination is the beginning of the thought of love of being in control.' The example of Nitria is instructive in showing the way things were going. So overpopulated by 338 AD was it that Amoun founded a second Nitrian settlement of Cells for those anchorites who wanted complete solitude. They were dependent on the primary foundation for bread but had their own priest and church. Nitria differed from the Pachomian foundations in that a letter of Amoun of 356 AD speaks of a full complement of clergy headed by a college of priests. By 393 AD according to Pachomius there were five thousand monks. At the centre there was one church with fifty monae, obviously different sizes of monasteries. There were close links between the Mountain monks of Nitria and the diocesan bishop at Hermopolis Parva, ten miles away. There also seems to have been a tradition of the bishops having been monks in the persons of Dracontius, Isodore and Dioscorus. Nitria is important also in the diversity of models, the free flow of traffic it shows: training in a common monastic life often developed into withdrawal into the anchorite's life in the Cells. This runs counter to Pachomius' understanding of the common life as a life-long vocation but we shall see evidence of this fluidity in the Celtic future.

The late fourth century is the point at which the various Eastern forms of monasticism begin seriously to influence the wider ecclesiastical world. The development, indeed the invention, of the Holy Land as a religious geography contributes significantly to the dissemination of ideas and practices. By the time of Athanasius' death, two independent Latin translations of his life of Antony had been made. Other Western influences seem to have come through Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius of Vercellae who came to the East as exiles

and returned to the West to inform and inspire Martin of Tours and others. There is also the influence of John Cassian.

The theology of Evagrius makes a fresh if piquant contribution to the self-understanding of monasticism. Antony, as seen through the filter of Athanasius, manifests and comes to symbolize an integration of body and mind. Evagrius, as what we might call an Origenist, imported into Greek monasticism the Stoic idea of passionlessness (*apatheia*) beloved of Origen and it became almost universal thereafter in Greek monasticism. *Apatheia* brought with it the accompanying idea of the superiority of knowledge over love. This had the effect of making monasticism more of an abstraction than a withdrawal, more of a disengagement from than a concern for the world beyond the desert. Evagrius is also responsible for codifying eight Thoughts, which manifest themselves in the Latin world as The Seven Deadly Sins. The eight are gluttony, fornication, avarice, grief, anger, accidie, vainglory, pride.

It is through John Cassian that these Sins make their literary way into western thought and the role of Cassian is vitally important to our story. In the 380s John Cassian entered the Jerusalem Monastery and went to visit the Egyptian deserts where he remained for seven years. It is very clear that Cassian

became a pupil of Evagrius but his own mature teaching sets aside many of the speculations of his mordant master, dispenses substantially with passionlessness and restores love to its primacy above knowledge. Within a few days of Evagrius' death in 399 AD Theophilus issued his Pastoral Letter which strongly denounced anthropomorphism; but the triumph of Origenism brought with it the collapse of Origenism. Cassian's fervour for Evagrius would undoubtedly have been dimmed by hearing Sarapion of Scetis say in response to the Pastoral and in the idiom of Mary Magdalen: 'They have taken away my God, and I have none I can hold now, and know not whom to adore or to whom to address myself.' Origenism was in fact condemned at the Synod of Alexandria in 400 AD.

Cassian would have been well aware not only of this controversy but also of the ensuing maelstrom.

In his mature writings of the 420s he avoids the name of Evagrius and mollifies his teaching. In this way it would seem that both Monasticism and Origenism made their way into the West and into the Celtic monastic life, which we must now explore.

(3) Irish Monasticism

The idea of an Age of the Saints in Ireland was propagated by John Ryan in his seminal work entitled *Irish Monasticism*. Looked at from today's perspective of a post-modern, predominantly secular Ireland, in its own day (1931) it fed an emotional need which many Irish people had to find in the early Irish church a combined spirit of originality and independence, an indigenous Christian culture undiluted by Roman or Byzantine influence. From it flowed unintentionally much of what has become a rather degenerate Celtic spirituality so attractive and so fallacious all at once when lifted wholesale out of its patristic and sub-patristic theological expressions and presuppositions and expected to flower all by itself. It tells a tale of otherworldliness, love of nature and spiritually submissive wild animals - a sort of cavalier monasticism characterized by heroic asceticism where pain triumphs over purpose, untroubled by bishops and all set in a vast primeval wilderness.

I do not wish gratuitously to diminish these ingredients of the Celtic Monastic Age but rather to look at them through more dispassionate eyes. This will, I trust, enable us to see that in very different circumstances the ideas, the practices and the genius of the Eastern monastic traditions whose paths we have sketched above leave tracks and run parallel with developments in Celtic monasticism which seem to be far too consistent, if not always coherent, to be accidental.

My overall point really is that the phenomenon, which we call Celtic monasticism, is no less potent, no less monumental for some serious appreciation of its origin and derivation. It still asks us to respect and marvel at its development, impact and influence on an already global world from a standpoint as remote in its western-ness as was the desert (of Antony, Pachomius and the others) in its eastern-ness.

Let us start with Iona where the monastic experiment in living with God is well documented. Not only are there Annals but also Adomnan's *Life of Columcille*. Iona was characterized by kinship, an eschatological family living its life with effective this-worldly connections, on a tiny island in the Inner Hebrides. We should not be seduced by the argument from original primitivism. This was the JF Kennedy Airport or Heathrow Terminal 4 of its day, so international were its contacts and influences.

First, Iona was no backwater. Remote perhaps to us, its churchmen exerted a powerful influence from their deserted place over neighbouring kingdoms. As princes they moved with authority and ease among princes. This in itself is of a

piece with the ways in which holy men were regarded as expert advisers on political and social matters in the Eastern desert world of the third and fourth centuries particularly as the Empire became self-confessedly Christian. But the secular and the sacred marched together. Adomnan's Columcille is no spin doctor. He combines secular nous with spiritual authority. Like the desert recluse he has a heightened sense of evil, entering into spiritual warfare physically, doing pitch-forked battle with demons, entering the fray to rescue the souls of dying friends from eternal hell-fire. Often the charge of aristocratic nepotism is laid at the door of Celtic monasticism particularly in matters of succession. Monasticism was both acculturated and counter-cultural. It was, after all, not in the first flush of youth in the seventh and eighth centuries. Ecclesiology, like politics, often is the art of the possible.

It found itself perforce mirroring lay society in that there was a hereditary aristocracy, which also controlled the landed wealth necessary for the endowment of the monasteries. The concept of the principatus, the Royal Abbot, first occurs in the eighth century and Iona, though seemingly removed geographically, is not immune. This secularization of abbacy was symptomatic of the involvement of the richer monasteries in the dynastic struggles of the warrior aristocracies. The cause and effect of this are not hard to find, since from the seventh century onwards monasticism took a highly significant role in the development of Irish cities with the economic and political advantages and temptations, which went with that. By unintentionally exciting the greed of the warrior aristocracies they invited the confrontation and the desire to control rich monasteries from within. Iona in its distant Hebridean location had its first princeps in 707 AD. By 764 AD Dúrow and Clonmacnoise were embroiled in pitch battles and by 776 AD Dúrow had again taken up arms. Such was the rapidity of assimilation to a secular norm. Yet even when a barbarous secular society was established, Iona was capable into the next century of sending to the island of Iona from its exile in Kells in the Irish midlands voluntary martyrs who sacrificed themselves to maintain the integrity of a token community on Iona.

Before we leave Iona to look at more general principles, there is evidence of a penitential community of anchorites in a nearby desert site in the tradition of the Egyptian Fathers. A seventh century monk of Iona could write a definitive guidebook of the Holy Land without leaving the monastery, so comprehensive and sophisticated was the Library. There is no sense in which Columbanus' letter to Gregory the Great of 600 AD concerning the date of Easter was considered as anything but a learned letter. Furthermore his quotation of Gildas, likewise an Insular Father, is taken as a serious rather than as a backwoods source. There is evidence of relics around the island of Iona to

ward off drought and to invoke the favour of heaven. The same holds in the seventh century of St Demetrius of Thessalonica and of the relics of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the walls of Constantinople to save the city from Islamic attack and conquest in 674-678 AD. It is therefore, to quote Bradshaw and Keogh: 'unwise to see the Celtic cult as arcane when it differs little from those of its contemporaries on the far side of the Mediterranean.'

Iona, I have suggested, is both representative and unrepresentative all at once. Let me explain: the characteristics which we have outlined as specific to it are not peculiar or exclusive to it in that they are found elsewhere on the Irish mainland in very similar form. The work of Colman Etchingham (*Church Organization in Ireland AD 650-1000*) is important in tracing both the earliest manifestations of the system of Celtic Monasticism in codifying the features common to it and in tracing their development in the relevant literature to the end of the first millennium. A look at these findings is important as we nudge towards the whole question of origins, influences and derivations.

The eighth century *Hibernensis* dedicates Book 39 to monks and is almost completely devoted to portraying a conventional monastic environment. Three categories of monks are delineated:

- (1) coenobites: these live together under an abbot and a rule, repudiate private property and concentrate on reading, prayer and service of their fellows.
- (2) hermits: these are utterly devoted to a life of intimacy with God, they live in remote places, isolated from the rest of humanity, with modest food consisting in bread and water brought to them at appropriate times.
- (3) anchorites: these live a contemplative life in cells remote from other people, having first subjected themselves to communal discipline for a period of thirty years.

But in some ways the totality of the evidence brought forward itself suggests that these distinctions are far too tidy. There are, for example, strong hints that anchorites were not completely divorced from society. An anchorite enjoyed the highest status in society, on a par with a king or a bishop. An anchorite had the qualifications to judge. This implies both a working knowledge of Latin and impartiality. The strong suggestion therefore is that an anchorite came out from the coenobitic monasticism where such learning was possible. This is underwritten by two further considerations. The one is that a coenobitic monk may not abandon community life for the solitary cell without proper preparation and the abbot's permission. The second is that there clearly was ambivalence about *sancta rusticitas*. It was deemed to be better than sinful erudition, but a tendency to lack of discretion meant that such a person had to be handled carefully and cautiously. And again the *rusticus sanctus* and scower of worldly

affairs is among those capable of ecclesiastical judging. St Brigid of Kildare was forced at one stage to summon an anchorite to conduct ordinations and professions.

Although many of the other texts of the period reflect this description outlined above, the two Monastic Rules attributed to Columbanus illustrate sixth and seventh century Irish monasticism even though they are designed for a continental European context. They themselves have to come out of some already existing context. We see here a fusion of categories which our exploration of Eastern desert monasticism had encouraged us to separate out: there is a clear preference for coenobitic life, there is an insistence on unquestioning obedience to the word of a superior and such obedience is equated with the mortification intrinsic to monasticism and cast in the form of martyrdom. Part of the impetus in this insistence on obedience relates to another constituency, the *manraig*, ecclesiastical dependants or clients (perhaps like Dobby and Winky the House Elves in the Harry Potter stories) whose proper obedience had to be driven home to them again and again.

Fresh evidence is given by Vernacular Law Tracts which have little to say about coenobitic life but are important in clarifying two terms *deoradDe* (exile of God) and *olbelteoir* (spark of the contemplative life). Not even a king could overturn the ruling of a master of ecclesiastical learning, a bishop or an exile of God. The argument is that whereas both of the above had the capacity to perform wonders (*ferat*) only the exile of God had learning. We are back with the anxiety about anchoritism and holy rusticity and with the requirement that a true anchorite who might at any point be called upon to exercise his holy impartiality was linked umbilically with the communal monastery by his learning. Why? Because it was possible to receive such learning only as a coenobite.

There is further evidence in the Vernacular Law Tracts of an amalgam of eremitic ideals and coenobitic practice by early in the eighth century at the latest in elite groups who might or might not be attached to larger ecclesiastical communities. Clearly the monasteries needed these people and the system was sufficiently elastic to accommodate their heightened spirituality within a world where they retained significant ecclesiastical and secular influence.

But, you may well say, I've heard something of Columba, something of Brigid but nothing yet of Patrick! The Lives of the Saints are later than the period to which they refer. Of Columba we know that Adomnan his biographer is concerned to emphasize coenobitic monasticism but refers to a certain Virgin

as one who 'completed another twelve years as a victorious soldier of Christ (*miles Christi*) leading the life of an anchorite in the place of the anchorites of Muirbule Mar. Hagiography of Patrick is not much concerned with our topic but Liber Angeli speaks of anchorites of the church who with bishops, priests and other religious participate in the Sunday liturgy in the southern basilica of Armagh. Assicus a bishop, Patrick's smith and a *monachus*, retreated to Slieve League in Donegal for a limited period and then resumed the common monastic life. An anchorite with a very balanced and mixed diet too is Joseph of Ros Mor who was bishop, master scribe and anchorite, abbot of Clones and other ecclesiastical settlements. Examples of such temporary withdrawal can be multiplied.

Clones is in my own diocese, now a market town on the Border, battered by thirty-five years of Troubles but with a fine spirit. Devenish and Killadeas are also both in my diocese and they point us to the Culdees (*Ceili De*), Companions of God, who are often seen as a reforming movement of the eighth century. St Malaise's community on Devenish Island in the middle of Lough Erne accepted the rule of the Culdees in the eighth century. In medieval times the Order serviced the secular parish (with Killadeas as a daughter chapel) and it continued alongside the Augustinians on Devenish until 1603 when the island was abandoned.

The most fruitful evidence of the Culdees comes from Maelruain's Tallaght Monastery in what is now part of the southern suburbs of Dublin. Are they evidence of a Reform Movement in the eighth century? This has long been assumed but Etchingham urges caution, as do others. We noted above Adomnan's use of *miles Christi*. This term is used time and again to denote the Culdees of the eighth and ninth centuries. The use of the term in the Rule of Mochutu suggests that they are a permutation on coenobitic monasticism. At Tallaght the term is used exclusively of adherents of a strict observance and at Finglas there is a Culdee women's precinct. For the Culdees there is evidence of a starvation diet, with work done for mortification of the flesh as well as for subsistence but there is evidence also of disapproval of individual anchoritic excess in mortification. The strong suggestion is that this movement is an accentuation of an aspect of monasticism, which had long been there, namely a particularly strict elite, which nonetheless remained, tied to the common-life monastery. There is, finally, insufficient evidence categorically to prove serious decline in anchoritism before AD 1050. Their power and reputation cannot be underestimated. Godfrith's Viking attack on Armagh in AD 921 spared the prayer-houses of the Culdees and the houses of the sick for whom they had a responsibility of care not out of piety but out of pragmatism. The city would have had no reason to exist and there would have

been nothing in future for others to plunder had he cleaned it out. The Culdee influence of virtual anorexia is evident at Clonmacnoise up until as late as AD 971 when the bishop died suddenly 'after a three day fast.'

It would seem fair to suggest that the Culdees had a specific role of rigorous monasticism during the period of sustained secular development but that this was more an accentuation of anchoritic coenobitism combined with pastoral work rather than a highly individualized Reform Movement. This was after all the time when the highly Eastern term desert, which forms part of five hundred Irish place names, is used of - believe it or not - an enclosure of female religious in The Tallaght Memoir and in AD 812 the name of a prominent church in Leinster Dermot's Desert, now known as Castledermot. There clearly was a problem!

(4) Origins and Derivation

Thus far we have reviewed the early origins of eastern Monasticism together with the development of this tradition on damper, Western soil and rock. Continuity of spirit as well as adaptation to local needs have led to a distinctive expression of Celtic monasticism in a different geography.

Turning now and finally to the question of origins we are faced with the same set of caricatures and transferred expectations of Celtic monasticism with which we began. The dilemma before an earlier generation of scholars was that they were themselves handling an expression of Celtic Irishness which, it was agreed by others, was so complete and sophisticated as to be explicable only in terms of a wholesale transplantation of a foreign culture to Ireland and representing the purest form of religious art and practice. In short this is the rhetoric of the isolationist and is wide open to being shot down as partisan. To someone like Joseph Raftery who wrote his article *ex oriente* in 1965 this isolationism is represented by scholars such as Peter Paulsen, Victor Elbern and of course Françoise Henry. Raftery rails against the adding up of minor assumptions to make a major one. He stresses the already-existing sophistication of indigenized La Tène metalwork in Ireland and traces interlacing as far back as AD 200, carpet pages to Romano-British mosaics and ends by positing - with an irony bred of intense frustration - an influence the other way round - from Ireland to Egypt - as being equally plausible. One of the challenges he laid down to subsequent scholarship was: 'The main body of material brought forward by the protagonists of the Coptic idea comprises the illuminated manuscripts ... The only valid argument, to my mind, is a body of illuminated Coptic manuscripts reliably dated to a period preceding the earliest known Irish manuscripts. No such manuscript does exist ... (page 202).

This challenge is taken up in 1976 by Robert K Ritner Jr. who draws attention to the then recently discovered and published Coptic Glazier Codex of circa AD 400 which has provided the long-postulated Coptic prototype. It offers a tangible Coptic artefact predating the earliest Irish example by half a century. This criticism of Raftery's extreme position is further substantiated by a suggestion of Coptic origin for both pointillism and interlacing. Interlacing resonates with a second century motif on the doors of Cairo's Church of Sitt Barbara where the tree of life symbol has been adapted and developed to form abstract interlacing. Perhaps there is scope for a fusion of the Egyptian and Irish motifs and also a reason for concealing the cross in exuberant vegetation running deep in the history of Coptic Christianity which was not technically relevant in Celtic Britain: the need to safeguard by camouflage an infant church from easy detection and persecution in a hostile environment. The genius of adaptation can often explain what looks like naïve assimilation in terms of survival of Christianity in times of persecution.

In light of the above we may now review the evidences adduced for Coptic influence as well as the anchoritism, the desert, the soldier of Christ in the post-Persecution age, the coenobitic arrangements which are part and parcel of Irish monasticism. What, then, are these suggested influences? Ritner begins with a poem about the monastic regimen from the Bangor Antiphons - this is the Bangor in Ireland and not the Bangor in Wales:

'A house full of good things built on a rock

And what's more the true vine carried across from Egypt ...'

Ritner takes us first to the literary and intellectual parallels, which he suggests, have not been considered sufficiently. The Voyage of Maelduin dated to the eleventh century at the latest describes one particular island, 19 as follows:

'In another island there are many trees with singing birds. An aged hermit, whose clothing is his hair, tells them that the birds are the souls of his kindred and that he is fed daily by the ministry of angels.'

(At this point we might note in parentheses that in the resurrection panels of Clonmacnois and Durrow, birds are seen to fly into the mouths of the dead. This signifies the return of the soul and the moment of the resurrection and we see the bird/soul motif so closely associated with Egypt.)

The above quotation represents a settled life, anchoritism with extreme practices but more than that an Egyptian motif in which birds carry the souls of the dead and provide sustenance for the living. The Debate between the Body and the Soul is attested in Egypt as early as the second millennium and has a life into the nineteenth century in Celtic literature. Research further suggests

that this may have its origin in a legend about Saint Macarius of Egypt in the fourth century.

The following parallels with specific ecclesiastical overlaps are adduced: the clochette (small bell) is known in Egypt as early as Justinian's reign, it appears in the diocese of Clogher at Killadeas and on White Island in the eighth century but not in the Greek Church until the tenth century. The Tau cross, with two spiral branches in the form of serpents, is ultimately Greek and attested from Kilkenny in the twelfth century. The Celtic Church favoured the episcopal crown of Coptic bishops rather than the Western mitre from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries. (Suffice it to say that you will see neither in the diocese of Clogher today in its Anglican witness!) For those whose specialism is ecclesiastical dress – and I suspect there are many – Coptic silk cuffs which are still in use are attested in sixth century Gaul. One of the oddities of the Book of Kells on the Madonna and Child illumination of the late eighth century is the *flabellum*, the processional fan. Three angels there have one each but it is logically and meteorologically more suited to the heat of the southern Mediterranean. It is associated with the Egypt of the Pharaohs more than it is suited to dank and windswept Ireland or the Hebridean Islands.

We can, I think, aesthetically and chronologically press this argument further. In the illuminated manuscripts themselves there is a particular pose of the Child Jesus with the Virgin Mary – as Henry describes it '*the child seated across his mother's lap*' – which artistically can be traced back to the imagery of Pharaonic date in which Isis suckles Horus in the same position. It seems that in Egypt as elsewhere the Christian church had the genius to assimilate as it developed. This holds similarly for early Coptic miniatures and points strongly towards a local derivation. Further evidence of a derivation from Egypt is suggested by the image of Christ in glory. In each of the crosses at Clonmacnois, Kells, Monasterboice and Durrow Christ stands frontally with his arms crossed, one carrying a cross, the other a Tau staff or flowering branch. Not only is this once again absolutely foreign to the early Irish tradition but it gains great ground and strength in that Luke from the eighth century Lichfield Gospels and Matthew from the eighth century Book of Kells are represented in this way. It relates directly to the depiction of Osiris in Egyptian art with crook and flail.

One further link between Osiris and Christ is witnessed to in the weighing of the soul to be seen at Monasterboice. This relates directly to an Egyptian pre-Christian prototype of last judgement and Henry's suggestion is that this weighing in the balance is Christianized by texts from Daniel and Job which use the same language. Not only does the Greek-style cross like a flower

emerge as a predominant Cross-style on the developing stone art of Ireland – the cross on a stone stele – but in the ninth and tenth centuries there evolved Irish High Crosses with the depiction of Paul and Antony meeting in the desert on Crosses in Castledermot, Moone Abbey and Armagh. Such imagery seems clearly to suggest an association with Egypt, which is essential to the emerging Irish monastic self-understanding and self-expression.

It would be possible further to enumerate derivations but instead I should prefer to do two things: to suggest possible routes of influence and finally to point up the purpose of such monasticism. First some possible routes:

- (1) Once we set aside the purist, isolationist theory there is no good reason to disregard two possibilities, one being the direct influence bypassing Gaelic intermediaries, the other being an acceptance of a European inculturation of Egyptians before coming to Ireland. In relation to both we are substantially in the realm of speculation but perhaps it is the time of the evening for a bit of speculation. Marie and Liam de Paor look positively on the possibility of Coptic activity in Ireland towards the end of the fifth century by sea routes to western France and the Mediterranean from Alexandria, the wine route, which remained open in spite of the barbarians. This suggestion is strengthened by Henry's evidence of extensive trade between the Near East and the coasts of Ireland, Scotland and England. Schwartz has drawn attention to The Life of St John the Almoner who died in AD 616 and spoke of a transportation of wheat to England in a boat of the Alexandrian Church. Jonathan Wooding who dates to circa AD520 a small range of North African ware and a much larger range of Near Eastern ware shipwrecked off the Cornwall coast again narrows the gap of credibility. It is clear too that even the advanced ascetics of Skellig Michael imported wine from Portugal traded against the delicacy of gulls' eggs, which were so perilously harvested from their maritime Sinai.
- (2) Take again the ski resort of St Moritz in Switzerland. A Coptic monk, Mauritius, was martyred with the Egyptian Theban Legion in AD 285. Three companions Felix, Regula and Exuperantius reached the lake of Zurich where they baptized local people until they were themselves beheaded by Roman Officials. Switzerland points also to the cult of St Warina of Garagos and St Victor whose relics were taken in the fifth century to Geneva. Twenty-one Swiss communities are dedicated to Antony of Egypt. Coptic influence may also be discerned in a description by Isidore of Seville (whose writings were very popular in Ireland) of the episcopal chasubles as hooded in the Coptic style.

One further speculation, and perhaps a speculation too far, The Litany of St Oengus in The Book of Leinster speaks like this: 'Seven Egyptian monks in Desert Ullaigh, I invoke unto my aid through Jesus Christ.' This suggests the discovery in the Western wilderness of Ireland and the Hebrides the desert of Egypt but it is surely quite likely that *Egyptian* here is almost a nickname for those of extreme ascetic and anchoretic life.

One final question and it brings us back to the eirenic hand of Donald Allchin with whom we began: Why do it all at all? As Antony is said to love the desert on which he looks, so Celtic monasticism speaks of the beauty of doing penance in The Loves of Taliesin, one of the great poems of the Western Middle Ages: 'the beauty of the virtue of doing penance for excess, Beautiful too that God shall save me.' This is because penance is viewed not primarily as a punishment, a diminution but as something which gives new life to our original baptismal dying and rising with Christ. A new way is opened to God's Kingdom, into the risen life, here and now. Hence the spirit of pilgrimage is the search for the place of resurrection. This positive understanding of penance leads also to showing us the world of nature and of grace, and integration with human life and with animals and plants. This new life links the re-created to the Creator in all aspects of old life. I leave you with Donald Allchin's own fine expression: 'That there is great diversity here no one could deny. I should like to suggest that there is also an underlying unity of vision, a vision of the interaction of creation and resurrection in a cosmic Christology which is characteristic of the Christian world of the first millennium.'

Perhaps those of us who live today in the Western damp can dream still of the influence of the Eastern desert.

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