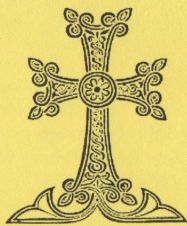


# KOINONIA



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*Koinonia*

THE JOURNAL OF THE ANGLICAN &  
EASTERN CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

Editorial

THIS issue of *Koinonia* appears after a long delay stretching from the decision of Kevin Ellis to relinquish the editorship because of increased responsibilities in the parish and at home and my own taking up the role and coming to terms with the unfamiliarity of its editorial and technological demands. I would like to apologize to all who have waited so long for the appearance of the issue. The Association remains committed to contributing to mutual understanding between the Anglican and Eastern Churches through this publication as well as through its many other activities. I would also like to thank Kevin Ellis for the many diverse and rich issues of this Journal which appeared under his editorship.

Some of the most important work that the Association does is through its pilgrimages, and pilgrimage is the dominant theme of this issue, as members of the AECA share their memories of journeys made to Armenia, Georgia, Ethiopia, and Istanbul. While Eastern churches here in Britain can attract the Western Christian by their exotic strangeness, to see them on their home soil can be to understand Christianity with new minds and to experience it with new senses, in a wholly other cultural, political, historical and geographic context. To journey in a way that enables us to see the vulnerability and courage with which so many Christians have to profess their faith can help us strip away many of the purely contextual assumptions which colour our own belief. We are indebted to John Thorne, William Cooper Bailey, Marion Syms, and Jonathan Collis for sharing their experiences in a way that enriches our common pilgrim journey toward God's Kingdom. John Salter rounds off this issue with a journey in time back to the origins of the Association.

—PETER DOLL



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## An Account of the 2006 AECA Pilgrimage to Armenia

John Thorne

IT has been my privilege and pleasure once again to go on pilgrimage with the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association. However things did start badly with a two-hour delay in our flight to Yerevan, and things did not improve on landing in the early hours when Bishop Geoffrey and I discovered that our cases were missing. We were left for three days with what we stood up in plus the very small amount of hand luggage allowed after the recent security scare. This certainly did not prevent my enjoying a wonderful spiritual journey in both Armenia and the disputed territory of Nagorno Karabakh.

On our first day, after looking at the fascinating manuscripts preserved in the *Matenadaran* (Institute of Ancient Manuscripts) we visited the *Armenian Genocide Memorial* – twelve huge stone columns representing the twelve Turkish states where one and a half million Armenians were massacred in 1915. We each laid a carnation round the central flame. Lord Robert Cecil speaking in the House of Lords said 'No more horrible crime has been committed in the history of the world' (Hansard, 16 November 1915). Sadly few people know about this terrible tragedy, and the Turks deny it ever happened. I have put a note in my diary for 24 April, the anniversary of the Armenian Massacre Proclamation, and intend to remember it every year in my prayers on that day.

In the evening we went to the magnificent Yerevan Opera House where the Armenian National Dance Group gave a splendid performance to a packed audience.

Next morning after our daily matins we made for the mountains. We had excellent views of *Mount Ararat*, five and a half thousand metres high, snow capped with its thirty glaciers, and estimated to be three million years old. Sadly this holy mountain, so important in Armenian culture, where Noah's Ark is said to have landed after the flood, is now in Turkish territory. We travelled in our comfortable bus near the river Arak, where Armenians fought against Hitler. It is a fer-



tile area with many almond and apricot trees and egg plants. We visited the two thousand year old temple of Mithras at *Garni* rebuilt between 1969 and 1975 after a disastrous earthquake in 1679, and now looking splendid with its twenty-four huge columns and nine steep entrance steps. Close to the temple are the remains of other buildings. On the west side are the remains of a seventh-century church, while north-west of the church was a palace and beyond it a bath house. The bath house has a mosaic floor underneath a modern shelter.

Seven kilometres further on brought us to the *Geghard* ('Spear') Monastery, one of the great sites of Armenia and on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2000 with its 13<sup>th</sup> Century cave churches. The main buildings of the monastery are surrounded by walls on three sides and the cliff face on the other. The spear which, tradition tells us, pierced the side of Jesus used to be kept here but is now to be found in the treasury at Holy Echmiadzin. Bishop Geoffrey said a prayer by the holy water stream and we sang one of Charles Wesley's great hymns. Outside we climbed the picturesque stone bridge and admired the wonderful mountain scenery. The bushes nearby were strewn with strips of cloth symbolizing the offering of prayers. Some of us remember seeing the same thing on our Cornish Pilgrimage many years ago. We then went back to Garni for a healthy alfresco meal including pork chops and roast potatoes with home made vodka at forty pence a glass.

Early next morning Bishop Geoffrey and I managed to retrieve our lost luggage in time for our adventurous eight hour journey to Nagorno Karabakh. We stopped en route at the monastery of *Khor Virap* ('Deep Dungeon'), the most important of all Armenian shrines, where St. Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned for thirteen years. Some of us descended the ladder into his subterranean cell where there was only a small hole 18" by 9" to allow food to be passed through. After his release, traditionally said to be have happened in 301, Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity as the state religion. Bishop Geoffrey read some prayers of St. Nerses; the sun was shining and the weather hot. For a small sum you could buy a pigeon to release with a prayer attached to its leg.

At mid-day we stopped to buy fruit and provisions for a picnic lunch taken at *Noravank* ('New Monastery'), set in a spectacular gorge. The 9th to 13th century buildings consist of two churches with many carved stones (Katchkars) on the outside of St. Gregory's church.

There are two remarkable tympana (one above the other separated by a window opening) at the church of St. John the Baptist. The carved relief of the upper one shows God the Father with almond shaped eyes looking straight ahead while a dove is entangled in his beard. He is raising his right hand in blessing while holding a head (possibly that of John the Baptist) in his left. The lower tympanum is semi-circular and shows Mary sitting with Jesus in her arms on a patterned rug which is adorned with tassels. In the 13th century the notorious Mongol leader Tamerlane came here, but he was lenient with the people.

We journeyed on through the magnificent mountains in clear sunshine. Suddenly, near the border of Nagorno Karabakh, thick fog descended, but we were lucky enough to get the mountain views on our return journey. In the evening we arrived at Stepanakert, the mountain capital of this unrecognised country with no embassies and booked in for two nights at the Hotel Nairo. The Australian flag flew proudly behind the reception counter; the owner was an Australian Armenian. We were taken to a large restaurant where the meal of cold chicken and chips tasted surprisingly good. The electricity kept going off but candles were provided.

Next morning we had a hearty breakfast of freshly cooked omelettes and delicious damson jam with the stones still in. After matins we visited the centre of the town. It had wide boulevards, a large parliament building and a new cathedral under construction. Our next visit took us to the Museum of the Struggle for Nagorno Karabakh 1988-1991. Photos of the 3,150 dead young soldiers, the cream of the nation, covered the walls. They died in the struggle against Azerbaijan. This Christian land had been given, out of spite, by Stalin to a Moslem country deliberately to divide up the Armenian 'troublemakers'. We drove along an unmetalled road and had another excellent alfresco lunch with lots of mulberry vodka to the accompaniment of live folk music.

Next morning, in the rain, we visited *Gandazar* ('Treasure Mountain') Monastery – a name derived from the presence of silver deposits in the district – the most important monastery in the country. Unfortunately Archbishop Pargev was away, but we were generously entertained by Fr. Hovanes, the parish priest. The church claims to contain the head of John the Baptist hidden under the high altar. For five hundred years the Armenian Catholicos resided here, and we saw many of their graves. Fr. Hovanes told us that all the churches were



closed during communist times. The church was re-opened in 1989 but bombed by the Azeris in 1992. Fr. Hovanes, who fought bravely in the war, showed us a live bomb buried in the wall. We were given refreshments in the newly built seminary shortly to be opened for fourteen students. At the moment there are only fifteen priests in the diocese. The Divine Liturgy, lasting one and three quarter hours, is celebrated every Sunday. The priest's wife organises a children's choir. After we had had the opportunity to ask Fr Hovanes some questions, we prayed that this country would survive and flourish as part of Armenia.

The next day on our return journey to Yerevan in fine weather we visited the massive, almost white, Shushi cathedral built between 1868 and 1887. The church was closed by Stalin during the Soviet period when it was used variously as a granary, a garage and a munitions store, but was re-consecrated on 18 July 1998. The bell tower decorated with angels playing musical instruments which stands beside the Cathedral was built earlier in 1858. Prior to 1988 the town had a mixed Armenian and Azeri population. Now the Azeri population has gone while the Armenians remain. Half the blocks of flats are occupied, the other half are burnt-out shells.

On the way back to Yerevan we exchanged our coach for three mini-buses for a rather hair-raising journey along rough unmetalled roads with deep potholes towards Tatev Monastery. We crossed the Satan bridge over the Vorotan river where there was a cave village, inhabited until 1960, which is the seat of the Bishop of Sunic. There is a legend about Tatev Monastery. It is said that the architect could not get down when he finished the cupola of the main church. He cried out *Togh astvats indz ta-tev*, which means 'God give me wings', and so the monastery got its name. Tatev monastery in its heyday in 835 contained 600 monks, philosophers, and a university. The main church, dedicated to SS Peter and Paul, was built in the 10th century but was badly damaged by an earthquake in 1931. It has now been restored except for the belltower, which formerly had three stories. It is planned to complete the restoration of the belltower in due course, which is why the large crane has been left *in situ* for several years – spoiling many visitors' photographs. Outside the church on the south side is a monument erected in 904 called the *gavazan*. It is an octagonal pillar built of small stones with an elaborate cornice and a small khachkar on top. The pillar formerly detected earth tremors by rocking on the horizontal course of

masonry on which it is constructed. It does not appear to have worked for some years, and the lower part is now bound up with rusting iron bands. After a picnic lunch we returned to the Regineh Hotel in Yerevan, had supper and sang Compline.

The next morning, Sunday 17 September, was Holy Cross Day, and we departed for nearby *Echmiadzin*, the 'Canterbury' of Armenia. A synod of bishops was taking place during the next few days, and we worshipped with the Catholicos of Cilicia, the Supreme Catholicos of All Armenia, and bishops from all over the world. Archbishop Nerses, formerly the Armenian bishop in London, celebrated the Liturgy accompanied by a wonderful choir. He welcomed us in his sermon. The Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches, welcomes Anglicans and other Christians to communion. Afterwards we were graciously received by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Catholicos and an old friend of Bishop Geoffrey. By coincidence I was at Choral Evensong in Winchester Cathedral when Bishop Geoffrey, then Bishop of Basingstoke, and Bishop Karekin, then Archbishop of Ararat, attended the service. In the afternoon we were able to visit the open air art market in Yerevan – the Vernissage.

Next day we visited the monastery of *Haghartsin*, dating from the 10th Century and once a great liturgical and musical centre with three hundred monks and one of Armenia's most visited monasteries, beautifully situated in woodlands. An important school of church music became established here which developed a new system of notation for the Armenian Liturgy. Fr. Sassum, the Vicar General, greeted us on arrival and told us something about the monastery. Among the buildings which can be seen is the monastic bakery – which has been re-opened and from which we enjoyed some delicious freshly baked bread. Bishop Geoffrey celebrated the Eucharist in the main church. Afterwards we admired the wooded mountain scenery and inspected a seven hundred year old walnut tree which still produces plenty of nuts.

We left Haghartsin for an excellent fish lunch on the shores of the huge freshwater Lake Sevan, after which we visited the nearby seminary where one hundred and twenty five young cassocked students between the ages of seventeen and twenty sang national songs for us. We then followed them up the two hundred steps to the ancient church of the Mother of God where they sang Vespers. The Assistant Dean told us about the daily routine of the college with its twenty two lecturers and



twelve priests and deacons. The money for this splendid new building came from expatriate Armenians in America. Things appear to have changed considerably since 1830 when a visitor to the monastery reported that the regime was extremely strict with no meat, no wine, no youths and no women, and that it served as a reformatory for those monks banished for their misdemeanours from Echmiadzin. Great plans are in hand to re-populate some of the ancient monasteries. The sight of one hundred and twenty five young trainee priests in cassocks was a deeply moving experience that you would not find anywhere in western Europe, although I have seen something similar in Odessa. We stopped to collect pieces of obsidian, a black semi-precious stone, on the return journey.

The next day we inspected huge carved letters of the Armenian alphabet erected to mark the sixteen hundredth anniversary of this Indo-European language. We continued to Mount Aragats, reaching the ruins of the mighty stone fortress of *Amberd* with its nearby church where we sang the *Angelus* and *Regina Coeli*, it being about midday. The fortress and the church are beautifully situated on the southern slope of Mount Aragats at an altitude of over 2000 metres. We drove from here to a church in the village of *Oshakan* where Mesrop Mash-tots, the creator of the Armenian language, is buried.

Next day we returned to Echmiadzin to visit the museums and the church of *St. Hiripsime*, who was one of the refugee martyrs from Rome in the late 3rd century. The church was built in 618 over the mausoleum of the saint which was constructed in 395. In the afternoon we had the opportunity to visit various features of Yerevan, including the fruit and vegetable market – a truly magnificent sight – and a brandy factory where those who came enjoyed samples of two year old, ten year old and twenty year old brandy.

Our last day coincided with the 15th anniversary of Armenian independence. The military fly-past delayed our departure flight by two hours. This was the end of another wonderful AECA pilgrimage. I am sure I speak for all twenty-eight pilgrims in thanking Fr. David Bond for all his hard work in organising this hugely successful venture and Bishop Geoffrey Rowell for his wonderful spiritual leadership. His deep and vast experience of Orthodoxy was invaluable. We are all eagerly awaiting Fr. David's future plans.

## On the Platform in Georgia

William Cooper Bailey

**M**ogesalmebit. *Me kartuli ar vitsi*. (Fortunately for you, this means my Georgian vocabulary is now exhausted). The eight huge Orthodox monks in full regalia glowered; the rest of the audience, mostly Tbilisilebi, Armenians with a few Bulgarians and others, applauded. Fr. Patrick de Laubier, the session chairman from 'the Catholic Church of Rome in Geneva', nodded approvingly. He clearly hoped that my talk on 'Globalisation and Secularism' at the heart of Georgian Orthodoxy in the Caucasus last November would be a little less controversial than the monk who had spent his slot demonstrating vigorously and in great detail with slides in Georgian which no-one could read why 'There will be no forgiveness either in this world, or in the world to come for those heretics who use the Gregorian Calendar'.

Fortunately I had been well briefed by the Orthodox Institute in Cambridge, and when asked in June to submit the synopsis of a paper which I would like to submit to a conference in Tbilisi in November on the subject 'Christianity, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow', I had not only chosen well among the 19 different topics on offer, but had got both the synopsis and final paper approved by the Georgian Patriarchate – the only English representative to do so (unless you count an English Orthodox monk living in Italy, or a Welshman) for presentation to their Symposium, and one of only about five non-Orthodox. The Symposium was a major event that was advertised on many posters in Tbilisi. There were over 2000 at the opening plenary session, before the conference broke into subgroups, of which 'Globalisation and Secularism' was one, with simultaneous translation into Georgian and English.

My advice from Cambridge had been good. I stressed that I was making a pilgrimage to their historic apostolic country (St Andrew is said to have visited it) in the footsteps of St Nino (who as we all know converted the Georgians in the mid 4th century), gently rubbing in St Alban (who had been martyred some years earlier) and of course those famous saints such as Augustine (carefully omitting which Augustine one was talking about), Aidan, Wilfrid, Bede (perhaps this country's



greatest theologian, and venerated also by the Orthodox) and the many others with which our sceptered isle is permeated. The Georgians in general might not be able to distinguish between an Anglican, a Catholic, a Scientologist, a Moonie, a Jehovah's Witness or a Lutheran, but even they could not really argue with a country whose Christianity had predated St Nino.

The conference though lasted for only 3 days of the official 8 day visit, most of the rest of the time being taken up with two visits to the Patriarch, and visits to the magnificent new huge Orthodox cathedral – reputedly the largest in the Caucasus – in stunning traditional Georgian architecture on a hill overlooking the pleasant leafy Caucasian town of Tbilisi, and to other notable churches and monasteries. It was the second anniversary of the Rose revolution, and one sensed that strains were severe, with agriculture having largely failed (it was uncertain who owned the land and the livestock), and uncertainty at government level. It seemed that the country was trying to turn away from Russia (whom they had invited in several centuries ago to look after their foreign policy) towards the West, but with little idea of how to do it and with few contacts or border crossings, apart from Turkey whom they fondly hoped would soon be in the European Union, so they could follow on.

The Government seemed to have some idea of what to do – removing the £70 tourist visa charge was a good start, but the lack of food and basic commodities meant that some areas – notably Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia – tended to look wistfully towards Russia and the good old days when food was certain and copious. They wanted jam now rather than jam at an ill-defined moment in the future.

Organisation tended towards the chaotic, and one sensed that it reflected Soviet organisation and planning, using an international symposium to impress foreigners but without a Western conference's norms and standards, yet they were clearly intent on moving in a more open direction.

Visits to monasteries were also illuminating, although it was clear that basics such as the nature of Christianity or monasticism in this country could not be taken for granted. The Georgians have a magnificent history with buildings from the fifth century onwards, and although somewhat distant from Western Europe, these could yet become an attractive and fascinating destination if and when the country

opens up. A second departure gate at Tbilisi airport would be a good start.

Ah yes. Globalisation and Secularism did I say? Very topical today, especially in this era of global organisations, but not actually very new. The Roman Empire was undoubtedly the greatest example of globalisation the world has ever seen. Definitely not secular though: you could have almost any combination of gods (or none) that took your fancy (provided the Emperor was included). How this globalisation got broken down by Constantine, Diocletian and others who split both (deliberately) the Empire and (accidentally) the Church, and how this is starting to be repaired by cheap travel (trains in the 19th century), and more recently the Internet, e-mail and chat rooms at minimal cost, was a story which took about 50 minutes or 3000 words to relate. You too can have a copy on request by contacting me at [wjcbaily@gmail.com](mailto:wjcbaily@gmail.com).\*

William Cooper Bailey  
10<sup>th</sup> April 2006

\* In English. If your English is not too good, the Georgian version should be available sometime. Bearing in mind that at the time of my talk, the Georgians could distribute neither my synopsis (submitted some four months earlier) nor my detailed paper (submitted six weeks earlier) even in the original English to the simultaneous translators, it might be quicker for you to start learning English. We have only 26 letters in our alphabet as opposed to 39 in Georgian, so your progress should be rapid.



With the Ethiopian Orthodox  
Tewahedo Church, Easter 2006:  
A Journey Back in Time

Marion M. Syms

*A report on a pilgrimage led by the Rt Revd Michael Jackson,  
Bishop of Clogher, and the Revd William Taylor,  
Chairman of the AECA*

SO this was Ethiopia 1998 -- where the 13-month year commenced in September and the day at 6.00 a.m. (We stayed on GMT to avoid total confusion!) This was Ethiopia, where Semitic, Asian and African traditions blend together and where the people are proud to retain their own unique Amharic script. This was Ethiopia -- the home of coffee, where the berries were originally chewed by the monks of old to ward off sleep during lengthy devotions and where, today, the aroma of pounded beans roasting over a charcoal brazier mingles with the heady scent of incense and spices.

It was early on Maundy Thursday and excitement mounted as our plane hovered over Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's sprawling young capital city, surrounded by aromatic eucalyptus groves -- a bustling and culturally diverse diplomatic centre, home to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

I was shocked to see women bent beneath back-breaking loads of firewood and young adults bearing in their body the legacy of polio and trachoma. Animals, pedestrians and traffic jostled together along the crowded streets, filled with the chatter of the eighty-plus indigenous language groups and immigrants from Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda.

We were greeted by Abba Solomon, the ecumenical officer of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who was to be our companion for the next eleven days, and headed for Holy Trinity Cathedral and the Patriarchal Liturgy and 'foot-washing' (for men only -- decorum substituted

'hand-washing' for women). Here we were shown some of Ethiopia's treasures: dazzling illuminated ancient goat skin manuscripts and icons.

We touched base with St Matthew's Anglican Church and were reminded that Ethiopia, plagued by coups, border conflicts, wide-scale drought and massive refugee problems, has increasingly had to rely upon external aid to survive. World Bank GNP rankings in 2002 put Ethiopia second to last in the world, with an annual income per head of only \$100 (compared to the sub-Saharan average of \$460). However, remembering that in the 1970s only 7% of the population could read and write, Ethiopia can be justly proud of its recent progress. We heard something of the impressive work being done by St Matthew's Church, with its significant presence in each of the major refugee camps in the west of the country (you can find out more on [stmatthewaddis.org](http://stmatthewaddis.org)).

Close to the Eritrean border, the ancient northern city of Axum, capital of the Axumite Kingdom, lies at the meeting point of Africa and Asia. Early in the fourth century, Christianity became the official creed of the Axumite Kingdom, making Ethiopia one of the oldest cradles of Christendom. Ge'ez, the language into which the Bible was originally translated, emerged as the official language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a Church which to this day remains truly inculturated, with a tradition rich in monastic influences and profoundly shaped by Jewish Old Testament ideas and values.

Ethiopian history has it that Menilek I was born to the Queen of Sheba from her union with King Solomon. As a young man, Menilek traveled to Jerusalem and returned with the fabled Ark of the Covenant taken from the Temple. According to Ethiopian belief, the Ark has remained in the ancient capital of Axum ever since. The Ark is kept in a chapel annexed to the church of St Mary of TSION in the care of a single monk, who, after his appointment to the post of Guardian, never leaves the compound.

It was to the small town of Axum that we journeyed early on the morning of Good Friday. We flew over the parched mountainous landscape, with its deserts and lakes and the mighty Blue Nile, to join the Good Friday Liturgy with Archbishop Isaias at St Mary of TSION, the most important church in the whole of Christian Ethiopia. We joined the hundreds of *natala*-clad fasting worshipers inside the church surrounded by many more non-fasting worshipers outside, all with a quiet reverence, sitting, standing, sleeping or leaning on prayer sticks. The



six-hour liturgy was occasionally punctuated by cross-carrying priestly processions beneath ornate brocade umbrellas and ended in clouds of dust as triumphant shrieking worshippers beat the ground in symbolic victory over the devil with cries of 'it is finished'. An almost carnival atmosphere followed. Perhaps we were sharing in an expression of faith that is truer to its original forms and precepts than any branch of more recent European Christendom?

A casual observer will notice certain similarities between Ethiopia's two great faiths, Christianity and Islam. In many towns the cry of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer five times a day can often be heard blending with the broadcast of the Christian liturgy emanating from near-by churches. Inside both church and mosque, worshippers stand or sit barefoot on splendidly carpeted floors and frequently engage in similar bodily actions in the course of their prayer routine.

As the Kingdom of Axum eventually declined, Lalibela emerged as the next capital – the 'New Jerusalem' built by King Lalibela in the 12th century with remarkable speed and 'the help of angels'. With its numerous rock-hewn and cave-hewn churches, Lalibela forms a living-sculpture to the glory of God. It stands as a testimony to the faith and vigor of the early Ethiopian Christian church, a faith which endures to this day.

It was to the remote mountain town of Lalibela that we flew for the liturgy of Holy Saturday. Livestock was much in evidence: hump-backed longhorn cattle, sheep and goats and chickens. Ethiopia probably has more livestock than any other African country, though on Holy Saturday much of it was heading reluctantly for the Easter cook pot as people joyfully walked (often barefoot) home from market. Later that weekend smoke from innumerable cooking fires spiraled up to mingle with the gathering darkness and the air was filled with convivial conversation and laughter. No wonder, because this was a feast day (and rumour has it that, for clergy, there are some 256 fasting days in the church's calendar!). Tragically a water shortage prevents the cultivation of much of the available land, and vegetables do not feature much in Ethiopian diet, the staple food being *Injera*, a brown pancake-like bread which doubles up as plate and cutlery.

In Lalibela we waited within the cool dark tomb-like walls of the Bete Maryam (House of Mary) rock-hewn church for the Easter Vigil to begin and to witness the joyous celebration of Christ's resurrection.

It was enough just to be a part of that tangled seething mass of humanity, both young and old, fasting, sitting, standing, dancing, sleeping, drumming and singing. In Ethiopia, truth is lived, not read. It was enough just to be there for hours into the night, watching the carefully choreographed dance of the priests and passing on the light from the paschal fire with our flimsy home-made candles. A hasty exit through the distant doorway was not realistic. It appears that health and safety legislation has yet to reach the Tigray district of Ethiopia!

The following day some from our group mule-trekking up steep and narrow pathways high into the hills above Lalibela with its monastery buildings clinging precariously to the mountain sides. Others stayed behind to enjoy the clear invigorating mountain air, the profundity of flowers and the colourful bird life which mirrors the diversity of the Ethiopian landscape and peoples. There were also many more of the rock-hewn and cave-hewn churches to explore.

Though still places of active worship and a focus for thousands of Christians converging from the surrounding area, subsidence, water ingress and erosion have taken their toll on the rock-hewn churches. For some, protective canopies (thanks to UNICEF) have now been erected. Religion lies at the very core of Ethiopian creativity and civilisation, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a store-house of the national culture. The nation's many treasures – crosses, vestments, illuminated manuscripts, wall paintings and dazzling icons – lie dispersed in churches and monasteries, largely uncatalogued and often stored in the most unsuitable conditions. They become objects of neglect, theft and destruction, easy targets for the unscrupulous souvenir hunter or those wanting to make a quick buck, to say nothing of damage by damp, mice and termites and constant turning of the pages of the precious illuminated manuscripts.

Our next flight took us southwards to the modern city of Bahar Dar, on the edge of Lake Tana, where we saw something of the work of the Jerusalem Children's and Community Development Organisation among people with HIV/AIDS. Impressively, the word 'dependency' does not feature in their vocabulary. They aim to enable communities to take care of their orphaned and vulnerable children and to become more self-reliant. The women are trained in bio-intensive horticulture to provide food for their families in miniscule backyard plots, using household organic waste and a minimum of water and labour.



Tana is Ethiopia's largest lake and monastic retreats can be found on some 20 of the lake's islands. Visitors are welcomed (though in some cases, only men have access) to the island monastery churches with their sense of timelessness and permanence which the passing of years cannot erase. Biblical stories, depicted in the dazzling paintings which covered every inch of monastery church walls, were vivaciously retold by our young and enthusiastic local guide. On some islands the monastery is part of a local community with its children anxious to sell small models of the papyrus boats which ply the waters of the lake.

The decline of Lalibela was eventually followed by the emergence of Gondar, founded in the 17th century by Emperor Fasiladas, as the political centre. The road to Gondar stretches around the edge of Lake Tana and was littered with rusting tanks and trucks, reminders of recent conflict. Here we toured the castles of Emperor Fasiladas and his descendants and visited the church of Debre Berhan Selassie with its remarkable murals depicting the crucifixion of Christ, the Trinity and the story of George and the dragon and its famous painted ceiling covered by the faces of angels. Gondar remained the capital of the realm until the mid-19th century, when it was finally overtaken by Addis Ababa. We bade farewell to Gondar watching the 5am Sunday dawn break over the city and listening to the Christian and Muslim calls to prayer wafting across the valley.

As we flew back to Addis, we looked down on the blue Nile, prayerfully contemplating that river's remarkable journey from Lake Tana and the wild and inaccessible regions of Ethiopia, through the plains of the Sudan and eventually through Egypt to the Mediterranean. Back in Addis we realised that there were vast areas to the south and east of the country which we had yet to explore and were reminded of the more recent rise of an 'urban monasticism' which has led to a Sunday School movement for adults as well as children.

As we journeyed fast-forward to London Heathrow and the year 2006 we reflected that perhaps one of the most attractive aspects of Ethiopia today is the way in which the drive towards modernisation harmonises with the traditional values of a rich and ancient culture. Here, one has the sense of a settled, mature community that will never lose sight of its own unique identity. A mood of continuity links past to present, and present to future, suggesting that this country will take

what it needs from technology, but will not allow itself to be overwhelmed by the technological ethos – or at least not yet. An old society engaged in rediscovering and reinterpreting itself, Ethiopia has about it a tranquility and a certitude that are rare in today's world.

*Perhaps it would be good to re-visit Ethiopia in September 2007 for their millennial celebrations? Alternatively you might like to read the insightful novel: The Chains of Heaven - An Ethiopian Romance, by Philip Marsden (Harper Collins).*

*This article first appeared in the house journal of Christians Aware, an international and inter-denominational organisation working to develop multi-cultural understanding and friendship. Christians Aware offers varied opportunities for listening and encounter between Christians and with those of other faiths. It seeks to work for understanding, justice and peace, locally, nationally and internationally. For more information go to <http://www.christiansaware.co.uk> or e-mail [barbarabutler@christiansaware.co.uk](mailto:barbarabutler@christiansaware.co.uk).*



## Report of a Visit to Constantinople, July 2006

*Jonathan Collis*

AS Chaplain of Jesus College, Cambridge, I attempt to broaden the horizons of the students here, not least because my own experience as a Cambridge undergraduate was enormously enriched by trips the Chaplain undertook to parts of the world nervous eighteen year olds were unlikely to visit themselves. Accordingly, this year I organised a visit of a week to Istanbul for 11 students, mostly undergraduates, from the college, assisted by a grant from the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association. The connection with Istanbul came about some years ago as my wife did a PhD in geology that was jointly supervised by Istanbul Technical University, and on one of my visits to her in western Anatolia I discovered the Anglican Chaplaincy in Istanbul and the ministry of the Chaplain and Apokrisiarios, Canon Ian Sherwood. During my time at Westcott House I was privileged to do a placement with Ian and also at the Phanar, working for the then Grand Archdeacon on English language correspondence.

So, armed with my wife's linguistic skills and a variety of contacts, we set off on 22 July. My family and I stayed at the Parsonage, as I was also undertaking locum cover for Ian Sherwood during his leave. The ministry of the Chaplaincy was of interest to the students, as it stands at the interface of some interesting phenomena – expatriate life, refugees from all over the world, the diplomatic world, Islam and ecumenical work. My aim during such a short visit was to introduce people to the questions these encounters raise. None had been inside an Orthodox church or a mosque, and they came from a variety of religious traditions – Anglican, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist. The Muslim call to prayer five times a day gave all a shock!

As part of an historical introduction to the city, we walked around Pera and Galata, and then went over to the old city of Stamboul, where we went inside the Blue Mosque and also Hagia Sophia. Side excursions to the bazaars and the Princes' Islands illustrated other aspects of the life of the city. Three visits in particular were valuable. The first was to the Phanar, where we had the benefit of a guided tour by Paul Gikas, who introduced us to Orthodoxy by means of the explication of the

parts of St George's Cathedral. Secondly, we went to Eyub, the third holiest shrine in Sunni Islam just outside the city walls where Job, a companion of the Prophet, is buried. That was a compelling introduction to everyday Turkish Islam, in shrine and mosque. Interestingly, both at the Phanar and at Eyub there was a great sense of warmth towards us as western Christians in these troubled times. The third visit was to the British Consulate-General, where Chris Kealy from the Press Office gave us a tour round the splendidly restored former embassy and spoke of the relationship between Britain and Turkey in the contemporary world – a topic fraught with hazard, especially in the light of the terrible bombing of the Consulate-General three years ago.

Naturally, there was time for less formal activities – my wife took several of the girls off for a Turkish bath, and much shopping was done, though no one seemed tempted by the leeches on sale in the Spice Bazaar, despite their well-known therapeutic qualities. All in all, the verdict from those who came was that it had been a trip which had informed their Christian lives and broadened their understanding of the traditions and context of Orthodoxy and Islam, as well as seeing how the Anglican tradition in the shape of its chaplaincy work can interact fruitfully with them.



## Notes on the History of the Anglican & Eastern Churches Association

*The Reverend A. T. J. Salter*

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

Under that railway bridge in 1906 the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, in its present form, was born. A thorough search of the archives of the Association has, however, failed to unearth any evidence of this meeting, so it could be part of the Anglo-Catholic mythology of the period. Nevertheless, there was a definite merger of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Union and the Eastern Church Association. The latter had been founded in 1864 on the initiative of John Mason Neale and others, supported by Pusey, Keble and Liddon. The Union was in some part the child of the layman, Athelstan Riley, seigneur de La Trinité, a leisured Anglo-Catholic layman. Mr Henry Fynes-Clinton had been put up for membership of the Union on 26 June 1897 whilst an undergraduate at Trinity College, Oxford, and still a layman by no less an ecumenist than William Birbeck, secretary of the Union, who had spent some time travelling in Russia. Despite the prestige in Anglican and Orthodox circles of his sponsor, it seems that Fynes-Clinton was not at first accepted as a member, for we find him proposed again for membership on 14 May 1899 when he was a tutor in a noble family in Imperial Russia. He was still a layman and resident at Smolensky Boulevard, Moscow, in the house of a Mr Morosoff (Dom Morosoff). In 1933 Fynes-Clinton and Fr Robert Corbould, Rector of Carshalton, on one side, and J. A. Douglas and Athelstan Riley on the

other, were to clash (of this later) and from that row (catalogued in the archives of the Association as 'The Great Fynes-Clinton Row') began the decline of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, into which they had put so much of their energy and expertise.

A hundred years ago the Anglican and Eastern Churches' Association met with phenomenal success. Why was this so? A hundred years ago English society was very unlike our own today, politically and ecclesiastically. When a great deal of the world atlas was coloured pink to indicate the extent and power of the British Empire, if there was any trouble in the Balkans, a British gun-boat could work wonders, often to the benefit of the Orthodox. Ecclesiastically it was the golden age of the leisured Anglo-Catholic layman, personified in such figures as Athelstan Riley; Lord Halifax; Sam Gurney; Sir Hubert Miller, Bart., the feudal squire of Froyle, whose gamekeepers, valets, butlers and parlour maids were chosen on their ability to serve solemn High Mass in the village church of The Assumption at Froyle and to sing a passable Schubert in G at 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning; and Diarmid, Duke of Argyll, a bachelor who sang Evensong to himself and God in a falsetto voice in his chapel at Inverary Castle, and who became one of the Founder Guardians, along with Fynes-Clinton, of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

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

The leisured layman and the leisured dilettante priest had heaps of time to devote to Church societies, and societies were often duplicated – hence the societies working for reunion with the Eastern Churches. The sad fact was that leisured, dilettante laity and clergy, waited on



hand and foot in their manors and vicarages, loved a good row. Vestiges of this linger on even today, generally in the closes of our cathedrals. The 'Lincolnshire Handicap' where the Dean and Canons scrap is an unhealthy sign of too many clergy, fixing their own stipends, with too much time on their hands in a tiny town.

Another reason for the Association's success after the Russian Revolution and the later the fall of European monarchies was an English phenomenon, snobbery. Exiled Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses abounded. For the socially ambitious laity like Athelstan Riley and name-droppers like Canon Douglas ('As I was saying only yesterday to Queen Marie of Romania', that sort of thing) friendship with Imperial and Royal personages only began for them when the Tzarist glory days were over. Tsarskoe-Selo, the Winter Palace, Kotrocheny Palace, Tatoi, Mon Repos, Sofia and Belgrade had never known them, unless amid an enormous assembly in the state apartments. The Association members welcomed them to Wilderness House and Nashdom, but Association life was by no means entirely social climbing amid the Romanoffs, the Galitzines, the Karageorgevitches and the Glucksburgs-Sondeberg-Glucksburgs. It also had a social conscience about human rights, refugees and genocide as it entered one of the most murderous centuries of the human race. The Association took a stand over the Armenian massacres. Douglas had rescued, when he was Chaplain in Constantinople, the then carpet merchant Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, during an attack on Armenian homes. He was thus instrumental in creating 'Mr 5%', when Gulbenkian went into oil in Persia. As a token of the Armenians' gratitude, Douglas was invited in the 1920s to consecrate one of the pillars supporting the baldachino over the altar in the exquisite church of St Sarkis in Inverna Gardens, Kensington, which Calouste had built in memory of his parents. The church is a copy of a church on Lake Van. People in high places were lobbied by members of the Association over the massacres, which the Turkish government still denies ever took place. The Association knew differently.

When our smallest ally of World War I, the Assyrian Christians' force, was let down very badly by the British Government in 1918, leaving them to the mercies of the Turks and Kurds, it was people like the Reverend Claude Beaufort Moss and his mother who established a fund for aiding the Assyrians. They raised a considerable amount of

money, enabling the Patriarchal Family to be housed in exile in West Ealing.

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

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