

# KOINONIA



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# *Koinonia*

## THE JOURNAL OF THE ANGLICAN & EASTERN CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

### Editorial

EACH WEEK I listen to a podcast that discusses underreported news from around the world. It constantly amazes me how many important stories do not receive even minor coverage, let alone headlines.

Events in Ethiopia, specifically the Tigray region fall into this category. Occasionally surfacing in the mainstream media for the briefest of moments, any stories soon disappear again. In part, this is understandable, as hard facts and verified sources are often hard to come by. In addition there is as much disinformation as there is information. Nevertheless, the conflict and ensuing suffering of the people of Ethiopia as a consequence is real, and in only the last few days there have been reports of widespread famine.

This edition of *Koinonia* seeks to try and rectify some of that absence of information with three articles by individuals with specialist knowledge. Assefa Genetu is a Deacon in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who in his article 'Ethnic Otherness' seeks to describe the origins and nature of the current situation. He speaks from personal experience and as someone on the ground who has lost six family members to the conflict. Another contributor is the Anglican priest John Binns, who has done more than almost any other Anglican to raise awareness in the UK of the faith and culture of Ethiopia. His article 'The tragedy of Tigray and the Ethiopian Church' gives another perspective on the conflict and how the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has inevitably been caught up in it. Finally, we are honoured to receive an article from the Ethiopian Ambassador to Great Britain, His Excellency Teferi Melesse Desta, entitled 'Stand with Ethiopia', in which he calls for greater international support. May I ask all members of the AECA to keep the people of Ethiopia and the situation there in your prayers.

The AECA is delighted to publish the full text of last year's excellent Constantinople Lecture 'Secularism, Orthodoxy and Europe', delivered by Fr Dragos Herescu, principal of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies,

Cambridge. The News and Notices section contains information about this year's lecture in November. I am also grateful to Matthew Phillips on the ecumenical significance of Archbishop Michael Ramey's understanding of Anglicanism, which describes him as prophetic of a 'koinonia ecclesiology' that remains significant for all who seek the unity of the Church. This edition also contains two book reviews, the first by Dimitris Salapatas explores the influence of the current Patriarch Daniel upon the Romanian Orthodox Church. The second by James Roberts, a doctoral student in Oxford, reviews a book on the eastern theology of salvation.

Finally, I wish to draw readers' attention to a request from Bartholomew the Ecumenical Patriarch to consider meeting in 2025 to mark the 1700th anniversary of the first Council of Nicaea so that the churches might walk together more closely in the future by reflecting on their common past. This anniversary is a great opportunity for imaginative and significant engagement between Christians east and west and we should begin to consider now what events and worship will mark this important ecumenical occasion in just a few years' time.

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# Contributors

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His Excellency TEFERI MELESSE DESTA is Ethiopia’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom. He assumed his tenure in London in September 2020 and brings with him more than 30 years’ experience in diplomacy having served at various posts within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at Ethiopian missions abroad.

ASSEFA GENETU, a Deacon in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was born near to Gondar, the Imperial Capital of Ethiopia he currently lives in Addis Ababa and is a Tour Guide and Operator of his own company Ethiopia Odyssey.

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## News and Notices

### *Constantinople Lecture 2021*



The AECA is pleased to announce that the 2021 Constantinople Lecturer is Carol Harrison the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the university of Oxford and a Lay Canon of Christ Church Cathedral. Professor Harrison's research is in the Early Church and Patristic period especially Augustine of Hippo (354-430). The title of her lecture is 'The Voice of the Holy Spirit'. As in previous years the lecture is kindly hosted by the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Sophia, Moscow Road and will take place on the evening of Thursday 25th November, preceded by Vespers and followed by a reception. Please save the date and further details on timings and how to book will follow shortly.

# Secularism, Orthodoxy, and Europe<sup>1</sup>

DRAGOS HERESCU

LET ME start by saying what an honour it is to have been asked to deliver this year's Constantinople Lecture by the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association – truly a venerable organisation, having been a pioneer of ecumenical life-sharing between the Anglican and the Orthodox Churches, all the way to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

The three words that make up the title of this talk warrant a separate lecture of their own, so in preparing for this I asked myself: What would be the word, the idea that can tie them together in a way that makes this paper deliverable in 30 to 40 minutes? It seems to me that that word is “*relevance*”. It sits just beneath the surface of what is at stake in relation to religion today in Europe, including the Orthodox Church – or Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Another observation to be made from the onset is that no talk about religion in society today, with its unavoidable secular backdrop, can be done in the kind of “regional insulation” that was possible even 30 years ago, when communism and the Iron Curtain were still around. Today, globalisation, migration, new opportunities for work and travel, and the internet itself have made the religious milieu much more connected, much more interdependent, and have turned what once were predominantly monochromatic religious spaces into a growing tapestry of faiths and religious traditions inhabiting the same space.

For example, data from the Pew Research Centre in the area of Religion & Public Life, project that in the interval 2010-2050, the makeup of Europe's religious tapestry is likely to change in a significant way, with “Europe's Christian population expected to drop by about 100 million people, falling from 553 million in 2010 to 454 million in 2050”,<sup>2</sup> joined by a slight decline in the Jewish population. The increase is projected to occur in Europe's Muslim population by 63% (from 43 million in 2010 to 71 million in 2050), in the number of the religiously unaffiliated population (about 16% growth, from 140 million in 2010 to 162 million in 2050), and also moderately in the number of Hindus and Buddhists. Data over the 2010-20 decade indicate that religious affiliation in Europe dropped from 74.5% of the population to 72.2% for Christians, whereas

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<sup>1</sup> Delivered as the Constantinople Lecture 2020 via Zoom.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/europe/>

it grew from 5.9% to 6.8% for Muslims, and from 18.8% to 20% for those declaring no religious affiliation.<sup>3</sup>

In simpler numeric terms, by 2050, the Christian population is projected to have a steady negative -0.5% annual growth, the unaffiliated a 0.4 annual growth, and the Muslim population a 1.2% compound annual growth. I will not venture further down the rabbit whole of statistical analysis, but will suffice to say that what these numbers paint in relation to religion in society is both a picture of increased *relevance* and *irrelevance*. Christianity seems to face a continued crisis of relevance, manifested in declining numbers.

So, when tackling the issues of religious belief and practice vis-à-vis secularism / secularisation, Orthodoxy, and Europe “relevance” seems to be a useful lens. In what sense?

*Secularism* or *secularisation* have at their very core the question of the continued relevance of religion in modern and postmodern society. *Orthodoxy* is witnessing the exacerbation of a process of hermeneutical dissonance between its theology and its practice – which is the gateway towards hermeneutical irrelevance – and this process is now affecting its institutional structures (post Crete, post Ukraine). While the context of the Orthodox diaspora communities in Western Europe is quite different than in Eastern Europe, since in the West parish communities are both more fluid and transitory and made up of a younger demographic, but also more committedly practicing, in Eastern Europe one notices much more of a polarised debate around issues of religion, especially in its institutional and traditional forms,<sup>4</sup> on the backdrop of an ageing or aged practicing membership. As concerns *Europe*, as the statistical data indicates, the issues at hand are those of diversity, pluralism, and tolerance – which all are tethered to the question of the relevance of religion in the public space.

Besides these more sociologically-based concerns, the question of relevance is also a theological question. For me, it comes up in relation to the last words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (His last words on this earth until His coming again): “I am with you always until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). How do we make this known today, as Christians? One recalls that this promise of

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/regions/europe/religious\\_demography#/?affiliations\\_religion\\_id=0&affiliations\\_year=2010](http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/regions/europe/religious_demography#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2010)

<sup>4</sup> See for example the debates in Romania about the erection of the new National Cathedral and the failed constitutional referendum in 2018 on the definition of the family. Also, in Serbia, the deep-running controversy regarding freedom of speech between the Patriarchate and the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade.

Christ cannot be separated by the context in which it was made – that of discipleship, baptism, and teaching, that is to say a context of witness. I wonder whether our condition today, of fragmented and sometimes diverging witness, makes it harder for Christ to be with us? It certainly makes Him less visible, less relevant. So, the question remains: How do we go about, in a secular context, discovering Christ’s continual presence in our own time and place? This is both an external challenge – towards the world – and internal, towards and within the Church. Internally, it has an ecumenical dimension as well as a confessional dimension, so to speak, specific to each Christian tradition.

I aim to further unpack some of these issues in the course of this paper. In doing so, it is important to clarify what this paper will do and not do going forward. What this paper will not do is entertain arguments regarding the virtues or pitfalls of secularism, but it will consider some of the ways in which secularisation impacts Orthodoxy in both Western and Eastern Europe (and the associated secularism it nurtures – whether in the greater misalignment between state and Church or in the growing disenfranchisement of religious institutions or of religious affiliation overall). Similarly, what this paper will not endorse is a complaintive approach to “the West” or a triumphalist orthodoxy, rather it will advocate for an increased “shared ownership” of our ecumenical consciousness on the backdrop of secularisation and increased secularism in Europe. This does not mean the creation of a mix-and-match “syncretic Christianity” where we borrow elements or developments from other Christian Churches. Rather, what I mean is the cultivation of a *keener reciprocal sensitivity to developments* occurring in our respective traditions, developments which could (would/should) inform developments in our own. To that effect, in the last part of this paper I will venture to consider some of the directions which the Orthodox could rediscover (dare I say improve upon!?) and rethink in our own practice.

### *Secularism and secularisation*

Before any of that, it is important to be clear about the terms “secularism” and “secularisation”. Although they are akin, in that they herald a challenge to the relevance of religion (the *relevance* of *Christian* religious life and witness) in society, secularism and secularisation have their own ecologies. Both challenge the relevance of religion at three levels: in the wider societal plane (religion in society), in the ecclesial institutional make up (who are we as Church in the

world), and in the life of individuals (what people believe and practice).<sup>5</sup> Theologically, both are part of the process by which Man (humanity) seeks to assert its relevance autonomously, either independently or in opposition / rejection of God. In that sense, one might say that secularisation has been happening since The Fall. Paraphrasing the British sociologist and theologian David Martin, the process of secularisation is concerned with “the autonomous study of Man in Society”.<sup>6</sup>

I take *secularism*<sup>7</sup> to refer to an attitude vis-à-vis religion in the public sphere. At its best, it is expressed and applied as part of a political or ideological framework which aims to ensure a level playing field for religious organisations and religious practice in society, a “normative commitment to neutrality on the part of the state toward religious affairs”,<sup>8</sup> which includes the separation of Church and State while aiming to ensure (or postulate at least) the freedom of religion, conscience and thought. In practice, secularism occupies a very fragile ground; it is constantly at the intersection of religion, freedom, multiculturalism (or pluralism), and politics, which means that it is easily and carelessly misused or interpreted. It often becomes a byword for secular humanism or atheism. For Christians, it carries echoes of persecution, marginalisation, the loss of political influence, and the implicit – if not explicit – relegation of religion to the realm of “a private matter”. This is one of the main points where secularism and secularisation intersect – and are often confused.

Because the lingering mindset of the Byzantine symphonic model continues to represent the *de facto* blueprint of state-Church relations for the Orthodox, despite sufficient evidence that it was never *the* blueprint but rather a very contextual arrangement of the post-Constantinian era, in the historically Orthodox countries, secularism – understood as the separation of Church and State and as relegating religion to the private sphere – is seen as profoundly “unnatural” by the Church. Every time actions by the political or the civil society push to diminish the fluid bartering middle ground between State and

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<sup>5</sup> This multi-layered perspective on secularisation was pioneered by the Belgian sociologist of religion Karel Dobbelaere. See his book: *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*, 2002, Brussels: Peter Lang.

<sup>6</sup> Martin, D., 2005/2016, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*, Ashgate / Abingdon: Routledge, p. 17

<sup>7</sup> see Copson, A., 2019, *Secularism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: OUP

<sup>8</sup> Kettell, S., 2019, *Secularism and Religion*, in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Retrieved 21 Nov 2020, from <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-898>

Church, this is counteracted by the exercise of a litany of favourable arguments, all rooted in history, tradition, cultural and religious heritage.

In practice, it seems to me, in the East of Europe secularism operates as a seesaw – with the State (politicians) and the Church (leadership) at each end. Until the seesaw is done away with altogether, neither will disrupt the motion. Moreover, what is equally essential in this dynamic is that the centre of balance remains the same, and in the middle of the board. This common centre of balance is made up of several coexisting and overlapping narratives: *ethno-religiosity*, *ethno-nationalism* (with periodic spikes and variable intensities), a *positive interplay between state-building and religion*, *scepticism towards external alien influence* (cultural, political, religious), all toned down by an *overachieving underdog mindset* (if not complex). Both Church and State in the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe will access this reservoir of master-narratives as they negotiate their own mutual relationship, but also their separate identities. For the Orthodox Church, the context of societal secularisation brought about by the collapse of communism in the early 1990s has been a catalyst for revisiting these narratives time and again and has constantly informed the public discourse and national psyche.

*Secularisation* refers to the socio-religious analytical framework (and indeed the process itself) which maps the decline of the relevance of religious institutions, beliefs and practices in modern society. Researchers such as the British sociologist of religion Steve Bruce, for example, map this change (understood as decline) all the way back to the Protestant Reformation,<sup>9</sup> while others<sup>10</sup> will consider the industrial revolution and the subsequent urbanisation (certainly in the UK) as a starting, or at least a pivotal, point in the way the religious make up of (at first) Western society began to experience a decline in religious observance, homogeneity, and eventually relevance. The argument, in a nutshell, is that some time over the last 500 years (!) a profound change occurred in human society that altered the religious makeup of European society, a point beyond which we cannot really go back. Secularisation is here to stay, and despite the occasional flash-flood of religious revival, we are looking at a somewhat inevitable process of “religious desertification”. Certainly, in Europe – or in parts of the world which emulate the western pattern of social democracy, pluralism, and free market economy.

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<sup>9</sup> Bruce, S., 2011, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*, Oxford: OUP

<sup>10</sup> see Brown, C., 2009, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, London: Routledge, Ch. 7.

Without going into overbearing details about the scholarly debate regarding the process of secularisation itself or the operating terms of the paradigm, it is important to say that there are voices such as those of Grace Davie (who famously coined the syntagm “believing without belonging”), the late American sociologist Peter Berger,<sup>11</sup> and indeed the aforementioned David Martin, who propose a less pessimistic outlook for religion in society. Their argument focuses on “religious change rather than decline” (Davie), on postulating that societal secularisation does not necessarily condition the secularisation of consciousness of individuals (Berger), on the revival of interest in the supernatural or “the spiritual”, on the very public reassertion of religious issues from the late 20th century, either because of migration (Martin) or politics (Jose Casanova). Indeed, scholars of this persuasion will point out that religious decline is a case of (Western) European exceptionalism, in stark contrast to developments in South America, Africa, India, or even in the USA. Eastern Europe and the Christian Orthodox context also feature as examples which customarily buck the (Western) secularisation trend. To further complicate the picture, there are researchers<sup>12</sup> who argue the case for a bespoke secularisation paradigm in Eastern Europe and Greece, affecting the Orthodox Church. (The Russian context is specific enough to not be easily assimilated into a generic Eastern Orthodox European pattern, although there are points of overlap).

I myself subscribe to this emerging perspective. Secularisation in the Eastern Orthodox space seems to me to be defined by the confluence of a mutated strand of Western European secularisation on the one hand (social differentiation, pluralism of cultural and religious ideas joined by increased socio-economic mobility, a growing sense of belonging to a European rather than just a local Eastern European identity) and on the other by an increased defensive, conservative and nationalistic reaction by the Orthodox Church – partly as a response to the changes brought about by the former, partly as an internal hermeneutic deficiency in communicating the faith outside its base-demographic (which narrowly includes the post-’89 generation).

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<sup>11</sup> Berger, Peter L. ed., 1999, *The Desecularization of the World*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans

<sup>12</sup> Dungaciu, Dan., *Modernity, Religion and Secularization in the Orthodox Area. The Romanian case*, in Manuel Franzmann, Christel Gärtner, Nicole Köck, eds., 2006, *Religiosität in der säkularisierten Welt*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 241-260 / Halikiopoulou, Daphne., 2011, *Patterns of Secularization. Church, State and Nation in Greece and the Republic of Ireland*, Farnham: Ashgate / Stan, Lavinia & Turcescu, Lucian., 2012, *The Romanian Orthodox Church - From Nation-Building Actor to State Partner*, *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 25, No. 2, *Dominante Kirchen in Europa / Dominant Churches in Europe* (2012), pp. 401-417

## *Orthodox demographics: religious affiliation and practice*

Data from the ever-reliable Pew Research Centre,<sup>13</sup> indicates that out of 260 million Orthodox Christians worldwide, approximately 200 million (or 76%) live in Central and Eastern Europe, with Russia accounting for over 100 million of that number. The largest Orthodox populations in Europe, outside Russia, are in Ukraine with around 35 million, Romania with 18.7 million, and Greece with almost 10 million. When these numbers are scrutinised further, they paint a less monolithic picture – the Orthodox in (Eastern) Europe are far less orthodox than their declared religious affiliation would suggest.<sup>14</sup> While belief in God ranks high at 91%, only around 10% attend church at least weekly. In a sense, the paradigm of “believing without belonging” or its variant of “believing in belonging” (also) coined by Grace Davie to explain shifting religious affiliation and declining numbers in Western Europe, seems to apply in Eastern Europe as well. This is mirrored by the situation in Western Europe, where a 2017 survey<sup>15</sup> of 15 countries showed that Christian identity is claimed by the majority of the resident population (around 70%), although only around 22% would attend services monthly or more. In the UK, for example, the numbers were 18% Church-attending Christians, 55% non-practicing Christians, 23% religiously unaffiliated.

Numbers for the Orthodox diaspora in Western Europe are less reliable, as there are constant variations owing to circular migration and high mobility. For example, in Germany, numbers of Orthodox were around the 1 million mark in 2010, whereas now estimates place these around 2 million. Equally, in the UK, numbers were estimated around 460,000 in 2013 and estimated to top 500,000 in 2020.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, the Office for National Statistics was estimating the numbers of Romanians in the UK to be 427,000, in 2019.

What do these numbers indicate in relation to Orthodoxy?

For Eastern Europe, the low attendance numbers may point to a crisis of relevance and to the establishment of a “de facto civil religion”, where ethno-religious identity is assumed as part of the cultural and historic fabric but not

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christianity-geographic-center-remains-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/30/orthodox-christians-in-europe-more-likely-to-believe-than-practice-their-religion/#:~:text=Orthodox%20Christians%20make%20up%20an,Russia%20to%20Serbia%20to%20Greece.>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://faithsurvey.co.uk/download/csintro2.pdf>

reinforced by an affiliation lived in practice. Equally, they point to what may prove to be, in the secularisation dynamic, an important demographic difference between the Orthodox and other Christian traditions, especially the Protestant, in that both in the 20th century and now in the first quarter of the 21st, the majority of Orthodox Christians continue to live, work, be mobile, and at the same time practice their faith (albeit at varying degrees) *in* Europe. Orthodoxy has not experienced the “Southern hemisphere shift” that occurred in Protestantism (and to a degree, in Catholicism).

### *How secularisation impacts Orthodoxy in both Western and Eastern Europe*

This geographical concentration may lead to a greater intra-European cross-pollination both between the different “Orthodox nationalities” and between diaspora and home communities within the same national Orthodox Church. There is anecdotal evidence that this is already happening. One effect of this may be that an internal “refresh” would occur, which may delay or counteract the effects of secularisation. However, if this local “intra-Orthodox ecumenism” between parishes or local communities fails to translate further up, it will not lead to any meaningful refresh.

There is certainly a new development in European Orthodoxy, which is partly connected to the refresh I mention and possibly connected also to a resistance to the effects of secularisation. This new development is the experience of Orthodoxy as a diaspora, minority religion; made up of minority, mobile, young communities – made up of “aliens and sojourners”. Although pockets of Orthodox communities or parishes have always existed in the West, and in the Far East (one only has to mention the name of St John of Shanghai / San Francisco or of St Innocent of Alaska in this sense), these communities never reached the critical mass that Orthodoxy has reached in Western Europe (and beyond) after 1990, when millions of Romanians and Bulgarians, joined by smaller but consistent numbers of Greeks and Russians ventured and later settled in Western Europe. The communities of St John and St Innocent’s time were also literally oceans apart from their home roots. In Europe, one is at most a 4-hour flight back to Russia, or Greece, or Romania, either for the major holidays or to join a family anniversary. Also, communication on social media has transformed the way faith communities are connected and aware of one another.

I believe that overall, the experience of being a minority faith, of having to travel by car for anything between 20-40 minutes, sometimes more, to get to church on a Sunday – and equally, of having your parish priest travel the same to come to you for a house blessing or to visit a sick relative, all of this has revived Orthodoxy in the West – certainly in the UK. It all goes back to the question of “relevance”. I have spoken with countless people in the parish (and these kind of interactions and experiences are hard to capture in a research context that seeks hard numbers and evidence), countless people who have said to me that after not being much of a church-goer in Romania, for example, they have started going to church here, in the UK. For some, it is a story not unlike that of the prodigal son, who after taking a break from his old-fashioned father, eventually realises what is important, what is relevant, and gives it another go. For others, it is the search for a sense of belonging and of community. For others it is a baptism occasion, where the priest that they initially begrudged for asking them to prepare by reading a Gospel passage, or by learning (re-learning the Creed), and by considering to offer Confession, turns out to be someone who does not need or want their money, but only to make them curious about their inherited faith, and only asks of them and a bit of their time.

Another change uniquely specific to the minority diaspora faith context for the Orthodox has been that most priests are in effect volunteers. They generally do not get paid by the parish or the Church – they tend to have a secular job like their parishioners. They understand what it means to “not have time for church”, but also “to make time for church”, they often feel the same need as their parishioners to discover and hold on to a sense of being and identity that transcends the worth offered by the secular world or their secular job.

Another change, it seems to me, is that at the level of “parish identity”. It took me coming to the UK, to Cambridge, to realise that growing up in Romania and going to church from quite a young age, I never really developed a sense of “parish identity”. For a complexity of reasons, I never felt like I belong to the parish in which our block of flats was located. The first time I felt that I belong to a parish was in Cambridge, with people who were complete strangers to me only a few months before. That parish wasn’t even a Romanian parish, but the English-speaking Russian Orthodox parish in Cambridge. I hope I am not overreaching when I say that I recognise some of that parish spirit in the parish where I now minister as priest. It remains a continually humbling and equally inspiring experience for me as a priest, to have people (not only ethnic Romanian) whom one sees almost every Sunday (at least before the pandemic lockdowns) knowing that they had travelled 20 or 30 miles to be there, or in-

deed that, although not being Romanian they join in as full members of the parish and help make the community diverse (as it should be). All this is, I believe, a testimony to that parish identity which people develop (perhaps because of the minority context) in the West.

I would be remiss to omit saying something about the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on Church life. When I read, in September, in the Catholic Herald<sup>17</sup> the Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich's pronouncement that the number of Catholics going to church would most likely decrease as a result of COVID-19 and that, as the headline read, the "pandemic may have accelerated [the] secularisation of Europe by 10 years", I was conflicted.

Part of me was inclined to agree with the Cardinal's estimation, although he indicated that it was a qualified assertion primarily for Luxembourg. Another part of me was baffled by this. Yes, the Cardinal was making a reasonable point that once people "have seen that life is very comfortable and that they can live very well without having to come to church", they will not do so after the pandemic ends. Those who came for cultural reasons will cease coming altogether. However, my experience – and indeed that of other Orthodox priests as well as Anglican, or Methodist, or United Reformed clergy that I spoke with – was that virtual attendance at services during lockdown was much increased from what it was before; that people were joining in (despite the eventual Zoom-fatigue) for talks, community events, support groups or prayer groups, with a newly discovered enthusiasm. Not quite a revival, but certainly not the Church's last gasp.

Moreover, once we were allowed to resume services in church, with limited numbers, I was astonished to see that it often took me longer to set up the online booking process for the 30-places available in church for the Sunday Liturgy, then it took for those places to be booked up. Suspecting some system error or even foul play, I once watched in real time how all 30 places were booked in less than 10 minutes! I found myself having to council parishioners who were frustrated that they didn't manage to get a place, often for the second week in a row! I had to check that it was not the same people booking every Sunday and abusing the system. It wasn't.

I am sure that in the aftermath of this pandemic, sociologists of religion and theologians will have decades of research material to consider the effects it has had on churches, and on religion in the public and private sphere. I am in-

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<sup>17</sup> <https://catholicherald.co.uk/cardinal-pandemic-may-have-accelerated-secularisation-of-europe-by-10-years/>

trigued to see whether the Cardinal's assessment applies to Eastern Europe as well, or whether the pandemic and the restriction on worship that ensued have, in effect, introduced a distancing, an estrangement, of the faithful from active participation and from their religious / faith identity, or not. Will it be a case of "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" or rather of "Out of sight is out of mind"?

To be fair, Cardinal Hollerich was not waiving the white flag just yet, as if foreseeing a *fait accompli*. Despite his pessimistic outlook, he was clear about the cause of the problem and of a possible way out. He argued that "...at this point, the Church must be inspired by a humility that allows us to reorganize ourselves better, to be more Christian, because otherwise this culture of Christianity, this only cultural Catholicism, cannot last over time, it has no living force behind it. I think it is a great opportunity for the Church. We must understand what is at stake, we must react and put in place new missionary structures".

Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe also exists in a milieu of "cultural Orthodoxy", which often tends to mask what is at stake, i.e. what is relevant, behind custom, behind institutional structures, or behind a self-sufficiency which lacks the awareness of humility. Such a context resists "new missionary structures". It resists even the idea of it! However, it seems to me that Orthodoxy in the West, although fragmented both geographically and institutionally, is less affected by all of that. I do fear that the window of opportunity is closing, though, and that there is insufficient transfer of the experience and ethos of Orthodox diaspora communities to their historic home-bases.

### *Theological considerations with an ecumenical perspective*

The answer to the question: *What keeps people coming to church, either virtually or in person, during and after a pandemic?* – is the one that holds the key many Church planning committees and commissions are looking for – and one is not allowed to answer "faith" (yes, but what sustains that faith?). That answer may well be the Achilles heel of secularisation. I will not venture to disclose that answer to you, not least because I think that it is a very contextual one for each Christian tradition or Church, so what may "work" for the Orthodox may not be suitable for Anglicans, for example. I do think though that there are parts to that answer which we hold commonly across the various Christian Churches. One of that commonly held answer is in serving the Liturgy; it has to do with worship and prayer.

Grace Davie talks about how religious memory mutates in a secular context, and the French sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger defines religion as a “chain of memory”<sup>18</sup> and considers secularisation as a crisis of collective memory. The COVID pandemic has altered and continues to mutate our shared religious memory. But this is not the first crisis that Christians have faced to the preservation and continuation of religious memory. Speaking only for the Orthodox, allow me to recall that no less than 30 years ago, communism was the pandemic that threatened our chain of memory. Communist secularisation aimed to impose both physical and spiritual distance between people and their places of worship, and between each other. And this was happening before one had the opportunity to stream services online! Yet, the Church survived. It did so by serving the Liturgy, in whatever conditions it had. Serving the Liturgy is essential for the preservation of the core of the Christian memory. All our Churches continued to do this during this pandemic and, while the memory may have mutated somehow, it has continued. Quite likely, it has been refreshed.

For the Orthodox, it probably is *the first post-modern memory we have*. We tend to relive pre-modern memories of what worship is (ought to be). I promised not to sound triumphalist, and I am sorry if this does, it is not meant to – it is rather a backhanded compliment. It may be that this pandemic has helped the Orthodox (more so in the diaspora) do something new: instead of condemning or complaining about post-modernity or about secularisation, about its fluid nature – felt even more acutely in the West – they have embraced that fluidity, rather than “complaining it away”.

The danger to breaking the chain of memory is greatest from within. It is most acute when the Church, faced with the challenge of newness, of pluralism, of otherness or of secular restrictions, either doubles down on old patterns or embraces change at the cost of continuity. The challenge is not to confuse “continuity” with “fidelity” – to the spirit or “mind of the Fathers” or indeed with “fidelity to the renewing work of the Spirit”, and in doing so to miss out on what is truly relevant. The challenge is not to be afraid to “pluck heads of grain and to eat” on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1). This is the only way to avoid the danger of becoming irrelevant.

This pandemic, with its associated limitations on social, economic, cultural and religious life, continues to be a test of relevance (or viability) for both the secular and ecclesial society. For the Churches, but I would say that espe-

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<sup>18</sup> Hervieu-Léger, D., 2000, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, Cambridge: Polity Press

cially for the Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe, it has been and continues to be, not unlike secularisation, a test of relevance. The restrictions to religious life brought about by the pandemic have led, especially now in the second wave, to a resurgence of conspiratorial ideas and complains, of perceived persecution – concealing the anxiety of losing one’s privileged position. The temptation of slipping into ideological apologetics is very real and seems hard to resist.

My hope is that the Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe can overcome these challenges and temptations. Our current context is an opportunity not for reasserting external, ethno-religious forms of identity and relevance (i.e. cultural Orthodoxy/Christianity), but for a “sacramental revival” which is *sacrificial* (as crucified love that bridges the distance of otherness), *kenotic* (which focuses on mercy and humility instead of judgement and privilege), and *ecumenical* (taking seriously the sacrament of the brother). These are needed not “for the world”, not to win-over the world, although they impact the world, but they are needed for *us*, to re-gain ourselves as Church, as Christians. So that our witness is common.

### *Concluding thoughts*

This brings me to my concluding thoughts.

The danger to the breaking of the chain of memory is greatest from within also in respect to the ecumenical dimension of the universal Church. In this context, I submit that the *de-facto* ecumenical co-living that takes place in the West (between the Orthodox and other Christians) seems to stand both the test of the pandemic and that of the ongoing secular wearing-down of religion, in the West.

So, I want to address this in my finishing remarks. And I want to do that by saying something about the aim of the Association: *to advance the Christian religion, particularly by teaching members of the Anglican and Orthodox Churches about each other, in order to prepare the way for an ultimate union between them, in accordance with our Lord's prayer that “all may be one”*. This aim remains as relevant as ever. It occurs to me that its ethos is deeply woven with the three issues that the title of this lecture intended to address, i.e. the condition of Christian religious life and witness in contemporary society (in our European context).

Some people may look cynically on the apparent lack of progress on that “Christian unity” that the Association, and indeed the ecumenical movement as a whole, is seeking. I, however, would say that this unity is here already, al-

though it is experienced imperfectly even as we continue to strive for it. Ecumenical coming together is a marathon not a sprint, and we have so much to learn about each other. The challenge is twofold, in that there is so much to learn about each of our respective past, and to keep up with the constant moving-forward happening in each of our Churches (albeit at different speeds and not always in the same direction).

But all this “learning about each other” can sound rather academic and programmatic. Thankfully, the stated aim of the Association concludes with a prophetic call for prayer: “*All its members are urged to work and pray constantly to this end.*” Indeed, praying together is the best way to learn about each other. It “frames godly” what otherwise can become a very “this-worldly” activity, heavy on plans, process, and quantifiable outcomes. At the same time, prayer places our mutual ecumenical learning on the plane of reciprocated intimacy, openness, dependency, and common witness. This unity of prayer is severely undervalued, I find, both within our ecclesial context and outside of it – in what we refer to as “the secular world”. Outside it is undervalued because its fruits are not readily visible (hence prayer is consequently often perceived by the secular mindset as “religious wishful thinking”). Within, I suspect, it is undervalued because it often is treated like an overture rather than as the main movement. Nevertheless, ecumenical encounter in prayer is happening – sometimes jointly and openly, many times discretely. One of its fruits is that it nourishes continual prayer for one another. It is a revelation of both identity and purpose – which encompasses what would otherwise be called “the other”.

One other corollary of prayer is “relevance”. I hope I am not in a minority of one when I say that one of the constant, most immediate realisations brought about by prayer (whether personal or communal) is that of “relevance” – a sense of “I pray therefore I am / I can / I will” – “we pray therefore we are / we can / we will”.

# The ecumenical significance of Michael Ramsey's understanding of Anglicanism

MATT PHILLIPS

## *Introduction*

AT THE Lambeth Conference of July 1968, Michael Ramsey, the one hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, preached the opening sermon to Bishops of the Anglican Communion gathered at Canterbury Cathedral. Today, most scholars would probably not consider this address to be Ramsey's most comprehensive exposition of Anglicanism. This is especially true when one considers that by this stage in his career, the Archbishop had already written on the development of Anglican Theology in *From Gore to Temple*, and later went on to give a series of lectures on 'The Anglican Spirit' at Nashotah House in 1979.<sup>1</sup> However, this article will seek to use Ramsey's Lambeth Conference sermon as the basis for exploring his understanding of Anglicanism, as it is arguably one of the most accessible and concise introductions to his ecclesiology, which continues to hold profound ecumenical significance today.

One of the most obvious features of Ramsey's sermon is a vision of Anglicanism which is thoroughly grounded in history. This is not particularly surprising, as he is preaching from Canterbury and recognises that this is where the Augustinian mission of 597 was first received. Nevertheless, as Ramsey continues, it is clear that the emphasis he places on Anglicanism as an historic institution is not intended to evoke feelings of nostalgia. Instead, he uses this context to preach that 'our love for what is Anglican is a little piece of our love for one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church', as well as arguing that Anglicanism is a 'tradition of ordered liberty and scriptural Catholicity'.<sup>2</sup> By tracing the historical lineage of Anglicanism, Ramsey establishes that it has a legitimate claim to be recognised as an expression of the historic catholic Church. He also suggests, albeit implicitly, that there are other churches he feels could make the same claim.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ramsey, M., *From Gore to Temple: the development of Anglican Theology*, (London: Longmans, 1969) and Ramsey, M., *The Anglican Spirit*, (London: SPCK, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Ramsey, M., 'Lambeth Conference Opening Service', Sermon, July 25, 1968. Available at: <[http://anglicanhistory.org/amramsey/lambeth\\_opening1968.html](http://anglicanhistory.org/amramsey/lambeth_opening1968.html)> (accessed 13/03/17).

And yet, almost paradoxically, as the sermon continues, Ramsey moves on to consider that there is an inherent provisionality to Anglicanism, even though he has just argued for its firm rootedness in history. 'Now, as the work of unity advances', he states, 'there will come into existence United Churches not descriptably Anglican but in communion with us and sharing with us... the unshakeable essence of Catholicity'.<sup>3</sup> As well as having an eye on the past, Ramsey therefore makes clear that he also has an eye on the future. His prophetic vision of a united Church clearly parallels his vision of the one historic Church, and he again advocates that Anglicanism is a legitimate expression of it. The only difference is that when he considers the future unity of the Church, Ramsey is explicit that Anglicanism will not somehow live in isolation, and that other churches would also find a legitimate place within this transcendent vision.

In what follows, this article will seek to expound further Ramsey's understanding of Anglicanism as being simultaneously bound up in an historic and future-orientated prophetic narrative. By drawing on Ramsey's other writings, which support this double-layered understanding of Anglicanism present in his 1968 sermon, it will be argued that his ability to conceptualise his own tradition in this way held profound ecumenical significance for two reasons. Firstly, by conceiving of the Anglican Communion as one expression of the catholic Church, Ramsey was able to cultivate ecumenical relationships on the basis of patristic roots and a shared historic past. Obviously, he was not the first individual to consider that a catholic vision of the Church could be widely embracing, yet his ability to view the Anglican Communion as one expression of the historic Church clearly stretched and developed previous understandings of Anglicanism in significant ways. In Ramsey's theological vision, the churches of the Anglican Communion were presupposed to be a historically legitimate expression of the Church, and there was therefore little need to invoke polemical arguments to justify their claim to catholicity. However, more crucially, this legitimacy was also generously extended by Ramsey to other churches outside of the Anglican Communion, which encouraged both mutual respect and increased recognition between them on the basis of their shared history. The second part of the article will then move on to suggest that Ramsey's understanding of Anglicanism as inherently provisional allowed him to look forward in a more transcendent way to the eschatological unity of the Church. It will be argued that this not only brought a sense of expectancy to ecumenical dialogue

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

but also importantly promoted relationships between the churches on the basis of their future unity, prompting them to learn from each other and to pursue holiness together. Ultimately, I suggest that Ramsey's vision of Anglicanism is not just of importance to Anglicans today but for members of the worldwide Church who are seeking to prepare the way for an ultimate union between believers.

### *The Patristic Roots of Anglicanism*

It is virtually impossible to read any of Ramsey's writing and not be struck by the way that he sees Anglicanism as a valid expression of the historic catholic Church. For example, even the title of his classical study on Anglican ecclesiology, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, drives home this point to his readers.<sup>4</sup> Within the broader history of the Anglican Communion, the claim Ramsey issued for Anglican catholicity cannot therefore be considered particularly radical, especially as since the Elizabethan Settlement, the Church of England had understood itself to be both catholic and reformed. Furthermore, Anglican divines such as John Jewel, Richard Hooker, and William Wake, had been expounding for centuries before Ramsey about what they thought this self-description might mean.<sup>5</sup> However, as Ramsey took on this task for his own generation, he sought to justify Anglicanism as a valid expression of the catholic Church by explicitly returning to patristic sources as the basis for his ecclesiology. In doing this, he was able to argue that the Church of England was 'not a new foundation, nor just a local realization of the invisible Church, but the expression on English soil of one historical and continuously visible Church of God.'<sup>6</sup>

This understanding of Anglicanism as being fully rooted in the patristic period was ecumenically significant for several reasons. Most obviously, by allowing the Gospels and Church Fathers to deeply inform his ecclesiology, Ram-

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<sup>4</sup> Ramsey, M., *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, (London: Longmans, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> All three of these individuals produced apologetic writing concerning the Church of England. Even Hooker who argues that other churches are to be seen unequivocally as legitimate expressions of the Church goes on to state that by 'that which best agreeth with Scripture', the Church of England's polity possesses a perfection that the other reformed churches lack (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book II, xi, 1). For this citation and further discussion, see Miller, C., *Richard Hooker and the vision of God: Exploring the Origins of 'Anglicanism'*, (Cambridge: James Clark & Co., 2013), 234.

<sup>6</sup> Ramsey, M., *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 176.

sey consciously detached himself from the trend of producing apologetic writing to defend the position and identity of the Church of England. For example, he saw the Oxford Movement as a 'divisive as well as a renewing force in Anglican history' and laments their conflict between the Evangelical and Latitudinarian wings of Anglicanism, as well as other churches, in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Although Ramsey therefore could praise the way that the Tractarians upheld that 'the Holy Catholic Church was their great doctrine', he also clearly felt that the patristic 'emphasis upon the union between the eucharistic Body and Christians themselves' had been completely overlooked.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Ramsey admitted that whilst he respected F. D. Maurice's attempt to show the Church of England as 'not as an exclusive institution but rather as an outreaching family', he could not accept that it had somehow succeeded all other churches to become the perfect example of the true catholic Church.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to predecessors such as the Tractarians and Maurice, Ramsey's own understanding of Anglicanism thus allowed him to get behind and beyond polemical debates of previous centuries. He did not depend on disparaging other churches in order to validate the existence of his own, and even when he made judgements of other churches, he did this in humility. This would have proved to be an enormously helpful foundation upon which to cultivate ecumenism, as Ramsey was able to adopt an undefensive stance as he looked outwards from his position as Archbishop of Canterbury. And yet, more significantly, by allowing patristic sources to form the basis of his ecclesiology, Ramsey was also able to depict the central principles of Anglicanism in a way that suggested that the Anglican Communion could be a legitimate and attractive ecumenical partner. This particular understanding of his own church therefore effectively led him to identify what later became known as the 'ancient common traditions' in ecumenical dialogue, and allowed Ramsey to argue that Anglicanism was a valid expression of these traditions on purely ecclesiological grounds.<sup>10</sup> For example, in a sermon preached in New York in 1962, he declared the essential fundamentals of Anglicanism to be 'the catholic principles of the Scriptures, of the Creeds, the sacraments and three-fold Apostolic ministry of

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<sup>7</sup> Ramsey, *The Anglican Spirit*, 69.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>10</sup> For usage of the term 'ancient common traditions' see: The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Michael Ramsey, 24 March 1966. Available at <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19660324\\_paul-vi-ramsey\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19660324_paul-vi-ramsey_en.html)> (accessed 05/03/2018).

bishops, priests and deacons, and the bond of continuity down the ages.<sup>11</sup> This articulation of Anglicanism clearly echoed the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, an understanding of Anglican identity aimed to encourage ecumenical relations on the basis of ‘the principles of the unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence.’<sup>12</sup> By building on this foundation, and allowing his own understanding of Anglicanism to also centre around these fundamentals, Ramsey was able to justify the legitimacy of his own tradition in a way that sought to emphasise common ground between churches. In particular, Ramsey’s sense of apostolicity as linking the Anglican Communion with the historic Church founded by Christ, emphasised the richness of the Anglican tradition and opened the way to partnership with other churches on the basis of these shared fundamentals.

### *The significance of Patristic Roots in the Methodist Reunion Scheme*

It was particularly during the 1960s, when the Church of England found itself debating whether it would accept or reject a scheme for full reunion with the Methodist Church, that Ramsey’s assertion of the patristic roots of Anglicanism proved to be significant, even though the scheme eventually failed. As both churches began to prepare for the first stage of reunion by recognising each other’s ministries, many of Ramsey’s Anglican contemporaries expressed concern over the plans for a proposed service of reconciliation. Admittedly, there were significant problems with the proposal that the Archbishop of Canterbury would lay hands on Methodist ministers and ask that they ‘might receive’ the Spirit, before the same words were prayed by the Methodist ministers over the Archbishop. Most obviously, as Owen Chadwick argues, this phrasing allowed ‘both sides to be happy with the proposal’ as long as ‘they understood the words in different senses’.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, much of the criticism levelled against Ramsey was far more venomous than was necessary, and accused him of trying to deceive the Anglican Communion. Furthermore, significant amounts of public criticism concerning the reunion scheme continued to propose that Anglicanism was in some way superior to the Methodist church, and could not make

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<sup>11</sup> Ramsey, M., ‘Sermons Preached by the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Michael Ramsey, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury in New York City’, Sermon, July 25, 1968. Available at: <[http://anglicanhistory.org/amramsey/new\\_york1962.html](http://anglicanhistory.org/amramsey/new_york1962.html)> (accessed 09/03/18).

<sup>12</sup> House of Bishops Chicago, ‘The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral’, 1886. Available at: <[http://anglicanonline.org/basics/Chicago\\_Lambeth.html](http://anglicanonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html)> (accessed 09/03/18).

<sup>13</sup> Chadwick, O. *Michael Ramsey: A Life*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 338.

a claim to apostolic succession. For example, Lord Fisher described the text of the service an 'open double dealing', suggesting that the words could imply that something was wanting in the priesthood of the Anglicans who were to be prayed for.<sup>14</sup>

However, in contrast to Fisher, Ramsey refused to engage in any kind of dialogue which would attempt to establish the superiority of Anglicanism over Methodism. In a speech to the diocesan conference of the Canterbury diocese in October 1968, Ramsey asserted again that 'he was a priest and a bishop in the historic order... coming down from the apostles' times' and conceded that Methodist ministry was not identical 'with the historic episcopate and priesthood'.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, as he had made clear several years earlier during an address at the Bi-Centenary of Methodism in Darlington in June 1953, he did clearly believe that 'Methodists and Congregationalists lie *within* the Catholic Church'.<sup>16</sup> In this speech, Ramsey even described communities 'reading the Bible, loving the Lord Jesus, and handing the knowledge of him to their children as 'true apostolic succession'.<sup>17</sup> Whilst he therefore did place demands on the Methodists, arguing that the necessary prelude to intercommunion was episcopacy and confirmation, there was no sense of him wanting to describe Methodism as inferior to Anglicanism. On the contrary, his broad and generous understanding of apostolicity effectively proclaimed that Methodists, along with Anglicans, were somehow linked with the historic church of Christ. Although Ramsey has therefore often been judged very harshly for his leadership of the failed reunion scheme, it is important to recognise that he actually sought to demonstrate an impressive kind of parity between Anglicans and Methodists. Most impressively, his generous and embracing understanding of apostolicity, and the notion of a shared history between the two churches enabled him to speak words of respectful recognition to the Methodists, rather than producing another polemic apology for Anglicanism.

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<sup>14</sup> Fisher of Lambeth, 'Anglican-Methodist Reunion', *The Times*, (London, England), 21 January 1969, 11. Available online: <<http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=T TDA&userGroupName=cambuni&tabID=T 003&docPage=article&searchType=&docId=CS186216501&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>> (accessed 03/03/17).

<sup>15</sup> Ramsey, M., 'Speech to the Diocesan Conference of Canterbury Diocese', 26 October 1968. Reprinted in Chadwick, *A Life*, 339.

<sup>16</sup> Ramsey, M., 'The Methodists and the Church of England' in Ramsey, M., *Durham Essays and Addresses*, (London: SPCK, 1956), 70.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

## *Recognising the catholicity of other churches*

Inherent within Ramsey's support for the reunion scheme with Methodists was therefore not only a firm view that Anglicanism should be considered a legitimate expression of the historic catholic Church but also a belief that there were other churches who could make the same claim. It is important to thus recognise that whilst Ramsey claimed that the 'Anglican Church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to the gospel, to the Church and to sound learning', he also clarified this statement by suggesting that 'its greater vindication lies in pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment.'<sup>18</sup> Again, this understanding of Anglicanism as merely one expression of something much broader in scope held important ecumenical significance. Most radically, this was a stretching of the vision of Anglicanism that Ramsey had inherited from previous generations, which extended recognition and respect to other churches on the basis that they were also expressions of the historic catholic Church.

By affirming the catholicity of other churches, Ramsey was able to establish a much deeper sense of interconnectedness between them and the Anglican Communion than any of his predecessors. Something of this interconnectedness was clearly apparent in his comments on reunion with Methodists, but is more obvious in his encounters with the wider Christian world. As Archbishop of Canterbury, Ramsey would have obviously travelled widely, and it is perhaps owing to his experience of churches outside of the Anglican Communion that he resolved to view them as legitimate expressions of the catholic Church.<sup>19</sup> However, the basis for this interconnectedness was not simply positive encounters but a firm conviction that other churches could claim, along with Anglicanism, to be drawing their ecclesial identity and energy from the same historic streams of tradition and Church life. For example, when Ramsey met Pope Paul VI in 1966, the Common Declaration that these two leaders issued, stated that they intended to 'inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue... founded on the Gospels and the ancient common traditions.'<sup>20</sup> This impressive state-

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<sup>18</sup> Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 220.

<sup>19</sup> For comments on the extent to which Ramsey travelled in his role as Archbishop of Canterbury, see De-la-Noy, M., *A Day in the Life of God*, (Derby: Citadel, 1971), 25.

<sup>20</sup> The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Michael Ramsey, 24 March 1966. Available at < [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19660324\\_paul-vi-ramsey\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19660324_paul-vi-ramsey_en.html) > (accessed 05/03/2018).

ment of future intent, which was positively received by many Anglicans and Catholics at the time, would not have been possible without Ramsey's wide-embracing vision of catholicity, which he had been promoting since the 1930s.

Similarly, Ramsey found that in his encounters with the Eastern Orthodox church, his ability to conceive that they both drew their identity from the same historic events proved to be hugely significant for ecumenism. Since his days as an ordinand, Ramsey had spoken about the eleventh century schisms between the Eastern and Western churches as the 'parent tragedy of many later tragedies of Christian division',<sup>21</sup> and therefore he made it his priority to visit Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in 1962 and received him at Lambeth in 1967. These visits took place against the ongoing dispute over Cyprus between Greece and Turkey, and yet they still proved to be of great ecumenical significance as both leaders were able to recognise each other's church as belonging to the historic catholic Church. This was particularly evident in the way that Athenagoras talked of Anglican liturgy as 'in spirit the same as ours', and Ramsey invited Athenagoras to sit in the chair of St Augustine during the singing of the 'Te Deum' at Canterbury.<sup>22</sup> As David Edwards writes, Ramsey clearly felt that in these encounters, he belonged to 'the same family' as Athenagoras, even though they belonged to different expressions of the catholic Church.<sup>23</sup>

By conceiving that Anglicanism could draw its energy, with other churches, from the death and resurrection of Christ, and the patristic witness to it, Ramsey was therefore essentially pre-empting the *ressourcement* theology of Vatican II. Gerald O'Collins describes this strand of theology, which was prominent in the 1960s as a 'creative return to biblical, patristic, liturgical and other sources' in order to 'revitalize the church's teaching practice'.<sup>24</sup> However, one could legitimately argue that this description is particularly apt to what Ramsey was attempting to do within his own ecclesiology, as early as 1936, when the *Gospel and the Catholic Church* was first published. In this work, he writes that Anglicanism is 'sent not to commend itself as "the best type of Christianity", but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church

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<sup>21</sup> Ramsey, M., *The Church of England and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Why their unity is important*, (London: BBC, 1946), 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 292-3 for a fuller account of this visit.

<sup>23</sup> Edwards, D. L., 'The Gospel and the English Church' in Martin, C. (ed.), *The Great Christian Centuries to Come: Essays in honour of A. M. Ramsey*, (London: Mowbrays, 1974), 22.

<sup>24</sup> O'Collins, G., 'Ressourcement and Vatican II' in Flynn, G. and Murray, P. D. (eds.), *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 372.

wherein all have died.<sup>25</sup> Even in this early work, one can thus find the seeds of ecumenical vocation within Ramsey's ecclesiology. Ultimately, the history of Anglicanism was not important to him to simply justify the existence of the Anglican Communion but because it pointed to the death of Christ. For Ramsey, this was not a divisive event but the point where through their 'present sharing' in his dying and rising again, the churches could find real and tangible unity.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Provisionality of Anglicanism*

Having explored how Ramsey's understanding of Anglicanism as a legitimate expression of the historic catholic Church, the second part of this article will now move on to consider his prophetic vision of the church. In particular, Ramsey's emphasis on Anglicanism being incorporated into a united Church at the eschaton will be argued to be an important catalyst for ecumenism and developing relationships with other churches. As noted earlier with reference to Ramsey's Canterbury sermon of 1968, it can feel somewhat contradictory that Ramsey advocated for the historicity of Anglicanism, whilst simultaneously arguing for its provisionality as an institution. And yet, it is not possible to fully talk about the ecumenical significance of his understanding of Anglicanism unless one can hold in tension his historical view of the tradition, alongside the transcendent sense of the Church, as both concepts clearly pervaded his ecclesiology. Furthermore, it is clear that to Ramsey, this apparent contradiction was not actually a contradiction at all, for both the foundations and future of the Church were bound up in the life of Christ. Unlike Charles Gore, whom Ramsey greatly admired but criticised for failing to take the incarnation further and beyond the events of the past, Ramsey felt that it was essential to explore how particularly the death and resurrection of Christ continued to bring life to the Church. As he explains, 'history cannot exhaust the meaning of these events, since in them the power of another world are at work, and the beginning of a new creation are present.'<sup>27</sup>

Most obviously, Ramsey's understanding of the provisionality of Anglicanism allowed him to make a clear distinction between what the Church 'really is' in the present with its many divisions and also what 'the Church really ought

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<sup>25</sup> Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 220.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

to be'.<sup>28</sup> Again, this view of Anglicanism was to prove hugely significant in the field of ecumenical relations, not least because it suggested that the future Church would look very different to the current reality, and encouraged a certain degree of openness to change and progress. As Alan Wilkinson argues, Ramsey's own ecclesiology found a deep agreement with the Catholic theologian Yves Congar, who argued that a united Church 'would be in a form that was as yet unknown.'<sup>29</sup> For Ramsey, there was thus not only an historic basis for unity, which could be traced back to the foundation of the Church through the death and resurrection of Christ but also a future hope of unity. Ultimately, he believed that it was only at the eschaton that the full reality of this unity would be realised, and yet maintained that in the present, the broken and fragmented churches could still receive it from the future as a gift. As Ramsey himself put it, the present Church is 'but a foretaste of the glory that is to come, and therefore the Church's sense of possession is mingled with the Church's sense of incompleteness.'<sup>30</sup>

This transcendent understanding of the Church, coupled with a calling to look beyond the current incompleteness of Anglicanism was what led much of Ramsey's writing and public addresses, as well as many of his own personal encounters, to accordingly be fused with a prominent sense of forward-looking expectancy. As Douglas Dales writes, Ramsey's view of the Church was 'less institutional than organic, with its fullness of life still developing and unfolding.'<sup>31</sup> Even though he was the senior bishop and principal leader of the Anglican Communion, he recognised that the final reality of a united Church would not be defined in Anglican terms but rather 'in terms of Christ, whose gospel created it and whose life is its indwelling life.'<sup>32</sup> Unsurprisingly, this impressive theological vision, which sought to allow the future to impinge on the present, proved to be hugely attractive in terms of ecumenical dialogue. By presenting the current institutional form of Anglicanism as an important but only provisional expression of the Church, Ramsey was able to make clear that he was not simply trying to incorporate all other churches into a giant Anglican

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Wilkinson, A. W., 'Ramsey (Arthur) Michael, Baron Ramsey of Canterbury' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Published online 23 September 2003. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40002>>, (accessed 05/03/2018).

<sup>30</sup> Ramsey, *The Glory of God and The Transfiguration of Christ*, (London: New York, 1949), 87-9.

<sup>31</sup> Dales, D. J., 'One Body – the Ecclesiology of Michael Ramsey' in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 5:1 (2007), 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 66.

superstructure. On the contrary, his insistence on the organic growth of the Church clearly demonstrated that he wanted to walk forward on the path to full reconciliation with all those who he saw as his Christian brothers and sisters, not just those who would describe themselves as Anglican. As Daniel Hardy argues, ecumenical relations ‘are a call to renew all the churches’, and Ramsey clearly modelled a desire to encourage renewal both inside and outside of the Anglican Communion.<sup>33</sup>

### *Learning and Growing together as churches*

However, before the unity of the Church at the eschaton, Ramsey conceived that Anglicanism could learn a great deal from other churches, as it would only be one part of the future unified Church. Although the term ‘Receptive Ecumenism’ has only gained respect and popularity in ecumenical dialogue in recent decades, it can be argued that Ramsey effectively pioneered a template for this methodology by encouraging Anglicans, as well as the other churches to learn from each other.<sup>34</sup> In this sense, his statement that ‘A Christian is not in a vacuum, and can never be in a vacuum’ is equally applicable to his understanding of the churches as he clearly saw each expression of the Church as incomplete and needing to show deeper respect towards each other if they were truly one body.<sup>35</sup> By portraying the Church as a community of learning, and incorporating Anglicanism into this community as a church that was willing to learn from others, Ramsey was thus able to help diminish suspicion and hostility between churches and introduce a sense of hope to future ecumenical dialogue. In his own interactions with leaders and theologians from other churches, he himself exemplified an attitude of expectant enquiry. For example, as Donald Allchin stresses, Ramsey had a personal conviction ‘about the centrality of Eastern Orthodoxy within the family of Christian traditions’ and genuinely believed that Greek theology could help the Anglican Communion to understand both their origins and vocation.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, he also affirmed the

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<sup>33</sup> Hardy, D., ‘Receptive Ecumenism – Learning by Engagement’ in Murray, P. D. (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 440.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Receptive Ecumenism’ was initially coined and explored by Professor Paul Murray. See ‘Preface’ in Murray, P. D. (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism*, ix.

<sup>35</sup> Ramsey, M., *Problems of Christian Belief*, (London: BBC, 1966), 25.

<sup>36</sup> Allchin, A. M., ‘Approaches to Eastern Orthodoxy and to Rome’, in Martin, C. (ed.), *The Great Christian Centuries to Come: Essays in honour of A. M. Ramsey*, (London: Mowbrays, 1974), 72.

'cosmic dimension' of Eastern Orthodox theology and the ability of the Divine Liturgy to speak of the whole of creation, in a way that he felt was sometimes lacking in Anglican liturgy.<sup>37</sup> And yet, Ramsey's firm conviction that each church had something to both offer and receive from each other did not only encourage politeness and respect in meetings with individuals from different traditions. More significantly, it also gave future direction and identity to the Church, directing it to become a body that declared 'utter dependence upon Christ, rather than simply 'Roman or Greek or Anglican'.<sup>38</sup> Ramsey knew that this was would be a difficult vocation to follow and acknowledged that the universal Church would need to undergo 'an agonizing death to its own pride.'<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, he was firm in the conviction that Christ was longing for 'one band' of followers to go with him, and repeatedly urged the churches to die to their own pride and be open to the prospect of learning from others.<sup>40</sup>

As Ramsey expounded his view of the provisionality of Anglicanism, which had a great deal to learn from other churches, he was therefore able to outline a trajectory for unity which actually affirmed rather than criticised difference between the churches. One can argue that Inherent within his understanding of Anglicanism was thus an important tension between the present and future. On the one hand, he clearly felt it important to cultivate good relationships between the Anglican Communion and other churches, which is evident in his support for setting up a formal commission for ecumenical dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics, as well as his personal commitment to developing friendship with leaders of other churches, such as Pope Paul VI. Nevertheless, at the same time, he could also conceive that if a degree of communion did not exist between two churches, they were still on their way to forming a bond, even if this would not ultimately come to fruition until the eschaton. In this respect, Ramsey's sense of the churches journeying together, with a heightened respect for each other's differences, once more foresaw important developments that were to emerge at Vatican II. As Patrick Hayes writes, in the 1960s, the word *koinónia*, implying a sense of fellowship or partnership, came to be seen as a 'decisive ecclesiological key' in ecumenical dia-

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>38</sup> Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 66.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ramsey, M., 'Whose Hearts God Has Touched' in Ramsey, M., *Canterbury Essays and Addresses*, (London: SPCK, 1964), 167.

logue.<sup>41</sup> Writing in the post-Vatican II years, Ramsey described *koinónia* as ‘participation’, arguing that all believers ‘participate in the Body and Blood of Christ, in the sufferings of Christ, and in the lives of one another.’<sup>42</sup> However, even in his earliest works, the basic workings of a *koinónia* ecclesiology are already evident in Ramsey’s writing, and there is a sense that he believes that the churches can be united, whilst still retaining their separate identities. Although Ramsey does not explicitly reference the Malines Conversations in this work, there is a clear sense that he may have been influenced particularly by the suggestion that the Anglican Communion could become ‘united’ with the Catholic church but ‘not absorbed’.<sup>43</sup> For example, in 1930s he wrote with particular reference to the Papacy that ‘ultimate reunion is hastened not by the pursuit of “the Papal controversy” but by the quiet growth of the organic life of every part of Christendom.’<sup>44</sup> This outright refusal to address the Papal Claims in isolation but to pursue organic unity together and to let ‘Peter... find his due place’ in the Body must thus be considered one of the most unique contributions Ramsey has made to the field of ecumenical relations.<sup>45</sup> His prototype *koinónia* ecclesiology simultaneously affirmed the identity of each individual church but also encouraged them to pursue organic growth together. This has been one of the most fundamental insights of the modern ecumenical movement.

Ultimately, Ramsey’s understanding of Anglicanism as one of many churches that would eventually be incorporated into a future unified Church thus provided an impetus for pursuing holiness in the present. ‘The Anglican Church can help prepare the way for Christian reunion,’ Ramsey argued, ‘not by indifference to the historic Church order, but by restoring a truer presentation of it in the context of the gospel and the universal Church.’<sup>46</sup> Although Ramsey therefore clearly realised that ecumenism could sometimes take on the

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<sup>41</sup> Hayes, P. ‘Koinónia’ in Kuian, G. T. (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Christian Civilization*, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), vol. 2, 1284.

<sup>42</sup> Ramsey, M., *Be Still and Know: A Study in the Life of Prayer*, (London: Collins, 1982), 113.

<sup>43</sup> There is remarkable confusion amongst scholars about who actually coined the term ‘United not Absorbed’. The term was actually included in the title of a paper written by Lambert Beauduin: *L’Eglise Anglicane Unie, non Absorbée*, which was commissioned but not written by Cardinal Mercier at the fourth Malines conversation. See Avis, P., ‘Anglicanism and Christian Unity’ in Morris, J. (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism: Volume IV, Global western Anglicanism, c.1910–present*, (Oxford: OUP, 2017), 206.

<sup>44</sup> Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 234.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 219.

form of quite technical dialogue, as exemplified in the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, he essentially saw the goal of pursuing unity as bound up in the very basic task of learning to live together as disciples. As he later explained in his lectures to students at Nashotah House, after many years of reflection and prayer, God's eternal self-giving enables people 'through the now-indwelling Spirit to give themselves back to God in lives that are really a recreation of human nature in Christ'.<sup>47</sup> In the final analysis, it was this vision of individuals from all churches therefore attuning themselves to Christ and growing closer to each other in unity which proved to be the simplest but also most significant element of Ramsey's prophetic view of the Church. By reasserting the importance of Christ's death and resurrection as central to both the foundation and ultimate reunion of the Church, Ramsey called the Church to not move forward in its own strength but to uphold Christ's actions as the real source of their unity. As Rowan Williams argues, Ramsey believed that 'The Problems of the Church, not least the problem of reunion, between Christians, cannot be met... unless it is recognised that the Church exists because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.'<sup>48</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Ramsey's ability to conceive of Anglicanism as simultaneously embedded in history and caught up in a prophetic vision of a unified Church at the eschaton therefore held profound ecumenical significance. Most obviously, as Ramsey looked back through the centuries and traced the lineage of the Anglican Communion to the foundations of the historic Church, he was able to assert the legitimacy of his own tradition, claiming that Anglicanism was vindicated by its own history based on a purely ecclesiological basis. Not only did this understanding of Anglicanism avoid the polemic nature of previous apologetic literature used to defend the tradition but it also invited other churches to affirm their own claims to apostolic succession and membership of the historic catholic Church. However, as Ramsey's vision for the Church also extended into the future and beyond its current institutional configuration, he was also able to weave a prophetic strand into his understanding of Anglicanism. In particular, his view that the Anglican Communion would be incorporated into the future unified Church demonstrated a confident provisionality in Anglicanism,

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<sup>47</sup> Ramsey, *The Anglican Spirit*, p.74.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, R., *Anglican Identities*, (London: DLT, 2004), 89.

and encouraged a spirit of receptive learning between churches, whilst affirming difference and growing in holiness. By employing this wide-ranging vision of Anglicanism, which drew energy from both the past and the future, Ramsey encouraged greater respect between churches and a realisation that despite their differences, it was possible to discern wide-reaching and rich commonalities between them. Ultimately, his ability to affirm difference whilst also encouraging organic unity was one of the most profound contributions to the ecumenical movement. This was, of course, eerily prophetic of the *koinónia* ecclesiology that emerged after Vatican II, and continues to hold significance for members of all churches seeking to prepare the way for an ultimate union between them.

# The tragedy of Tigray and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

JOHN BINNS

TIGRAY IS the northernmost region of Ethiopia. It was the centre of an ancient empire which was described by the Persian prophet Mani in the 3rd century as one of the four great empires of the world – along with Byzantium, Persia and China. Its capital was Axum which was not only the centre of this great civilisation, but was also a holy place, where Menelik, the son of King Solomon of Israel and Makeda the Queen of Sheba in Arabia, brought the Ark of the Covenant from the Temple at Jerusalem. So it's a place of both historical and religious importance, and is visited by pilgrims tourist and visitors. In recent months Tigray has once again come to the attention of the world media – but now for tragic reasons, as a place of violence where people have been killed and displaced during a period of unrest and conflict.

This conflict has been present under the surface for some years but has become wider and more serious since a new wave of fighting started in November 2020. There have been reports of massacres, mass displacement of the population; warnings of a humanitarian crisis; and possible destabilisation of the wider region. There has even been use of terms like ethnic cleansing and genocide. The conflict has been arousing horror and condemnation within the world community. However, many of the statements and reports show little awareness of why the conflict is happening and how it might be resolved. The purpose of this article is to explore the roots of the violence; the wider context within Ethiopia; the longer term aims of the government within a complex society of 100 million inhabitants and over 80 ethnic groups; and the impact on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tawehedo Church. If there is to be lasting reconciliation and reconstruction then it has to arise out of understanding of why and what is happening and how peace can be built.

I first visited Ethiopia in 1993. I stayed in the Anglican chaplaincy in Addis Ababa. This visit had become easier because there had been major political changes a couple of years earlier. In 1991 the northern alliance of Tigrayan and Eritrean forces had finally overcome the Derg military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam and marched into the capital Addis Ababa. The Anglican chaplain who had stayed in Addis through the dark Derg times, told me how the asphalt space outside the chaplaincy had been used a killing place by the re-

gime, and even school children had been rounded up and shot – and in a sadistic twist sometimes used by dictatorial regimes, the families had to pay the cost of the bullets before the bodies were returned to them for burial. When the northern troops came close to the capital, people anxiously awaited this army, which the government propaganda had portrayed as a ruthless military machine. The day came, and the inhabitants of Addis watched as the victorious army marched in. The military machine turned out to be a column of young men from the mountains, some in uniform, some in shorts, AK47s slung over their shoulders, with bemused looks as they walked in, meeting no resistance, and took possession of the palace and government offices.

The prize for the victors in this civil war was that Eritrea became an independent state, which happened in 1993, and the Tigrayans took over power in Ethiopia. The Tigrayan leader of the guerrilla force became Prime Minister. Meles Zenawi remained in power for the next twenty two years until his death in 2013. He was a formidable leader who gained the respect of leaders around the world. Clare Short, then UK development secretary, described him as the most intelligent leader she had met anywhere in the world. While the new government brought together people from the different ethnic groups to form the EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) government, there was no doubt that Tigrayans dominated, holding key political positions and ensuring that money and influence was directed to their home region of Tigray. There was a policy of ethnic federalism which gave greater autonomy to the regions – which further benefitted the Tigrayan regional government in Mekelle. Resentment at Tigrayan dominance grew, and I remember being surprised when back in 2008 an Ethiopian journalist friend living in London told me that his greatest fear for his country was the prospect of genocidal reprisals against Tigrayans when their grip on power eventually broke.

Meles died in 2013, and there was a deep sense of loss and grief – in spite of some inevitable opposition. I was in Addis at the time of his death and joined the huge crowds processing through the palace to pass by his body. It lay in a state room, a solitary flute playing a lament as we filed past in silence, with a powerful atmosphere of grief. After he died protests grew in number and strength, especially among the Oromo, the largest ethnic group. These were inflamed when Oromo farms were appropriated by the government to enable the expansion of the capital, Addis Ababa. Opposition leaders were detained. Meles' successor, Hailemariam Desalegn resigned after six years as leader when protests continued.

The new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, was elected in April 2018. He came from an Oromo farming family in the west of the country. His father was a Muslim, his mother was an Orthodox Christian, he had become a member of an Evangelical church, and this connection with different elements of Ethiopian put him in a good position to reconcile different groups and build a new consensus. He came with an urgent sense of being called by God to renew the nation. He would end speeches with the words ‘God bless Ethiopia and all its people’ – not a phrase which would ever have been used by previous leaders. There was immediate and rapid change. Political prisoners were released, the state of emergency was lifted, censorship rules were relaxed. Then the long running border war with Eritrea, which had cost tens of thousands of lives, was brought to an end. The following year, in December 2019, a new political party, the Prosperity Party, was formed with the aim of bringing together the different ethnic groups to form a united central government for all Ethiopians. There were big projects planned. There was a development plan for the capital; huge hydroelectric dams to provide renewable energy for wide areas of East Africa. Tensions didn’t disappear but there was a new sense of hope.

My journalist friend’s fear for Tigray turned out to be justified. The TPLF (Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front) had dominated government and now resisted their loss of power. Their candidate for Prime Minister was defeated by Abiy. They did not join the new Prosperity Party and withdrew to their regional power base in Tigray. Many of the high-profile court cases for corruption or embezzlement were inevitably directed against those who had power – many of them Tigrayans. Then when the national elections, due in 2020, were postponed for a year because of covid 19, the Tigrayans went ahead with their own regional election, against the decision of the national government. Tension grew and in November an attack on a federal army camp by Tigrayan forces was the spark which led to military confrontation.

The Ethiopian government sent in their troops to re-establish order and impose the government’s authority in November 2020. At first it seemed that fears of large-scale combat were not going to be fulfilled. The federal forces occupied key towns and then prepared for the big assault on Mekelle, the capital of Tigre. After preparations, the day of the great battle for the capital arrived and the federal troops moved in to the city of 28 November. But it was all over in 24 hours. It seemed that the Ethiopian government forces did not meet resistance. Maybe all would be quickly brought to a peaceful conclusion.

But conflict has dragged on. The military action has allowed underlying various tensions to blow up into disorder, chaos and violence. The fighting

between the federal defence force of the national government and the TPLF continued as the Tigrayan forces have fallen back onto their strongholds in the mountains to the east and reverted to the pattern of guerrilla warfare which they had become used to in previous conflicts. The Eritrean army has taken advantage of the situation to re-take the disputed border area around the town of Badame and move against targets within Tigray, re-engaging in the border war which they had been fighting earlier against the Ethiopian government which had then been dominated by Tigrayans. Sudanese forces have also moved into Ethiopia as part of another long running border dispute over the fertile region of al Fashaga, claimed by both Sudan and Ethiopia. The neighbouring region of Amhara has scores to settle with Tigrayans in the area of Wolkait, Humera and Raya, in the north west corner of Ethiopia, an area claimed by both and which had been incorporated into Tigray by the previous government. Irregular militias and armed gangs of youths have also taken advantage of the breakdown of order. There are several simultaneous wars taking place in Tigray.

Some of the oldest and holiest religious buildings are in Tigray. The chapel adjoining the cathedral of Mary of Zion is the home of the Ark of Covenant brought from the Temple at Jerusalem by Menelik, the son of Solomon and Makeda the Queen of Sheba, as recounted in the epic *Kebrä Negast* or *Glory of the Kings*. The oldest church building still in use is the mountain top monastery of Debre Damo. These have been caught up in the violence. Debre Damo monastery has been attacked and monks and local people killed, although the church is largely undamaged. There has been damage to religious buildings. Among these is the al Negashi mosque in Wukro which was built in the seventh century by the companions of the prophet Muhammad and is claimed to be the oldest mosque in Africa. This was damaged by bombs, and the government has announced plans for its repair and restoration. Other reports suggest that there has been limited damage to the monuments and holy places.

The church is inevitably caught up in the fighting, which has shared in the suffering of the people and the region. The suffering of the people of Tigray is also the suffering of the Orthodox Church. Members of the church have suffered in the fighting. The festival of Mary of Zion attracts many thousands of pilgrims at the end of November, and there have been killings reported of worshippers at this festival. The church has cared for those affected as clergy have continued to minister in the churches and will continue to work for reconstruction of communities. Church leaders have tried to build peace. The

Patriarch and the archbishops in Tigray have worked for peace and reconciliation. In February 2021, there was a prominent peace-making visit to Tigray by leaders of all faith communities, including Orthodox archbishops.

While the death and displacement in Tigray are rightly causing shock across the world, many in Ethiopia point to other deaths and outbursts of violence which have taken place across the country. It's been suggested that an outcome of Prime Minister Abiy's liberalisation and release of political was the freeing leaders of ethnically based separatist and opposition groups, which gave new space and opportunity to movements demanding power and land for their own communities. Ethiopia is a young country and census figures show that in many areas 75% of the population are under the age of 30. Traditional community structures and elders of the community have less influence with this growing number of younger people and popular leaders such as the Oromo, Jawar Mohammed, gathered their supporters together using Facebook – in Jawar's case while living in the USA. The use of social media has formed new alliances of young people who have used violent methods to express frustration and tensions. These changes in society have allowed the conditions in which violence can emerge.

Nationality, ethnicity and faith all contribute to these conflicts. Ethiopians have strong but diverse loyalties. They take pride in belonging to the only nation in Africa which was never colonised and their victory over Italian forces at Adwa in 1896 remains a day of national celebration. They also belong to an ethnic group with its own language. There are around 90 different ethnic groups speaking 80 languages. Then faith matters in Ethiopia and very few would admit to having no faith. Allegiance is divided so that roughly 40% are Ethiopian Orthodox, 30% are Muslim and 20% are Evangelical Christian. Sometimes ethnicity and faith coincide so that the vast majority of Tigrayans and Amhara are Orthodox; while Somalis are Muslim. However the largest ethnic group, the Oromo are fairly equally divided between the faiths. Add to this a growing population, which has increased from 66 million in 2000 to 112 million today, then it is clear that Ethiopia is a complex and changing society.

As well as the conflict in Tigray, there has been violence, killings and displacement of peoples in north Shoa where there are many Oromo living in the Amhara region; and in Benishangul Gummuz in the west where a Gummuz group seeks greater influence. Sometimes religious difference becomes hostile and violent. So In August 2018 in jijiga, there were 58 Christians killed; in September 2018 at Burayu near Addis Ababa – 23 killed; October 2019 at Bale Robe and across the south – churches burned; January 2020 - killings at the

feast of Timkat at Hara and Dire Dawa; July 2020 – churches and properties burned at Shashamene.

These tragedies have each resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of arrests. This sad litany of loss of life illustrates why the federal government is determined to establish its authority and defeat separatist groups and assert the authority of the federal government over narrow regional interests – including in Tigray. The events in the north should be understood within this wider view of the tensions and challenges of Ethiopian society. They show the urgent need for a national consensus to build a strong central government to bring together the hopes and aspirations of a diverse and culturally rich nation.

The only realistic prospect for peace in Tigray, and throughout Ethiopia, is for the Ethiopian government to establish order, ensure the provision of emergency food supplies and provide stability. The postponed national elections will take place in June 2021. All friends of Ethiopia hope that these will be peaceful and will lead to a gradual resolution of conflicts and reduction of tensions, not only in Tigray but across the country.

Religion is important within Ethiopian society. The churches are growing. The Orthodox Church had a membership of 21 million in 1984; which grew to 32 million in 2007; and is now around 40 million. It has been calculated that if present trends continue its membership will outstrip the Russian Orthodox Church by 2050 and so it will be the largest national Orthodox Church in the world. It is calculated that there are around 40 dioceses, 50,000 churches, 500,000 clergy and over 1000 monasteries within the church. The Evangelical churches are also healthy and expanding. The Ethiopian Lutheran Church, called Mekane Jesus, or place of Jesus, with over 8 million members is the largest of the evangelical churches of in Ethiopia and is the largest member church of the Lutheran World Federation. These figures, taken from the survey by Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church* (Milton Keynes 2011) point to a significance of Ethiopia within world Christianity which has yet to be recognised.

It is not just size which is significant. Ethiopia became a Christian country in 342 when King Ezana was converted to Christianity and Frumentius was consecrated by Athanasius of Alexandria as the first Archbishop or Abuna, known as Abuna Salama – father of peace – or Kassate Birhan – bringer of light. From then until the deposing of the emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 the king was Orthodox, with the dynasty tracing its descent from Menelik the son of King Solomon of Israel. He governed a state which Orthodox Christians believed was the successor to the chosen people of Israel. The presence of the

Ark of the Covenant in Axum is a sign of this divine choice. Emperor and Abuna together ruled over an ancient Christian kingdom and church.

The relationship with the state, has resulted in changes of church leadership which have taken place alongside the political upheaval. After the northern alliance won the civil war in 1991, Abuna Merkorios, who had been consecrated three years previously under the Derg government, resigned, supposedly due to ill health, and went to Kenya, and from there to the USA where he became a rival patriarch presiding over many of the churches outside Ethiopia which were opposed to the existing government. Meanwhile a successor abuna Pawlos was elected and consecrated. Abuna Pawlos had been in prison under the Derg then lived in the USA. It so happened that he came from Adwa, the same town as the Prime Minister Meles, and later the two leaders died within a few days of each other. Pawlos was succeeded by Abuna Matiyas, who was also from Tigray but had spent many years in the USA and in Jerusalem. The result of these changes was that there were two living Patriarchs, Abuna Matiyas in Addis Ababa and Abuna Merkorios in the USA, and so two synods and a schism within the church.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is committed to the building of reconciliation between faiths. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on 'Social Capital and its role in Traditional Conflict Resolution' and he applied these ideas to the tension between Muslims and Christians in his home region of Jimma where he set up the Religious Forum for Peace. So he was concerned at the division in the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia and a few months after he became Prime Minister, in August 2018, he flew to the USA and brought Abuna Merkorios back to Ethiopia. He installed him in the Patriarchate and so there was the unusual situation of a church with two Patriarchs, one for administrative and one for spiritual matters. Thus the pattern of the church being affected and influenced by the state has persisted, but in this case, the Prime Minister has brought reconciliation. The close relationship between government and Orthodox church has continued in spite of the removal of the Christian Emperor Haile Selassie. Here it was the Prime Minister who enabled the ending of the schism and helped to bring a new unity and hope to the church.

Alongside the relationship between the leadership of church and state is the vitality and resources of its lay membership. Through the history of Ethiopia, the church has been an integral part of society. Around a third of the country was church land, up until 1976 when all land was nationalised by the Derg government. As well as this structural institutional identity of church and state went a lively informal network of co-operative groups. These are also a part of

Ethiopia life, and take various forms. Within the church, they are called mahabers, or communities, and ensured continued growth during the times of state hostility under the Derg. It is usual for members of the church to become part of a community or association, called a mahaber. Usually a mahaber is small, with perhaps a dozen members which meets regularly, often on the monthly feast day of Maryam, as people affectionately call the Mother of God, or one of the saints, share a meal together and carry out some form of ministry to support the church under the guidance of one of the clergy who acts as a spiritual father to the mahaber. But some mahabers are large. The influential mahaber kiddusan or community of the saints, was formed by a group of students who had been enlisted in the army in the final days of the Derg government in 1991. From this small beginning the mahaber has gained widespread support especially among former university students. It has grown to number many thousands of members, who are expected to pay a percentage of their income to the mahaber. It has built an eight storey office as headquarters opposite the entrance to the Patriarchate. From here, it finances and manages many projects within monasteries and churches which affirm a traditional form of Orthodox Christianity. Its large educational and mission programme has contributed to a dynamic growth within the church. There are similar confident and assertive movements of members within the Evangelical and Islamic communities.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is significant not only because of its size and its history but also because of its location. Ethiopia lies at a crossroads of continents, between Africa and Asia, also on strategic sea routes up the Red Sea to Egypt and the Mediterranean to the north, and to India and China to the east. Then across the sea is Arabia, with Syria and the Middle East beyond. As the crow flies it is about 500 miles between Axum and Mecca. This closeness to Mecca and the shared roots in Semitic culture has resulted in a natural warmth of relationship between faiths in Ethiopia. When the prophet Muhammad was forced from Mecca to Medina in 615, he sent 82 of his followers to find refuge with the Christian king in Ethiopia because, he said, 'the king there will not tolerate injustice and it is a friendly country'. He later instructed his armies not to attack the Ethiopians – so long as they did not attack first. The result of this is the Christian kingdom in the highlands of Ethiopia, just a short distance from Arabia, throughout the history of Islam. This tradition of tolerance and mutual respect continues – although a more radical form of Islam has recently grown up alongside the more moderate tradition. The religious traditions of Judaism have also been present in Ethiopia, and in Arabia. The

region of Najran, the south western part of the Arabian peninsula was a Jewish kingdom at the time when Ethiopia became Christian. The shared cultural roots has led to the emergence of religious traditions which combine elements of both Christianity and Judaism, and these include the Beta Israel or Falasha and the Qemant. While there have been examples of conflict and extremism, there is also a long tradition of peaceful co-existence between the three monotheistic faiths of the Middle East. The shared Semitic cultural background gives the Ethiopian church a different set of traditions of worship and practice, and a different set of relations with other faiths, from the rest of the Christian church.

The tragic events in Tigray in November 2020 and the months following have made us more aware of the history and traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church – as well as its present tribulations. If this has the unexpected consequence of making us more aware of its vitality and growth, its potential to point to a more creative relationship between the faiths, and its place in a vibrant African Christianity then we may all benefit from these new insights, and be more able to share in the building a better future for the people of Tigray, Ethiopia and the church as a whole.

John Binns has written *The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia: A History* (London T & T Clark 2017) and *The T & T Clark History of Monasticism: The Eastern Tradition* (London T & T Clark 2020).

# Ethnic otherness, a new reality between AMHARA and Kemant

KEVIN WALTON

ETHIOPIA IS a land of multiple ethnic groups with a variety of beautiful ethnic interactions. The north-western part of Ethiopia, historically in particular, is notable for a well-developed ethnic interaction. Understanding, in depth, the socio-economic life, and nature of the Socio-political organization, language, religion and myth of ancestry is very crucial to figure out the amicable ethnic interaction between the Amaha and Kemant people. The politicization of ethnicity by ethnic political elites adds fuel on the ethnic differences between the two groups since 1991 GC. This a made-up ethnic polarization begot ethnic conflict which caused for the loss of dearest human life and total destruction of huge material wealth. The reality and existence of ethnic difference has never been the actual reason for antagonistic inter-ethnic relations otherwise exploited by ethnic entrepreneur for their own political and economic means. It is the narrow minded interference of ethnic political entrepreneurs in to the collective and social life of the Kemant and Amhara people which plants the seed of insecurity and ethnic based conflict.

There is not an agreement among scholars about the narration of the ancestral origin of the two groups. The Amhara, the second largest ethnic group found currently in Gondar, Gojjam, Wollo and Shewa Province. And also scattered in different part of the country through migration, resettlement program in 1974- 1991 and conjugal relationship with other ethnic groups. The Kemant are located in their historical area north of Gondar. Today they are found north of Lake Tana , in Gondar town and in the rural areas of Gondar.

For some church historians the name Amhara is derived from AM means People and Hara means Free so it means free people. For President Mengistu Hailemariam (1974- 1991) Amhara means people who live in the mountains. Another notable writer claims that the word Amhara means cultivator. For Kessate Brihan the word Amhara comes from the Ethiopian word Amari which means eye-ful, gracious, welcoming and agreeable. Tradition has it that the name Amhara, historically, is known since the 12th c. A.D. In the formation of Abyssinia/ Ethiopia and revitalising the work done to offer central government, the Amhara people along with others have been paid so much.

Amharic is the language of the Amhara people and used to serve the National Language of the Kingdom and now it is the working language of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The Amhara people are agriculturalist using ard - plow and harnessing the Oxen to pull them, this has still been the only methodology of agriculture in the whole of Ethiopia. They cultivate Teff, Millet, Sorghum, Barley and Beans. They also domesticate Cattle, goat and sheep. The Donkey, Mules and Horses used as draft animals.

The word Kemant was not known in written documents until 1714; however, it remained vague until 1991 to know who the kemant are. The Kemant traced their ancestral origin to Aynar the great grandson of Canaan, grand son of Ham, son of Noah and cemented their root to Isreal. And Aynar is believed to settle in the forest of Karkar enclosing his body in wood flakes and this labelled them as "The Son of wood" which is denounced, by Nega Gete, as a fabrication. On the contrary, a study by Zelalem claims that the kemant named as the Child of wood is because of the fact that they supplied the Town Gondar with fire wood after the completion of the Castle of Fasildes. Some they believe that they came from Egypt in around 2410.BC. For the prominent Kemant politico-religious leaders, the 'womber' literally mean SEAT, the origin of Kemant is nowhere but Ethiopia.

The very interesting thing here is that following the introduction of the Ethnic based Federalism in Ethiopia in 1991 by TPLF (Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front), ethnic political elites exploited ethnic differences for their own advantages in the name of "Quest for Identity and Self-Governance in the whole of Ethiopia EXCEPT Tigray where TPLF came from. So Kemant is no exception that the Kemant quest for recognition and self-governance Committee believed that the present Amhara and Tigray are Converted Kemant before the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia. This claim, by the Kemant Committee, is due to the result of their attachment of origin and territory they inhabit. This last view of the Kemant Committee supported very well with every possible means by the TPLF. Linguistically the Kemant speak a Cushitic language Kemantedgna, a dialect of AGEW. The Kemant language is a sister language of the Agew of Gojjam, the Xamat'ana of Wollo and the Belin of Eritrea. Following the assimilation of Kemant people in to the greater Amhara, their language today is on the verge of extinction as Amharic is spoken fluently among them. The common language they speak, the same livelihood make both group undistinguishable. Before the conversion of the Kemant in to Christianity, the role of the Kemant religion (Hege - Lebona) was the epic centre of kemant identity and sense of belongingness which rigidly built a

boundary between them and the Amhara; however, this would never been a factor for them not to live peacefully. The Kemant people were converted to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity during the time of King Yohannes IV 1872-1889 so as to create homogenous society so as to defend the border near Sudan. And again during the time Haileselassie I 1930-1974, the remaining Kemant converted to Christianity in their will and to some extent by force. The religious assimilation actually destroyed the religious boundary and this paved the way for the two ethnic groups allowing inter-ethnic marriage, social practices based on religion such as making feast in the name of any given Saint, going to church for mass, establishing idir a traditional institution functional during the ceremony of sorrow and weeding, for example, members of this idir, cooperating in burial and mourning and social security activities. The Mahiber is another social institutions for the making of feast in the name of a saint and this provide them aid and also undertaking agricultural tasks together. These two group also develop prominent social systems that strengthen their personal relationships such as Yekirstina lij (God Child) and yetut lij (Breast Child) and those who are bonded by these two systems are considered to be relatives and the system is much respected. Based on this religious and social values, any personal and communal problems such as land, cattle raiding, death and fire. etc. were solved for millennia.

### *Bitter Relations*

Historically, there was not any hostile inter-ethnic relation in Ethiopia and this is also true for Kemant and Amhara. If there is any conflict and for sure that is between the people and the state and their oppressive policies. During the imperial regimes and Derg, the people were suffering from social grievances. The kemant did not have same land rights as the Amhara and even the grievance were between the Christian and none Christian Kemant. But this problem was solved when land was nationalised during the time of Mengistu Hailemariam. Despite such state – society resentment, it was un common to see inter-ethnic conflict till the EPRDF (Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front) came in to power in 1991. The difference between the EPRDF and Imperial and Derg, the later worked towards common citizenship than advocating ethnic division. The EPRDF was the sum of four regional powers, but power was exclusively under TPLF (the late prime minster MELESE Zenawi was the head of TPLF) while the other three parties were just a figure; they were on power

for the past 27 years not for their people rather for executing the agenda of TPLF, i.e. Ethnic Federalism.

The materialisation of the Ethnic based Federalism in 1991 GC by TPLF, changing the political atmosphere in Ethiopia which transcendent the situation in to identity based conflict which brought in to pieces the age old amicable relationship between different ethnics. Some groups went direct in to such an ethnic conflict immediately after the institutionalization of Ethnicity. It took for others years of experiments to yoke themselves in identity based conflicts.

As in the case of Kemant, the need for identity recognition and self-determination was fast, but it was in the state of immaturity to jeopardise the well- established flowering Kemant *visa vi* Amhara ethnic relationship. After the development of self-identity and political awareness, the personal conflicts between the two groups slowly grown in to such a bloody inter-ethnic upheaval.

Please bear in mind that, even though the EPRDF was a sum of four regional parties, the three parties were under the command of the TPLF that means the executive members of these parties could not have their say against the TPLF. The Amhara regional party was one of the three parties which seems to be so concerned to answer for the quest to Kemant's identity recognition and self- determination; however, in reality, this party was overwhelmed by the TPLF men like Bereket Semon (now he is in prison), Helawi Yosef and others. These men were appointed to serve the Amhara people by the late PM. Melese Zenawi, but their actual appointment is to work on the contrary there for any economic right, development and even any boarder related questions from the Amhara people must be kept slow even for many occasions, the questions were a cause for many to be killed, displaced and lost. Wolkait and Raya are the two fertile lands of Amhara people taken by TPLF since 1991 and the Metema and its surroundings, near Sudan, is said to be sold to Sudan by the TPLF. The Amhara people along with others were responsible for the necessity of having united Ethiopia, but TPLF is not interested in that so for this TPLF must work against the will of the Amhara people. Put the Amhare people at war with the Oromo, Afar and Gumuze what makes it different the war between the Amhara and Kemant is because the Kemant are within the Amhara region the others just share board.

So the quest for Kemant Identity recognition and even self-determination is a constitutional right be given for other ethnic groups, but the Kemant could not enjoying it at list their identity recognition. The regional and federal

political elites, when asked, why not the Kemant be given their constitutional right, they said simply because the kemant are fully assimilated with the Amhara! In the meantime the interim Kemant Committee opened its office in Mekele the regional Capital of Tigray so this makes it all clear that the quest for Kemant identity is a real serious matter for the TPLF men which, on the other hand, the Amhara regional party men just be a pupate for that dearest question of their own people. So the Kemant Committee started creating awareness among the Kemant people and making all ready to go out for peaceful demonstration in Ayikel and Chilga town. But this demonstration met a problem and the regional special force of Amhara stopped it by killing 6 Kemant people and this took the whole situation on the wire that the kemant feel the Amhara are their enemy and the Amhara themselves came out, on the following day, 2015, with offensive mottos saying Kemant are migrants and stop illegal treatments of the Amhara and the Keman with their motto say Chilga is the historical city of the Kemant and quest for identity and self-determination is not the concern of the Amhara regional state and no development before identity. These went on as it is and caused for the death of hundreds and destruction of properties. This severely polarised the two people despite the fact that they used to live together for millennia. The kemant feel that they are oppressed, ill-treated, denied of their right and dehumanized where the Amhara being told that of the Kemant get their Identity recognition and self-determination, you would be displaced from your land and be second against your historical will. These wrong sentiment and self-image out the situation upside down.

The inter-personal conflict gradually gravitated itself in to a more destructive inter-ethnic conflict in 2015 and in 2020 September, the day was gloomy thousands of kemant people were killed by the regional special force and Fano (armed group mainly financed by the regional business men and rich Amhara). The Kemant Committee, on the other hand, mobilized its force mainly armed by TPLF and involved in the killing of Amhara as well. Victims are farmers, children, mothers and women and men those who do not have any political relation. Among those are my dear family members and they were 6. It is hard to accept the situation for the remaining family and what makes it worse is those who live in abroad who support the TPLF Juntas have been spreading wrong information to the international community that there is crime committed by the current government against the Tigray people. TPLF commits war crime, genocide against both the Kemant and Amhara people.

The DR. Abiy administration has been working to bring those involved in to justice.

# Stand with Ethiopia

TEFERI MELESSE DESTA

*At this critical time, it is time to dispel the barrage of disinformation and stand with the people of Ethiopia*

OVER THE past few months, much of the media landscape reporting the current situation unfolding in Ethiopia's Tigray Region is filled with a barrage of misinformation and disinformation campaigns from disgruntled political groups hell-bent on instilling religious and ethnic tensions among Ethiopians, who, for millennia, have lived together in peace and mutual respect. In particular, these negative campaigns are aimed at derailing Ethiopia's ongoing reform process as the country is now at a crossroads in its efforts to build a more democratic and prosperous society.

Ever since the coming to power of the new administration, spearheaded by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018, a series of sweeping socio-economic and political reforms have been initiated towards the realisation of a true democracy. These reforms are rooted by the demands and needs of the Ethiopian people and include the widening of political space, the return from exile of parties previously designated as terrorists, the release of hundreds of political prisoners, and the various legal, press and electoral reforms undertaken in the country.

The three decades preceding Prime Minister Abiy's administration were tainted with state capture by a minority clique – the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF). To maintain power and control, the TPLF pitted ethnic and religious groups against one another, fuelling resentment, mistrust and animosity, while utilising state power to suppress any form of dissent.

Since Prime Minister Abiy took office, he particularly stressed the need for healing the nation through reconciliation and forgiveness. In fact, the Prime Minister was successful in cementing a peaceful solution to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which was divided into two factions when TPLF took power in 1991. Accordingly, Patriarch Abune Merkorios returned home after 27 years of exile in the United States. In 2018, Ethiopia also signed a peace deal with Eritrea ending a 20-year-old stalemate and allowing Eritreans to reintegrate within the Horn of Africa and the global community. This effort earned the Prime Minister a Nobel Peace Prize.

Sadly, while efforts of rebuilding democratic institutions and transit Ethiopia into a new chapter were intensified, disgruntled forces of the TPLF wanted to sabotage the reform process and make Ethiopia ungovernable. The Federal Government of Ethiopia was patient enough not to take swift measures in the hope that the TPLF leadership would come to its senses, and for these, a series of negotiation efforts were made. Even more, several rounds of negotiation attempts were made to resolve the political differences through dialogue, including through a delegation of religious leaders who went to Tigray's capital, Mekelle, in the hope of peacefully resolving differences. Unfortunately, all these efforts to give peace a chance were rejected by the TPLF leadership.

Much worse, the TPLF launched what they called a pre-emptive attack on the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces on the night of 4 November 2020, which brutally killed the ultimate guardians of the Constitution. No government, anywhere in the world, would tolerate such a heinous crime. The Federal Government had no option but to execute its sovereign mandate to enforce the rule of law and ensure the constitutional order. Accordingly, the government launched and completed a law enforcement operation and is now engaged in rebuilding the Tigray Region by ensuring that humanitarian needs are addressed, damaged infrastructure is repaired, administrative and governance functions are restored to effectively provide public services to citizens, and bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes committed in the region.

During the entire law enforcement operation, the Ethiopian National Defense Forces took necessary care and discipline not to cause any harm to civilians and damage infrastructure. The government thus regrets any civilian casualties during the law enforcement operation - even one death of an innocent civilian is one too many.

The government has taken concrete steps to address any human rights abuses that have occurred within the context of the conflict triggered by the TPLF and has made its position unequivocally clear concerning human rights violations committed in the Tigray Region. Any serious violations committed against citizens will be thoroughly investigated and the government will spare no effort in bringing perpetrators to justice. No one is above the law. The government has also called on relevant UN agencies and the African Human Rights Commission to support these investigations. Accordingly, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Human Rights Council have signed a key agreement to launch a joint investigation.

The Government of Ethiopia is currently doing all it can to rebuild the region (restoration of bank services, maintenance of infrastructure, telecoms, electricity, schools, and health services); rehabilitate (building the confidence of the community, making town hall discussions with various sections of the community); provide humanitarian support (so far the government along with local and international organizations has delivered aid to nearly 4.2 people in the region) and support the interim administration in Tigray (enabling the interim administration to function, reinstate police forces, and build the capacity of administrative operations).

Concurrently, the government strongly wishes to reiterate its commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its citizens in Tigray and advises all actors to beware of misinformation campaigns launched against it by those with hidden political motives.

Despite the provision of unfettered access to both international aid agencies and international media to the region, disinformation and misinformation campaigns are rife. Furthermore, unnecessary pressure on the government, which is currently providing 70 per cent of the much-needed aid, while international humanitarian support is only at 30 percent does not make the situation easier. The Government of Ethiopia has so far spent almost \$1 billion to support vulnerable populations and restore infrastructure in the Tigray region. I, therefore, call on the international community and friends of Ethiopia to support Ethiopia, at this critical time, by helping augment the Government's lifesaving efforts. Indeed, it is time to stand with Ethiopia.

# Book Reviews

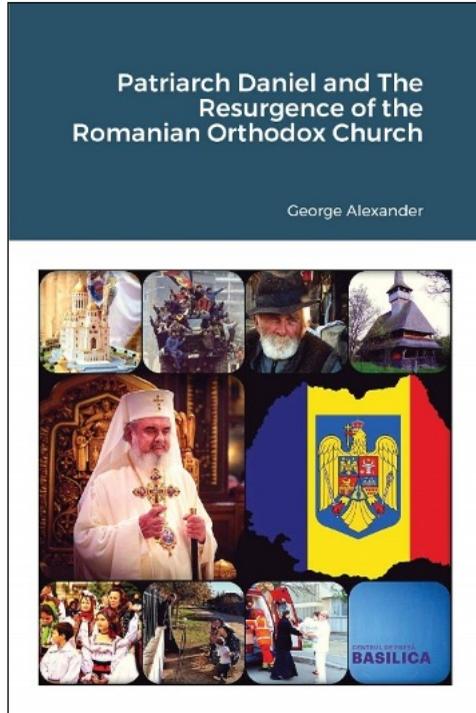
DIMITRIS SALAPATAS

George Alexander, *Patriarch Daniel and the Resurgence of the Romanian Orthodox Church* (OCP Publications, 2021), pp. 84, £10.00.

THIS BRIEF but very important book is a great introduction to the Romanian Orthodox Church in the post-Communist era. The focus is the work, mission and vision of the current Patriarch of Romania, Daniel. Despite the differences, schisms and disunity in Orthodoxy today, this book is seen as a light in the tunnel, coming to us from the Romanian Orthodox Church.

It is interesting to note that the author is not Romanian Orthodox himself, and so is able to identify the work, mission and achievements of this Patriarch and Patriarchate from an outsider's point of view. This is definitely significant, allowing for a more objective analysis of the current history of the Romanian Church.

The book successfully and concisely explains the life and achievement of Patriarch Daniel, naming him the Patriarch of Vision and Mercy. According to the author, 'Patriarch Daniel has always emphasised the importance of charity and social care concerning the Church Traditions, Liturgy, and Gospel-preaching. The most crucial aspect is the fact that Patriarch Daniel practices charity from his ecclesiastical pocket, which is a matter of primary inspiration for others. He is indeed the Patriarch of Mercy.' (p.o).



His Beatitude was elected Patriarch in 2007. 'Under his leadership, the Romanian Church has turned into a haven for the poor and the needy.' (p.5) His charity work and his care for the less fortunate is obvious through the countless initiatives which have started and flourished under his leadership. He has also worked with the government in order to intensify the cooperation between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

The author wishes to challenge ideas and play with words, by promoting the Reformation ideas within the Romanian Church. Of course, this does not mean that the Orthodox Church of Romania is reforming; but reformation is 'applied to the management and administration of Church affairs rather than her doctrine and dogma.' (p.11). This REFORMATION under Patriarch Daniel's leadership 'represent the process of Reorganizing Effectively the Future of the Orthodox Church in Romania in a Meticulous manner According to the Traditional values and by respecting Individual opinion and National interest.' (p.12). All of these changes and initiatives do come with criticism towards Patriarch Daniel, which are mentioned in this book. However, the author wishes to challenge these ideas by quoting St. Nikolai Velimirovich, who claimed that: 'We must be super-conservative in preserving the Orthodox faith and super-modern in propagating it.' (p.13).

The promotion of a 'post-communist identity' (p. 15) for the Romanian Church is key for the work and vision of this Church. However, this is not only the goal of the Patriarch. He is supported by the Holy Synod, the priests, members of the Church and also the government.

The second part of this book tries to showcase the resurgence of the Romanian Orthodox Church, after the many decades of communism in the country, identifying how now it has become the hidden gem of Europe. This is also due to the fact that the current new era is led, ecclesiastically, by His Beatitude Daniel of Romania. Importantly, the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church is a long one, since the establishment of the Church by Apostle Andrew, the First-Called. It has had a troubling, controversial and difficult time under a number of leaders, Patriarchs and Communism. However, the current era seems to be a new page in the history of this Orthodox Church. New Saints have been canonised, new initiatives have flourished, including the 'No Village Without a Church' initiative and there have been new church administrations established. Importantly, new media, press and public relations have been created, which have been quite popular in the Orthodox world.

Currently the Romanian Church has created new enterprises and objectives in order to promote Charity and Social Welfare, it has assisted with the

efforts against COVID, it has established the Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative, Environment Protection and many more new schemes, which affect the Church in Romanian but also the whole country and also the Romanians who live abroad. These schemes are also attracting non-Romanians to also appreciate and explore the Romanian Church today.

A key objective of this Church is its Pan-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interreligious Outlook. Despite the current schisms within Orthodoxy and any troubles that might occur, the Orthodox Church of Romania tries to keep good relations with all, including the Romanian Greek-Catholics, the Oriental Orthodox and the Western Christians.

A great achievement will be the completion of the People's Salvation Cathedral, in Bucharest, which is set to be completed in 2024. Upon completion, it will be the largest Orthodox Christian Cathedral in the world. Despite the criticisms, due to the large cost, it is pointed out that this idea existed since 1877, the year Romania gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire. This Cathedral is to represent 'not merely a lavish building for showing off, but a centre of culture and philanthropy of the Romanian Church.' (pp54-55). Many in Romania today see the construction of such a building as a clear response against Communism.

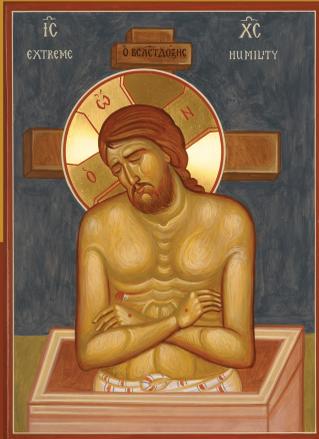
As explained in the conclusion of this book, 'The Church must remain an agent of positive change as well as of resisting negative change.' (p.61). This brief but interesting book tried and achieved to showcase in a positive light the important work led and inspired by His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel. Many of the initiatives stated here could also inspire and guide other Orthodox and non-Orthodox Churches around the world. The Romanian Church can be seen as a positive example of a Church that has resurrected out of the darkness of Communism, as seen by 20th century Romanian history.

## JAMES ROBERTS

Khaled Anatolios, *Deification Through the Cross* (Eerdmans, 2021), pp. 464, £42.50.

IT IS a rare privilege to encounter a scholarly work which bridges the divide between the diverse disciplines which fall under the general umbrella of biblical studies and theology. It is even rarer to encounter a work which incorporates liturgical studies into its methodology, and places all of these elements in a conversation between the Eastern and Western traditions. Khaled Anatolios, in his excellent work 'Deification through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theo-

Khaled Anatolios



DEIFICATION  
THROUGH THE CROSS

*An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation*

logy of Salvation', manages to creatively engage with these diverse traditions and methodologies in his assessment of soteriology. He navigates this complexity, however, in a way which remains illuminating and accessible for a broad readership. In this work, Anatolios wishes to challenge theological systems which place soteriology at the margin, often as a kind of theological add-on. In contrast, he proposes a theological system where soteriology is truly integrated into an understanding of biblical interpretation, the history of Christian thought, and the practice of the liturgy. Not only does he wish to place soteri-

ology at the heart of his theological system but, following the influence of the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann, Anatolios wishes to reclaim the joy of salvation. Similarly, he wishes to dispel some common misconceptions about the Eastern approach to soteriology. In the East, Anatolios suggests, soteriology does not ignore the cross and focus entirely on personal deification and theosis, as some characterisations of the Orthodox position on salvation suggest. Rather, the Eastern tradition in its liturgy has a normative and integrated soteriology which is rooted in the Scripture, Liturgy and thought of the Church, and which has joy at its heart. In order to propound a normative soteriology of the East, Anatolios proposes a constructive model of soteriology

which is rooted in a notion that he terms 'doxological contrition'. The first part of this work explores the foundational sources to support a soteriology of doxological contrition, including liturgical texts, biblical sources, and the theological doctrine of the church councils. The notion of doxological contrition is rooted in the experience of salvation in the liturgy. This experience is twofold; firstly, in the act of worship a person is enfolded into participation in glory and secondly, this makes a person aware of their short-comings and sin. Thus, there is a balanced duality between worship and repentance in the experience of the liturgy, which Anatolios identifies as foundational for the experience of salvation. Anatolios' systematic theology of doxological contrition draws on an impressive range and breadth of theologians and traditions which again bridge the divide between East and West. Irenaeus, Anselm, Gregory Palamas, Nicholas Cabasilas, Aquinas, Matthias Scheeben are all carefully engaged with, along with several other key thinkers. Furthermore, Anatolios places this systematic theological construction in dialogue with other fields within theological studies including liberation theology and Girardian mimetic theory. In this systematic theological engagement, Anatolios places doxological contrition in the context of Christological and trinitarian doctrines of the church. Once again this not only breaks down denominational divides in Christian theology, but it also assists in integrating soteriology across the breadth of the Christian experience and tradition. 'Deification through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation' exhibits Anatolios' depth of expertise and theological aptitude as he holds together an impressively broad corpus of texts and traditions. However, he does so in a way which remains engaging and accessible. This work is an excellent resource for scholars across theological disciplines as well as anyone wishing to deepen their knowledge of salvation and the Eastern tradition. For any readers who are interested in the Eastern tradition, Anatolios' dissembling of some common misconceptions about Orthodox soteriology would be of great interest.



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Cover Photo:

*Ethiopian Cleric with a book of the Gospels. Image courtesy of John Binns.*