

انطباعات زيارة، الجزء الأول بقلم المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

تضم أبرشية الجزر البريطانية وإيرلندا، الأنطاكية المستحدثة، رعيةً من الناطقين بالعربية، تعدُّ أربعمئة وخمسين عائلة مُسجَّلة، وخمس عشرة رعية، وأربع إرساليات، ناطقة بالإنكليزية، ومن أصول بريطانية. مدينة لندن مركز الرعية الأولى والأكثر عددًا. كنيستها كبيرة وجميلة. استأجرتها الرعية من الكنيسة الأنغليكانية، بعقد يتجدد كلَّ عشرين سنة، وقد استعادتها الآن، بينما تبحث الرعية عن مكان آخر ليكون بمثابة كنيسة.

يؤكد القائمون على خدمة الرعية الكبرى وجود الكثير من العائلات التي قَدِمت إلى المملكة المتحدة، قديماً وحديثاً، وهي غير مُسجَّلة في قوائم الرعية. هذا يستدعي جهداً رعائياً مُجهداً، من أجل متابعتهم والوصول إليهم، ورعاية علاقتهم بالكنيسة.

أمّا الرعايا الأخرى، التي تعود أصول عائلاتها إلى سگان البلد، فقد انضمت إلى الكنيسة الأنطاكية الأرثوذكسية، في تسعينيات القرن الماضي، وكانت آنذاك تسع رعايا فقط. وقد روى الأب مايكل هاربر، رئيس المجموعة الأولى، قصّة انضمامها هذه، بتفصيلٍ ممتع.

يعود السبب الرئيس في اكتشافها أصالة الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية، إلى ما شهدته كنيستها الأم، الأنغليكانية، من تحولات وتغيّرات جذرية، في السنوات الأربعين الأخيرة. فقد هبّت رياح التغيير على هذه الكنيسة، في سبعينيات القرن العشرين، وسرعان ما بدأت كرة الثلج تتدحرج وتكبر، بتسارع هائل. فخلال عقد من الزمن، فقط، بدأت بقبول المرأة في سلك الكهنوت، وكذلك المثليين والمثليات، إلى جانب قضايا أخرى لا تتسع هذه المقالة لها.

رفض قسم كبير من شعب هذه الكنيسة وكهننتها هذه التحولات، وسعوا، بقدر ما استطاعوا، إلى إيقاف حركة التأثير بالفكر الدنيوي الدهري السائد. وعندما أدركوا عجزهم عن تحقيق ذلك، تركوا كنيستهم، وبحثوا عن الكنيسة ذات الجذور الثابتة والأصيلة. فاكتشف بعضهم الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية، غير المعروفة كثيراً في بريطانيا، إلا في رعايا المهاجرين من بلاد أرثوذكسية، الذين يشكّلون، في الواقع، كنائس جاليات.

لماذا تأثرت الكنيسة الأنغليكانية بالثقافة الدهرية إلى هذا الحدّ؟ قد يكمن السبب في أمرين: أولهما أنّها تعتمد مبدأ التصويت، على الطريقة الديمقراطية في اتخاذ قراراتها، حتّى الإيمانية. ما يعني أنّ اعتماد قرار ما أو تحديد إيماني ما، يتم بناء على عدد الأصوات التي يحصل عليها، لا

على الروح القدس الحاضر في الكنيسة، ولا استناداً إلى تراث راسخ في استقامة الرأي ومعرفة الله.

أمّا السبب الثاني، فيعود إلى فَقْد الجذور الأولى للمسيحية، وتالياً فَقْد التقليد الشريف، الذي يحفظ استقامة الإيمان، ويقيه من الانحراف. فالتراث اللاهوتي المتين يساعد على حفظ استقامة الرأي، ومواجهة التحدّيات المعاصرة، بروح التمييز بين الثابت والمتغيّر في الإيمان وتعبيراته.

لطالما افتخرت الأنغليكانية، بأنّها لا شرقيّة ولا غربيّة، بل تجمع بين الاثنين. لكن تقهقرها السريع أمام موجة الحداثة، وما بات يُعرف الآن بما بعد الحداثة، أمر محزن جدّاً. تُعدّ بريطانيا البلد الأكثر إلحاداً في الغرب. والعلمنة الأوروبيّة، وإن تفاوتت في موقفها من الدين، بين بلد وآخر، إلا أنّها عندما فصلت الدين عن الدولة، أبعدت الله كليّاً عن المجتمع، وجعلته إله أفراد فقط. فصار الإنسان المرجع الوحيد للقيم والأخلاق والتشريع.

حاول البابا يوحنا بولس الثاني ورئيس أساقفة اليونان خريستوذولوس، في التسعينيّات، إدخال عبارة "جذور الاتحاد الأوروبي الثقافية مسيحية – يهوديّة"، في دستور الاتحاد الأوروبي، ولم يفلحوا. عندما يُستبعد الله من التنظيم الاجتماعي، يفقد البشر المرجع الثابت الوحيد للقيم الاجتماعيّة والإنسانيّة. أن يكون الإنسان، وحده، مصدر القيم والتشريع، يعني أن ما من قيم ثابتة، وأن النسبية هي الحَكَم.

نقول بلغتنا اللاهوتية إنّ البشر، حاليّاً، في حالة السقوط، وقد تجسّد المسيح من أجل إنقاذهم وعودتهم إلى حالتهم الفردوسيّة الأولى. لذلك، فهم عندما يستبعدون الله من حياتهم، فإنّما يُبعدون الحياة عنهم. وما تفكّك العائلة ومفهومها، في العالم الغربي، إلا أحد الأمثلة على ما يقود إليه غياب الله عن المجتمع.

في حديث مع أستاذة العقيدة في كليّة اللاهوت الأنغليكانية، وهي زوجة أسقف لندن (يسمح بالزواج للأساقفة الأنغليكان) قالت إنّ العقيدة عندهم محميّة بالمجامع المسكونيّة السبعة. ولكن حرية التفسير والاعتقاد، جعلت الأنغليكانية تحوي مروحة واسعة جدّاً ممّن يحملون اعتقادات مختلفة، قد تصل إلى حدّ إنكار العقائد الأساسيّة في المسيحية!! فتجد، على سبيل المثال، أسقفاً لا يعتقد بقيامة المسيح بالجسد!

لفتني تواضعها الجَمّ، عندما سألتني، في معرض حديثنا عن تحدّيات الشبيبة عندهم، فقالت: ماذا ننصحنا بخصوص استعادة الروحانية، التي يبحث عنها شبابنا، لمواجهة تحدّيات الحياة المعاصرة؟

علمت من أحد الأساقفة الشباب أنّ النزاع حول كهنوت المرأة، لا يزال قائماً عندهم، وأنّ احتمال انفصال الكنائس الإفريقيّة، وعدد أتباعها بالملايين، أمر محتمل. يطرح واقع الكنيسة الأنغليكانية، بحدّة، العلاقة ما بين الإيمان والثقافة:

- إلى أيّ حدّ قد تلعب الثقافة دوراً في تغيير الإيمان وتفسيره؟
- ما هي الحدود التي يقف الاجتهاد عندها؟
- أين دور الله في صياغة التعبير الإيماني ضمن بيئة دهرية متجدّرة، بعمق، في كلّ مناحي الحياة؟
- كيف يؤثّر حضور الله، فعليّاً، في الكنيسة، ليقبها خطر الانحراف، من جهة، ويمنحها القوة، لكي تواجه التحدّيات الخطرة، التي يفرزها مجتمع الحداثة الدهري، الخانق روحياً، والذي يسود العالم تدريجياً؟
- هل يمكن للمفهوم الديني أن يكون مستقلاً عن الثقافة العامّة؟
- ألا تدفع الثقافة المنغلقة نحو تديّن منغلق، وعدائي، ومشوّه للإيمان؟
- ألا تقود الثقافة المنفتحة نحو تديّن قد يصل إلى حدّ تطويع الإيمان لها، وإفراغه، تالياً، من مضمونه وروحانيّته؟

تكاد ترى الإيمان وقد صار كحقل من حقول الفلسفة، التي منشؤها ومرجعها الإنسان وحده. نحا الغرب هذا المنحى منذ الانشقاق الكبير، وتضخم دور العقل البشري، على حساب الروح القدس المنير والمقدّس للعقل، في فهم الإيمان وصياغته والتعبير عنه. فغدا الإنسان المرجع الرئيس، وضعف الإرث اللاهوتي - الروحي الاستناري، فغاب فعل الله الحيّ، إلى حدّ كبير.

أمّا في الشرق، فبقي الله، الحاضر، بالروح القدس، في وسط كنيسته، الأول والأخير. كذلك، بقي مبدأ اعتماد أيّ قرار صادر عن مجامع الكنيسة، قائماً على صيغة "رأى الروح القدس ونحن" (أعمال الرسل ١٥: ٢٨). لكن الممارسة ليست بمستوى التعليم دوماً. قد يُخطئ المجمع الكنسي، باعتبار أعضائه بشراً، وغير مستنيرين بالضرورة، في حكم الواقع. لكن الإيمان يبقى

محفوظاً بالتقليد الشريف الراسخ، وبالقدّيسين الذين يقوّمون الانحرافَ الحاصل. وحده الله الفاعل في قدسيّته، المستنيرين بالروح القدس، يحفظ الاستقامة في الكنيسة.

قال ممثّل الإمبراطور للقدّيس مكسيموس المعترف، في القرن السابع: "مئات الأساقفة وثلاثة بطارقة وقّعوا على المرسوم الإمبراطوري. ماذا تنتظر؟ لقد سقطت الأرثوذكسيّة." فأجابه القدّيس: "أنا الأرثوذكسيّة." وهذا ما تحقّق. فقد ذهب التعليم بالمشيئة الواحدة، الذي نادى به الإمبراطور، إلى غير رجعة، وبقي التعليم الأرثوذكسي بمشيئتي المسيح، الإلهيّة والبشريّة، سائداً عند كلّ الطوائف المسيحيّة، شرقاً غرباً، حتّى الآن؛ وهو التعليم الذي دافع عنه القدّيس مكسيموس، ودفع مقابل موقفه هذا قطع يده اليمنى ولسانه، وهو في الثمانين من عمره!

أمام الخواء الروحي العميم والمعمّم بطغيان الثقافة الغربية الحالية، تصير مسؤولية الشرق الأرثوذكسي، ودينونته، أكبر، بكثير، ممّا قد نتصوّر.

TESTING OUR CHARACTER, TO MAKE US STRONGER

I am sure we've all heard the phrase "WORST POSSIBLE SCENARIO." It is often used to describe circumstances and situations that are seemingly bleak. It may be used to describe one's health, or perhaps a catastrophic personal tragedy. For some, a huge financial loss may qualify. For others, the phrase may be used to explain feelings experienced when dealing with the death of a loved one. In any event, a "worst possible scenario" frequently leaves us with a feeling of hopelessness.

For Orthodox Christians, however, hopelessness is NEVER an option. With the grace of God, we firmly believe that even the most dreadful scenario can be changed and improved. The Scriptures bear witness to this truth. The Israelites in the Old Testament, after finally being freed from Egyptian slavery, wandered in the desert for 40 years, causing some to question why Moses had brought them into the wilderness to die. What could

have been worse than this? Yet Moses had great faith, and ultimately the Israelites found their home in the "promised land."

After enjoying a life of abundance and prosperity, Job suffered a series of "worst possible scenarios," losing his family, his land and his health. Because he refused to blame God for his tribulations, he was rewarded with more than he had before his life took that dramatic change for the worse.

Could there be a greater "worst possible scenario" than our Lord's Crucifixion? Our entire faith is based upon the darkness of Good Friday becoming the Light of the Resurrection on Pascha.

The solution is to embrace God. He will always provide us with the necessary strength to see us through any tribulation. If we place our trust in God, the possibility is great that our burdens will be lightened by the One Who truly knows our pain.

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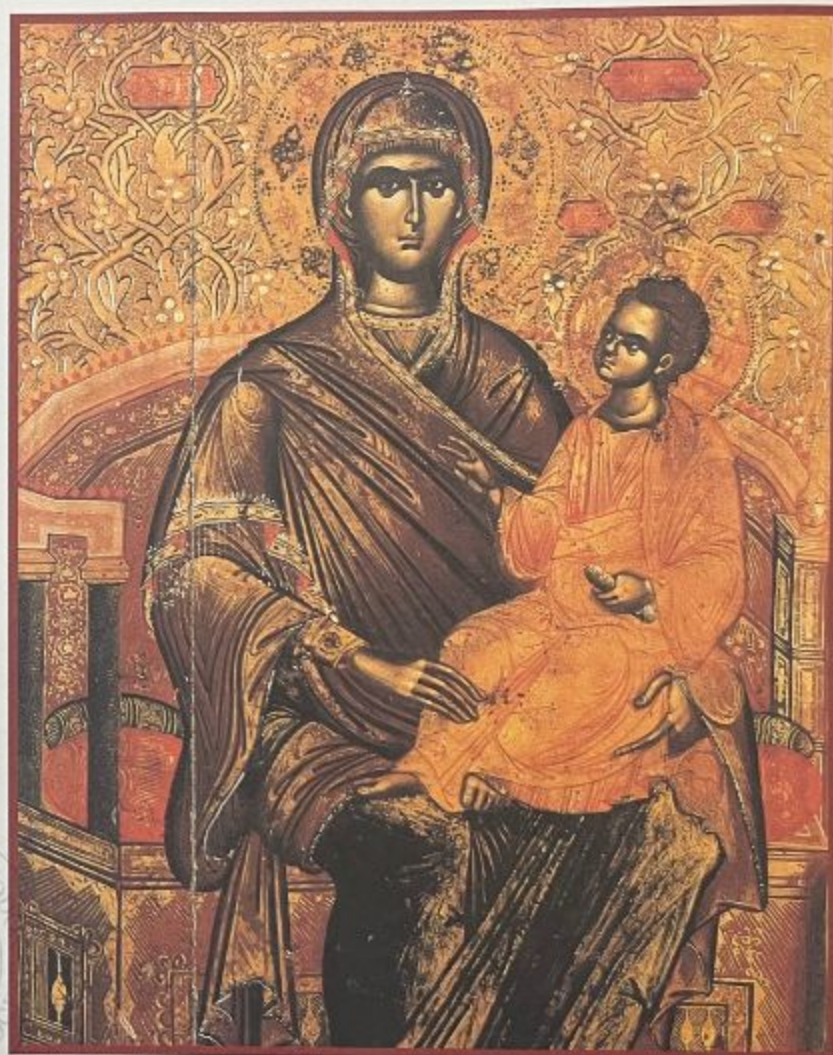
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Church Calendar: Check the Link. <http://www.stgeorgevicksburg.org/service.html>

SAINT GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Very Rev. Father Gabriel Karam, Pastor

Saturday Great Vespers 6:00 p.m. - Sunday Orthros 9:15 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:30 a.m. - Confessions: By Appointment

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 09, 2025

TONE 5/ EOTHINON 11

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE FIVE

Let us believers praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection

APOLYTIKION OF ST. NEKTARIOS OF AEGINA IN TONE ONE

The offspring of Selyvria and the guardian of Aegina, the true friend of virtue who didst appear in the last years, O Nektarios, we faithful honor thee as a Godly servant of Christ, for thou pourest forth healings of every kind for those who piously cry out: Glory to Christ Who hath glorified thee. Glory to Him Who hath made thee wondrous. Glory to Him Who worketh healings for all through thee.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. GEORGE IN TONE FOUR

As deliver of Captives: And defender of the Poor, Healer of the Infirm, champion of Kings, Victorious Great Martyr George, Intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION OF ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS IN TONE FOUR

The sacred treasury of God's holy glory, * the greatly precious bridal chamber and Virgin, * the Savior's most pure temple, free of stain and undefiled, * into the House of the Lord * on this day is brought forward * and bringeth with herself the grace * of the Most Divine Spirit; * her do God's Angels hymn with songs of praise, * for she is truly the heavenly tabernacle.

We Celebrate Today

On November 9 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate our father among the saints **Nektarios of Aegina**, Metropolitan of Pentapolis in Egypt, the wonderworker.

Verses

Since thou drinkest the nectar of life eternal, thou gushest, O Nektarios, streams of healings.

On the ninth, the soul of Nektarios was taken from his body.

Nektarios was born in Selyvria of Thrace on October 1, 1846. Because of his brilliance and holiness, Nektarios ascended in the Church of Alexandria from monk to metropolitan of Pentapolis in eastern Libya. His flock loved him. Nektarios' swift ascent aroused the envy of lesser clergy and laity. In 1890, Patriarch Sophronios relieved the innocent Metropolitan Nektarios of his duties and commanded him to leave Egypt. He became a provincial preacher and teacher around Athens. Through his eloquent sermons his untiring labors to educate fitting men for the priesthood, his generous alms and deeds despite his own poverty, and the meekness and fatherly love that were manifest in him, Nektarios became a spiritual guide to many. In 1904, he began the building of Holy Trinity Convent on the island of Aegina. Nektarios spent the rest of his life there, and through his

prayers delivered the island from drought, healed the sick, and cast out demons. The saint's relics continue to work miracles since his entry into eternal life on this day in 1920. He was canonized in 1961. In 1998, Patriarch Petros VII and the Holy Synod of Alexandria begged the saint to forgive them and their predecessors.

On this day, we also commemorate the Martyrs **Onesiphoros and Porphyrios of Ephesus**; and Venerable Matrona of Constantinople. By the intercessions of Thy saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

+Healing & Recovery Fr. Paul Yerger. Fr. Leo. Deacon Terry. Kh. Janet Henderson. Joy Logue. Sue Thomas. Dolores Nosser. Hugh Cummings. Rick Collins. George Michael Nasif. Lynne Abraham. Pam Smith. Irene Tzotzolas. Maha Habeeb. Michael Farris. Athena Georgia. Andrea Simon. Chuck Abraham. Timmie Fedell. Andy Freeny.

+Birthdays & Anniversaries. Nov. Nancy Thomas, (10), Joni Nosser, Ellis Thomas (12). Morgan Tzotzolas (13). George & Miriam Jabour (18), Jake Dornbusch, Timmie Fedell (19). David Leese (21). Jackson Randall Wright (22).

+The Nativity Lent: Is divided into 2 Periods: (1)- Nov.15 through Dec. 19 when traditional fasting discipline (no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish & wine) is observed daily, with katalysis for wine & fish on Mon. Tue. Thur. Sat. & Sun. (2)- The period of the forefast, Dec.20-25. When the traditional strict fasting is observed all days of the week.

+Fall Festival Is Today. The festivities will begin at 4 pm. We will have a cake walk, bingo, cotton candy and popcorn. Hotdogs, chili and all the fixings will be provided by volunteers and will be cooked in our kitchen. please bring sweets and prizes for bingo.

+Keep in your prayers. Our Catechumens, Cole Gary, Jacob Milliken & John Morgan Mcright. Who are preparing themselves for the Holy Sacrament of Baptism & Chrismation.

+Fall Kibbee Sale Saturday November 22. Deadline to place orders is today Nov.9.

+Christmas Poinsettia. If you would like to purchase one for someone special to adorn the church for the Nativity Season. Order an 8-inch Poinsettia in either memory or honor of an individual. (Antiochian women)

The Church Fathers Teach

Temptations are allowed by God so that the hidden passions are revealed, and can be fought and thus the soul can be healed. They also are a sign of divine mercy. For this reason, trust in God and ask His help, so that He strengthens you in your struggle. Hope in God never leads to despair. Temptations bring humble mindedness. God knows the forbearance of each of us and allows the temptations according to the measure of our powers. Let's strive however to be vigilant and careful, so that we not put our own self into temptation on our own.

Saints Nektarios of Aegina

Welcome our Visitors! We invite you to venerate the cross at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. However, only Orthodox Christians who are in good standing and who have prepared by prayer, fasting, and Confession may receive Holy Communion.

DIVINE LITURGY NOVEMBER 09, 2025

****DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM****

NEKTARIOS OF AEGINA AND PENTAPOLIS, THE WONDERWORKER

THE EPISTLE

(For St. Nektarios)

The Saints shall boast in glory. Sing unto the Lord a new song.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (5:8-19)

Brethren, walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

THE GOSPEL

(For the Seventh Sunday of Luke)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (8:41-56)

At that time, there came to Jesus a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet, he besought Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed round Him. And a woman, who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him, and touched the fringe of His garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround Thee and press upon Thee! And Thou sayest, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, "Someone touched Me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from Me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before Him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. And Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." While Jesus was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." And when Jesus came to the house, He permitted no one to enter with Him, except Peter and James and John, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and bewailing her; but Jesus said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand Jesus called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and Jesus directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed; but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Impressions of a Visit, Part One

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The recently established Antiochian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland includes one Arabic-speaking parish, with about 450 registered families, along with fifteen English-speaking parishes and four missions made up primarily of people of British origin.

The largest parish is in London, whose church—spacious and beautiful— was rented from the Anglican Church under a twenty-year renewable lease. The church was restored to the Anglican church two years ago, while the community is seeking a permanent home to serve as its own church.

Those serving the large Arabic-speaking parish explain that many families—both long-settled and newly arrived in the United Kingdom—are not officially registered with the parish. Reaching and caring for them requires continuous pastoral effort to nurture their relationship with the Church.

As for the other parishes, whose members are mainly of local British background, they joined the Antiochian Orthodox Church in the 1990s, which numbered nine parishes at the time. Fr. Michael Harper, who led the first group, has written the fascinating story of how they entered Orthodoxy.

The main reason they discovered the authenticity of the Orthodox Church was the radical transformations that took place in their former church—the Anglican Church—over the past forty years. Winds of change began to blow there in the 1970s, and soon the snowball began to roll and grow rapidly. Within a single decade, the Anglican Church began ordaining women to the priesthood and accepting homosexual clergy, alongside other developments too numerous to mention here.

Many of its faithful and clergy rejected these changes and did all they could to resist the growing influence of secular and worldly thought. When they realized they could not stop it, they left their church and searched for one with deep, authentic roots. Some discovered the Orthodox Church, which at that time was little known in Britain except among immigrant communities from traditionally Orthodox countries—communities that often functioned as ethnic enclaves.

Why did the Anglican Church become so deeply affected by secular culture? The reason lies mainly in two factors.

First, its decisions—even matters of faith—are made by vote, according to a democratic process. This means that truth is determined by the majority of voices rather than by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church or by a rooted tradition of right belief and knowledge of God.

The second reason is the loss of the early Christian roots and, consequently, the loss of the sacred tradition that guards right faith from deviation. A solid theological heritage helps preserve sound understanding and enables the Church to face contemporary challenges with discernment—knowing what in faith is unchanging and what can be expressed in new ways.

Anglicanism once prided itself on being “neither Eastern nor Western,” claiming to unite both. Yet its rapid decline before the waves of modernity—and now post-modernity—is very sad. Britain today is among the most secular countries in the West. European secularization, though varying from one country to another, has in most places separated religion entirely from public life. God has been pushed out of society and reduced to a private matter for individuals. Thus, man himself has become the only reference of values, morals, and laws.

In the 1990s, Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Christodoulos of Greece tried to insert the phrase “*The cultural roots of the European Union are Judeo-Christian*” into the European Union’s Constitution, but failed. When God is excluded from social order, humanity loses its only stable reference point for moral and human values. If man alone is the source of truth and law, then nothing is fixed and relativism reigns.

In our theological language, we say that humanity is in a fallen state, and Christ became man to raise us up and restore us to our original life in Paradise. When people exclude God from their lives, they exclude life itself. The disintegration of the family and the confusion about its meaning in the Western world is just one example of what happens when God is absent from society.

During a conversation with a professor of theology at an Anglican seminary—who happens to be the wife of the Anglican Bishop of London (their bishops may marry)—she told me that their faith is “protected” by the seven Ecumenical Councils. Yet, she admitted that the freedom of interpretation and belief within Anglicanism has created such a wide range of views that some even deny the core doctrines of Christianity. It is possible, for instance, to find an Anglican bishop who does not believe in the bodily Resurrection of Christ!

I was struck by her humility when she asked me, as we spoke about the challenges facing their youth: “What would you advise us to do to recover the sense of spirituality our young people are searching for, to help them face the challenges of modern life?”

A young Anglican bishop also told me that the controversy over women’s ordination is still unresolved, and that a schism of the African Anglican churches—with their millions of adherents—is a real possibility.

The current state of the Anglican Church raises pressing questions about the relationship between faith and culture:

- To what extent can culture influence or change faith and its interpretation?
- Where are the boundaries of legitimate theological reflection?
- What is God’s role in shaping the expression of faith within a deeply secular environment?
- How does the living presence of God in the Church protect it from deviation and give it strength to face the spiritual suffocation of modern secular society that is spreading across the world?
- Can religion exist independently of the surrounding culture?
- Does a closed culture produce a closed, defensive, and distorted religiosity?
- And does an open culture risk bending religion to its own desires, emptying it of its substance and spirituality?

Faith in the modern West has become like a branch of philosophy, with man as its only reference point. This shift began with the Great Schism and the growing exaltation of human reason at the expense of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and sanctifies the mind to understand divine truth. Man became the final authority, and the spiritual and theological heritage that illuminated it grew weak. As a result, the living action of God has largely faded from view.

In the East, however, God remains the Alpha and Omega, ever-present in His Church through the Holy Spirit. Decisions of Church councils are still made in the spirit of the Apostolic phrase: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28). Of course, practice does not always reach the level of the teaching. A council may err, since its members are human and not necessarily illumined. But faith itself remains preserved by the steadfast holy tradition and by the saints, who correct deviations. Only God, acting in His saints who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, preserves the Church’s integrity.

When the imperial envoy said to St. Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century, “Hundreds of bishops and three patriarchs have signed the imperial decree. Orthodoxy has fallen—what are you waiting for?” the saint replied, “I am Orthodoxy.” And so it proved. The imperial doctrine of “one will” in Christ disappeared forever, while the Orthodox teaching of two wills—divine and human—prevailed in most Christian churches in the East and West. St. Maximus suffered the cutting of his right hand and tongue for this confession when he was eighty years old.

In the face of the spiritual emptiness produced by the dominance of today’s Western culture, the responsibility—and the judgment—of the Orthodox East are far greater than we may imagine.

Impressions de visite, première partie

Par Métropolite Saba (Isper)

L'archidiocèse des Îles Britanniques et d'Irlande d'Antioche compte une paroisse arabophone de quatre cent cinquante familles enregistrées, quinze paroisses et quatre missions anglophones d'origine britannique.

La ville de Londres est le centre de la première et la plus nombreuse paroisse. Son église, vaste et magnifique, est louée à l'Église anglicane par un bail renouvelable tous les vingt ans. Celle-ci vient de récupérer le bâtiment, tandis que la paroisse recherche un autre lieu pour y célébrer.

Les responsables de cette grande paroisse affirment qu'un grand nombre de familles, arrivées au Royaume-Uni autrefois ou récemment, ne figurent pas sur les listes paroissiales. Cela demande un effort pastoral considérable pour les suivre, les rejoindre et entretenir leur relation avec l'Église.

Quant aux autres paroisses, composées de familles britanniques, elles se sont jointes à l'Église orthodoxe antiochienne dans les années 1990 ; elles n'étaient alors qu'un nombre de neuf. Le père Michael Harper, responsable du premier groupe, a raconté avec un plaisir manifeste l'histoire de cette adhésion.

La cause principale de leur découverte de l'authenticité de l'Église orthodoxe réside dans les transformations profondes qu'a connues leur Église-mère, l'anglicanisme, au cours des quarante dernières années. Dès les années 1970, un vent de changement souffla sur cette Église, et la boule de neige grossit rapidement à une vitesse fulgurante. En moins d'une décennie, l'Église commença à ordonner des femmes prêtres, à accepter les personnes homosexuelles dans le clergé, et à débattre de nombreuses autres questions que nous ne pouvons détailler ici.

Une large part du peuple anglican, ainsi qu'une partie de son clergé, refusa ces évolutions et tenta, autant que possible, d'arrêter cette dérive séculière. Lorsqu'ils prirent conscience de leur impuissance, ils quittèrent leur Église et cherchèrent une Église aux racines solides et authentiques. Certains découvrirent l'Église orthodoxe, encore peu connue en Grande-Bretagne, sauf dans les paroisses d'immigrés provenant de pays orthodoxes, qui étaient en réalité des églises communautaires.

Pourquoi l'Église anglicane s'est-elle laissée si profondément pénétrer par la culture séculière ?

Peut-être pour deux raisons principales :

1. **Premièrement**, elle adopte le principe du vote, à la manière démocratique, pour prendre ses décisions, y compris celles touchant à la foi. Cela signifie qu'une décision ou une définition doctrinale repose sur le nombre de voix obtenues, et non sur la présence de l'Esprit Saint dans l'Église, ni sur un héritage solidement ancré dans l'orthodoxie de la pensée et de la connaissance de Dieu.
2. **Deuxièmement**, la perte des racines primitives du christianisme a entraîné celle du saint héritage qui garde la rectitude de la foi et la protège contre la déviation. Une théologie solide aide à discerner entre ce qui demeure et ce qui change dans la foi et ses expressions.

L'anglicanisme a toujours été fier d'être à la fois oriental et occidental. Pourtant, son recul rapide face à la vague de la modernité — et désormais de la post-modernité — est profondément triste. La Grande-Bretagne est aujourd'hui l'un des pays les plus athées d'Occident.

La sécularisation européenne, bien qu'elle varie d'un pays à l'autre, a, en séparant la religion de l'État, éloigné Dieu totalement de la société et en a fait une affaire privée. L'homme est devenu la seule référence pour les valeurs, la morale et la législation.

Le pape Jean-Paul II et l'archevêque de Grèce Christodoulos ont tenté, dans les années 1990, d'insérer la phrase « les racines culturelles de l'Union européenne sont judéo-chrétiennes » dans la constitution de l'Union européenne, sans succès. Ainsi, lorsque Dieu est exclu de l'ordre social, l'humanité perd son seul fondement stable de valeurs.

Que l'homme seul soit la source des valeurs et de la législation signifie qu'il n'existe plus de valeurs fixes, et que le relativisme devient l'arbitre. En langage théologique, nous disons que l'humanité est en état de chute, et que le Christ s'est incarné pour la relever et la ramener à son état paradisiaque originel. En écartant Dieu de leur vie, les hommes écartent la vie elle-même. La désintégration de la famille et de son concept dans le monde occidental n'est qu'un exemple des conséquences de l'absence de Dieu dans la société.

Témoignages et réflexions

Lors d'une conversation avec une professeure de dogmatique au collège de théologie anglican — épouse de l'évêque de Londres (le mariage étant autorisé pour les évêques anglicans) — elle affirma que leur doctrine est protégée par les sept conciles œcuméniques. Cependant, la liberté d'interprétation et de croyance a fait de

l'anglicanisme un éventail très large de convictions différentes, pouvant aller jusqu'au déni des doctrines fondamentales du christianisme. On trouve ainsi, par exemple, un évêque qui ne croit pas à la résurrection corporelle du Christ !

Son humilité m'a frappé lorsqu'elle me demanda, au cours de notre discussion sur les défis de la jeunesse : « Que nous conseillez-vous pour retrouver la spiritualité que recherche notre jeunesse, afin d'affronter les défis de la vie contemporaine ? »

Aussi, un jeune évêque m'a confié que la question du sacerdoce féminin demeure un sujet de discorde, et que la séparation des Églises africaines — qui comptent des millions de fidèles — est tout à fait possible.

La réalité de l'Église anglicane pose avec acuité la question de la relation entre la foi et la culture :

- Jusqu'où la culture peut-elle influencer la foi ?
- Où s'arrête la liberté d'interprétation ?
- Comment l'Esprit de Dieu agit-il dans une société sécularisée, profondément enracinée dans tous les aspects de la vie ?
- Comment la présence effective de Dieu dans l'Église la protège-t-elle du danger de la déviation, et lui donne-t-elle la force d'affronter les défis spirituellement étouffants de la société moderne ?
- Le concept religieux peut-il être indépendant de la culture générale ?
- Une culture fermée ne pousse-t-elle pas vers une religiosité fermée, hostile et déformée de la foi ?
- Et, inversement, une culture ouverte ne conduit-elle pas à une religiosité qui risque de plier la foi à elle-même, la vidant ainsi de son contenu et de sa spiritualité ?

Foi, raison et fidélité à la Tradition

On dirait presque que la foi est devenue un champ parmi d'autres de la philosophie, dont l'origine et la référence sont l'homme seul. L'Occident a suivi cette voie depuis le Grand Schisme : le rôle de la raison humaine s'est hypertrophié au détriment de l'Esprit Saint, qui illumine et sanctifie la raison dans la compréhension, la formulation et l'expression de la foi. L'homme est devenu la référence principale, l'héritage théologico-spirituel patristique s'est affaibli, et l'action du Dieu vivant s'est largement effacée.

En Orient, en revanche, Dieu demeure présent, par l'Esprit Saint, au milieu de son Église — le premier et le dernier. Le principe selon lequel toute décision conciliaire repose sur la formule : « Il a plu à l'Esprit Saint et à nous » (Actes 15 : 28), reste en vigueur. Certes, la pratique n'est pas toujours à la hauteur de l'enseignement : un concile ecclésiastique peut errer, ses membres étant humains et non nécessairement illuminés dans leur jugement. Mais la foi demeure préservée par la sainte Tradition solidement ancrée et par les saints, qui corrigent toute déviation. Seul Dieu, agissant en ses saints illuminés par l'Esprit Saint, préserve l'orthodoxie dans l'Église.

Au VII^e siècle, le représentant de l'empereur dit à saint Maxime le Confesseur : « Des centaines d'évêques et trois patriarches ont signé le décret impérial. Que veux-tu de plus ? L'orthodoxie est tombée. » Le saint répondit : « Je suis l'orthodoxie. » Et cela s'accomplit. L'enseignement de la volonté unique, prôné par l'empereur, disparut sans retour, tandis que l'enseignement orthodoxe des deux volontés du Christ — divine et humaine — prévaut encore aujourd'hui dans toutes les dénominations chrétiennes, orientales et occidentales. Saint Maxime paya ce témoignage de sa main droite et de sa langue, coupées à l'âge de quatre-vingts ans.

Conclusion

Face au vide spirituel généralisé et imposé par la domination de la culture occidentale actuelle, la responsabilité — et donc le jugement — de l'Orient orthodoxe sont bien plus grands que nous ne l'imaginons.