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## THE BASIS OF ANGLICAN DOCTRINE AND FELLOWSHIP IN RELATION TO THE ORTHODOX EASTERN CHURCH.

By THE REV. F. S. CRAGG, M.A., Organizing Secretary, Evangelical Churchmen's Ordination Council, and late Secretary Palestine Mission (C.M.S.).

THE Eastern Orthodox Church occupies a position of the highest importance in Christendom. This is seen to be true even if that position is considered merely from a geographical point of view, for that Church is intimately concerned with and is challenged by two of the greatest and most aggressive of anti-Christian forces, Secularism and Islam. It is not surprising that at this particular stage in history the relations between British Christianity and the Christianity of the Near East should have come under review. Secularism, which is threatening the moral foundations of our own civilization, has assumed its most militant and revolutionary form in Russia, the largest of all Orthodox countries. The witness of the Christian Church in Russia, faced by the cruellest opposition, is of vital concern to the Church in Britain. Islam, the religion of nearly 100 millions of subjects of the British Crown and of many peoples for whom Great Britain has assumed a special responsibility, is the next-door neighbour as well as the ancient foe of all the Orthodox Churches in the Near East. It is not too much to say that the behaviour of the Christian Church in the Near East, the very heart of Islam, will have a far-reaching effect upon the future well-being not only of Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt, but also upon the Moslems of India, the Soudan and Tropical Africa. The Christian Church in Great Britain cannot but be concerned that the Christian witness in the Near East shall be real and effective. Evangelicals, too, will feel that they have a special concern, in that hitherto the burden of the evangelization of the Moslem world has been laid almost entirely upon the shoulders of Evangelical Christians, and not least upon the Evangelicals of the Church of England.

We approach, therefore, the consideration of our Fellowship with the Orthodox Church with a deep sense of our responsibility. We realize what a tremendous power for Christian evangelism the Orthodox Church may become. We sympathize deeply with the peoples and churches who have endured for centuries the yoke of Turkish oppression, and particularly do we sympathize with our fellow-Christians in Russia who are enduring perhaps an even more grievous yoke to-day. We should be lacking in Christian charity and deaf to the clear call of God if we did not desire to extend the right hand of fellowship to the Eastern Churches. We must help them if it lies within our power, that they may enjoy

a new freedom of spiritual life, a new sense of God's call to them and a new fellowship in service with other Christian Churches. It would be a mighty achievement in the extension of the Kingdom of God if we could secure in the Holy Land and throughout the Near East a united Christian witness.

These considerations form the essential background in any steps which are taken to establish any form of unity between the Orthodox and Anglican Churches. Apparently reunion has entered the realm of practical politics. The last Lambeth *Encyclical* says that

" a most important delegation from the Orthodox Churches of the East arranged by the Œcumenical patriarchs and headed by the Patriarch of Alexandria visited our Conference. Another delegation headed by the Archbishop of Utrecht represented the Old Catholics. Both of these delegations came to tell us that they desire definite and practical steps to be taken for the restoration of Communion between their Churches and ourselves. This is a notable advance crowning a long period of increasing friendliness. The Conference had asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a commission of theologians to confer with similar commissions if appointed by the authorities of the Orthodox and Old Catholics, and it is hoped that these commissions can find such a unity of faith and such a similarity in practice to exist between the Churches that restoration of communion may become possible as soon as the Assemblies of the various Churches can meet."<sup>1</sup>

It will be noticed from this that the problem has now become mainly one of theology. The Orthodox have made it very clear that the prior condition of inter-communion must be " dogmatic union." And already much has been done to justify the hope of the *Encyclical* that dogmatic union will be achieved. The question has been before the Orthodox Churches for many years. It was raised as a question of real urgency by the spiritual needs of Orthodox Churchmen in America and the Dominions, who wished to receive Communion in Anglican Churches, in places where there was no provision of an Orthodox Ministry. While such communions had been permitted in many places, no general permission was possible until the Orthodox Church in General Synod had satisfied itself as to the validity of Anglican Orders. At the request of the Great Church of Constantinople, Professor Androustos proceeded in 1902 to investigate the validity of Anglican Orders. His report may be regarded as the basis of later investigations. In it he stated his satisfaction as to the " visible part " in Anglican Ordinations, including the " historic sanction " and " formulæ of consecration," but was not completely satisfied in regard to the " invisible part," which concerned the " purpose to make a priest " in the Orthodox Catholic sense. The stumbling-block in his view consisted in the XXXIX Articles, and also in certain ambiguities in the Prayer Book. Canon Douglas, in his very illuminating book on the *Relations of the Anglican Church with the Eastern Orthodox*, states that the result of his investigations was so satisfactory that if a declaration upon certain points could be made, not necessarily by the authorities of the Anglican Church but by a large section of the Anglican Church, e.g. the High Church, then the Orthodox

<sup>1</sup> Report of Lambeth Conference, p. 25.

Churches would be justified in accepting as authoritative the Orders of an Anglican priest who wished to be received into Orthodoxy. The position is made so clear by Professor Androutsos that his own words should be carefully studied.

"In particular, the High Church (party) will solve the question of its priesthood by defining, wisely and truly, what faith it holds as of primary importance, and by defining what doctrine it holds in the dogmas which are bound up with the priesthood and which are shown in its divinely bestowed character and in its excellent power, that is to say:

"1. As regards the Sacraments. Does it receive the Seven Sacraments ?

"2. As regards Confession. Does it take Confession as a necessary condition for the remission of sins; and the priestly absolving of sins as included in the authority given to it by the Lord ?

"3. As regards the Eucharist. How does it accept the Real Presence of the Lord ? And what is the character of the Unbloody Sacrifice ?

"4. As regards the Œcumenical Councils. Will it receive these Councils as infallible organs of the true Church the declarations of which bind *eo ipso* every particular Church and accept them always as the true faith ?

"If the High Church (party) define these dogmas correctly and lay down the rest of its doctrines in an orthodox manner, all doubt would be taken away as to the succession of English ordinations, and at the same time solid foundations would be laid for a rapprochement and for a true union with the Eastern Church—a work well pleasing to God and one of blessing from every point of view."<sup>1</sup>

Incidentally it is interesting and historically important to observe the place which the High Church occupied in the thinking of the Orthodox. They still believe that essential Anglicanism is represented by the Anglo-Catholics. Even so recently as 1929 Archbishop Germanos wrote that he had quieted the misgivings of a fellow-Orthodox by pointing to the steady progress which had been made inside the Anglican Church towards Catholic ideas. "Why should we not," he said, "think that the time is coming when the Catholic nucleus which always existed in the Anglican Church should not prevail over the whole body?"<sup>2</sup> When this tendency is taken into account the "Declaration of Faith," which was presented to the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1922 and signed by 3,715 members of the English Church Union, assumes a very real importance. This statement was intended to satisfy the doubts of the Orthodox on various questions which Professor Androutsos had raised. It accepted the Œcumenical Councils, the seven Sacraments and the Catholic theory of Apostolic Succession. It stated that there has been conferred upon Anglican priests the Sacrament of the Order with the purpose that they

"should (a) preach and teach the Word of God; (b) offer the unbloody sacrifice of the Eucharist for both the living and the departed; (c) sacramentally absolve sinners who repent and confess their sins; and (d) otherwise minister to the called of Christ according to the ancient faith and practice of the Universal Church."<sup>3</sup>

This statement further proceeded:

"We affirm that by consecration in the Eucharist, the bread and wine being

<sup>1</sup> *Relations of the Anglican Church with the Eastern Orthodox*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian East*, 1929, p. 30. <sup>3</sup> Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity*, p. 92.

blessed by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, are changed and become the true Body and true Blood of Christ and as such are given to and received by the faithful. We hold therefore that Christ thus present is to be adored."<sup>1</sup>

The statement also gave satisfaction in regard both to the honour to be paid to the Saints and to the use of sacred images, and counted "the XXXIX Articles of Religion as a document of secondary importance concerned with local controversies of the sixteenth century." This Declaration of the English Church Union would have relatively little importance but for the fact that the Orthodox leaders had been encouraged to believe that genuine Anglicanism and Anglo-Catholicism were synonymous terms, and that this view would appear to have received support rather than otherwise by their consultations with Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conferences in 1920 and 1930. An official delegation of Orthodox attended the Lambeth Conference for the first time in 1920. Archbishop Germanos, in writing of the meeting of this delegation with the bishops' committee, stated that "the patriarchal delegation insisted upon the Anglicans recognizing the Holy Eucharist as being of a sacrificial character and the introduction of the Epiclesis of the Holy Spirit as necessary for the change in the Holy elements." The delegation remained satisfied because the Anglicans accepted the decision relating to ikons of the Seventh Council. The delegation mentions the impression created by the declaration made by the Anglicans that "prayers for the dead are now in use by the Anglican Church and their use is becoming more general by the permission of the Bishops."<sup>2</sup> The delegation on its return presented a careful report and one of its number, Professor Comnenos, was requested by the Patriarch of Constantinople to investigate afresh the validity of Anglican Orders. His investigation was so favourable that in 1922 the Great Church of Constantinople officially declared its opinion that Anglican Orders were valid. This was followed by similar declarations by the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Cyprus. Apparently they had received satisfaction in regard to the points raised by Professor Androutsos twenty years before. No doubt the E.C.U. "Declaration," issued a few months earlier, had been of real assistance. In particular, the place of the XXXIX Articles in Anglicanism had been settled. The delegation reported the Chairman of the Anglican bishops as stating that the XXXIX Articles "were written to suit the sixteenth century, for the confuting of heresies. Many of them are already obsolete."<sup>3</sup>

Professor Comnenos, in his report which led to the declaration of the validity of Anglican Orders, wrote as follows:

"It must not be forgotten that a very secondary authority is assigned to the XXXIX Articles, which in their details are not binding upon the clergy themselves, are designated as Articles of Religion and not of Faith, to-day have chiefly an historic value, are being abandoned every day by this or other of the Episcopal Churches, and being formally retained almost only in England because of their former political importance."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity*, p. 92.    <sup>2</sup> *Christian East*, 1929, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity*, p. 66.    <sup>4</sup> *Christian East*, Vol. II, p. 110.

The situation is very plain. Abolish the XXXIX Articles; interpret the Book of Common Prayer according to Anglo-Catholicism, and the result is an Anglicism which is able to enter into dogmatic union with Orthodoxy. But the place where officials of the Established Church of England should endeavour to abolish the XXXIX Articles, which after all have their authority from the Crown of England, is in the councils of this realm and not in official committees with the Churches of other lands. To say the least, it is most unfair to the other Churches.

The report of the later delegation to the Lambeth Conference of 1930 brought forth a similar declaration as to the validity of Anglican Orders from the Patriarch of Alexandria. Very shortly there is to be a Synod of all the Orthodox Churches. Its declaration as to Anglican Orders will no doubt be forthcoming and intercommunion will be possible. But it will not be Union. There is far too much misconception and misrepresentation, however unintentional they may be, in the making of this reunion movement. Unity must have stronger links than these.

It is of very real importance that the whole Anglican Church should examine the Report of the Archbishops' Commission when it appears. In the meantime a document which appeared in the Lambeth Conference Report and is called a *Résumé* of the Discussions between the Delegation of the Orthodox Church and Bishops of the Anglican Communion at Lambeth, 1930, is worthy of close study. A few examples of statements which it contains will suffice to reveal its importance, especially if they are read in the light of Orthodox teaching.

(1) The *Résumé* contains the statement by the Anglican Bishops that "in ordination a special charisma is given to the person ordained." Dositheus, the author of one of the five books received as symbolic throughout all Orthodox Churches, describes their doctrine of Orders as follows: "Episcopacy is so necessary that if that were taken away there would be neither Church nor Christian. Episcopacy seems to us as necessary to the Church as breath to a man or the sun to the world."<sup>1</sup> A later theologian of high rank contends that "Priesthood is a sacrament in which the Bishop lays his hands upon him who is chosen, invokes upon him the Divine Grace and *imparts* to him the grace of Priesthood."<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to read these statements without coming to the conclusion that, in other words, (a) Episcopacy is of the "esse" of the Church, and (b) a grace which is inherent in the Apostolic Succession is transmitted from bishop to priest through the laying-on of hands: this is the theory which in Orthodox eyes underlies the statement of the Anglican Bishops. This is not Anglican theory. It is contrary to historical evidence and it is a theory which was held by no leading Anglican theologian before the days of the Tractarians. It would rule out completely any possibility of reunion with Non-Episcopal Churches.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Relations of the Anglican Church with the Eastern Orthodox*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

(2) A second statement of the Anglican Bishops in this *Résumé* is to the effect that "after Communion the sacred elements remaining are regarded sacramentally as the Body and Blood of Christ." This statement means that the bread and wine after consecration are not simply bread and wine but have been changed, and was regarded by the Orthodox as satisfactory from their point of view. There is no ambiguity in their view as to what this change means.

"At these words" (referring to the Epiclesis), "there is wrought the Change in the elements, and the very bread becomes the very Body of Christ and the Wine His very Blood. The species only remaining, which are perceived by the sight. . . . This Holy Mystery is also offered as a sacrifice for all Orthodox Christians as well living as those who sleep."<sup>1</sup>

Or take Dositheus :

"In the celebration of the sacrament we believe Our Lord Jesus Christ to be present not typically or figuratively nor by a greater degree of grace than in other sacraments nor by a bare presence . . . nor by conjunction whereby the Divinity is substantially united to the bread as the Lutherans foolishly and wretchedly suppose, but truly and really that the bread and wine after consecration are changed, transubstantiated, transformed, the bread into the true Body of Our Lord which was born in Bethlehem of the true Virgin, the wine also is changed and transubstantiated into the very Blood of Our Lord which as He hung on the Cross flowed from His Side for the life of the World. We believe that the substance of bread and wine remains no longer but the very Body and Blood of the Lord in the form and figures of bread and wine."<sup>2</sup>

Theologians are able to do wonderful things with words, but it will be difficult to persuade any ordinary person that either the official teaching or practice of the Orthodox Church does not imply a material change in the elements. But the surprising fact is that the Orthodox now believe that Anglican teaching is the same as theirs.

(3) It was further stated by the Orthodox Delegation that the explanation of Anglican doctrine . . . made with regard to the Eucharistic sacrifice was agreeable to Orthodox doctrine. Professor Androutsos declared that one of the points upon which satisfaction would be required was as to the offering of the "unbloody sacrifice for the living and the dead." The Synod of Alexandria declared after the Lambeth Conference that it accepted Anglican Orders because in these declarations endorsed by the Lambeth Conference "complete and satisfying assurance is found as to the Apostolic Succession, as to the real reception of the Lord's Body and Blood, as to the Eucharist being 'thusia nilasteria.'" There is a reluctance to translate these words. They either mean "propitiatory sacrifice" or else the bishops have committed the Church to something which cannot be translated into English. But the Orthodox teaching is clear enough. Mogila says: "This Holy Mystery is also offered as a sacrifice for all Orthodox Christians as well living as those who sleep";<sup>3</sup> or Bulgariis: "The end of the Holy Liturgy is that the Lamb of God may be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world."<sup>4</sup>

(4) The *Résumé* also states that in the Eucharistic prayer the

<sup>1</sup> *The Relations of the Anglican Church with the Eastern Orthodox*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Anglican Church prays for the "faithful departed." In the "Terms of Inter-communion," a document drawn up in 1921 by the Eastern Churches committee, of which this *Résumé* speaks with approval, agreement was expressed with the decision of the Seventh Council about the use of ikons. It is possible to interpret the Seventh Council in such a way that an ikon will mean no more than will a sacred picture in the National Gallery to a reverent observer. But in fact "Saints" and "Ikons" have led to much superstition in the East just as they did in mediæval England. One picture will suffice of peasants in Roumania as described by Dr. Kidd in his *History of Eastern Christendom*:

"God is to them a very shadowy conception; Jesus Christ is worshipped rather from a distance, but they feel at home with their Saints; Saints Nicholas and Dmitri, Basil and Gregori, and especially the Holy Virgin. They burn candles before their shrines, pray to them in distress, take the clothes of the sick to the Holy images to be blessed by the priests, and they scrupulously keep the feasts of the saints."<sup>1</sup>

This is a characteristic picture, and it is this picture which has, at any rate to the reverent Moslem mind, been the greatest offence in Christianity. It has locked the doors of Christendom against Islam. The warning contained in the words of the Rev. W. W. Cash still holds good

"Islam in proclaiming the unity and greatness of God was putting forth an idea that grew in the minds of men into a profound conviction. The simplicity of it appealed to them as an immense relief from the complexity of mediæval Christian teaching with its priestly offices, saint worship and its labyrinth of theological difficulties."<sup>2</sup>

It is no wonder that the XXXIX Articles have been ruled out of consideration. Every one of these statements on the part of Bishops at Lambeth, interpreted by Orthodox teaching, are contrary to the XXXIX Articles as they were understood at the Reformation and after the Reformation by all Anglicanism with the exception of the Anglo-Catholics. In 1920 the Bishops stated that many of these articles were obsolete. In 1930 they declared "that the doctrine of the Anglican Church is authoritatively expressed in the Book of Common Prayer and that the meaning of the XXXIX Articles must be interpreted in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer." It would naturally be presumed that the particular articles which refer to Orders and the Sacraments and to the Councils are among those which are now obsolete, or are so to be interpreted. It may be true that there are certain articles which had special reference to difficulties in the sixteenth century and which are now chiefly of historic interest; but the articles to which the Orthodox take exception are not among them. These particular articles state principles of Anglican faith and practice, which are equally true, or false, both in the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. They are not final, absolute and infallible statements of doctrinal truth, but they are the truest expression which we possess of the mind of the Anglican Church in regard to the matters with

<sup>1</sup> P. 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Expansion of Islam*, p. 271.



which they deal. They cannot be summarily dismissed as matters of secondary importance unless the Anglican Church is prepared to confess that in doctrinal matters it has no mind at all. It is interesting to notice how different is the attitude of the Orthodox to their own traditions, and also to observe the principle underlying dogmatic union with the Orthodox which raises perhaps the greatest difficulty of all. The Orthodox have made it perfectly clear that complete dogmatic agreement is essential for Reunion. "Where the totality of the faith is absent there can be no 'communio in sacris.'" This was the declaration of the Orthodox delegation at Lausanne. Archbishop Germanos explains :

"Faith and the exposition of Faith are so closely allied that only when one accepts the true theological exposition of the Faith is one in touch with the truth of the Faith. The fundamental basis of Faith for the Orthodox is the content of the Divine Revelation as it survives in the Holy Gospel and in the Apostolic traditions and as expressed in the Seven Œcumenical Synods and believed in the first eight centuries of the undivided Church."<sup>1</sup>

And Canon Douglas declares that

"in postulating full dogmatic agreement as an essential basis of Reunion, the Orthodox are constrained to look for essential identity with their traditional faith as to the Church, the Ministry, the Eucharist and so on, as expressed in the writings of their theologians, their Liturgy and in their practice."<sup>2</sup>

The sole question in any "dogmatic" approach to the Orthodox is as to whether the Anglican faith is identically the same as the faith of the Seven Councils and of the first eight centuries. That faith cannot be questioned. It is incontrovertible. Consider this position in the light of the Articles. Article 6 states that

"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

Article 21 on the authority of General Councils contains the following words :

"And when they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) they may err and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of the Holy Scripture."

Are these Articles merely of historic interest? Are they not rather the expression of the very principles which secure the spiritual freedom of the English Church? And they represent a mentality which is fundamentally different from that of the Orthodox.

Much space has necessarily been devoted to the consideration of "dogmatic union" because that is the immediate issue. But it is never the most important issue in the achievement of Christian fellowship. Living unity between Churches will come neither from the agreements of theologians nor ecclesiastical formulæ, but from a new sense of a common purpose in the extension of the Kingdom of God. The body of Christ is living, organic, active. It is by

<sup>1</sup> *Christian East*, 1928, p. 14.      <sup>2</sup> *Christian East*, 1930, Summer Number.

co-ordination of its members in the pursuance of some definite Christ-purposed action that Unity in a living body will be revealed. It is my own conviction that the line of obedience to God's call for Christian witness in Moslem lands is far more hopeful of ultimate reunion than any other. Neither its importance nor its difficulty can be exaggerated. Nothing less than a spiritual awakening throughout the whole Church of England will enable us to obey the call of God. I do not think it is presumptuous to assert that the same need is equally evident in Orthodoxy. The following are the words of a devoted and scholarly Eastern churchman :

" Really the conflict in the Near East has not been between Christianity and Islam as pure religions ; . . . It has been a nationalistic struggle with a mixture of religious fanaticism. There has not yet been started a purely spiritual campaign in these Moslem lands to influence Islam for good."<sup>1</sup>

At the present time it must be confessed that there are few signs that the Eastern Churches are alive to the great missionary challenge of Islam. One's own personal experience entirely bears out the opinion of Bishop McInnes, who speaks with very real sympathy and after a long residence in the Near East.

" Not merely have they," referring to the Eastern Church, " lost their old missionary zeal, but they regard the notion of the conversion of Moslems with actual abhorrence. Too often any reference to the call to missionary effort and to any responsibility to try to win the Moslems arouses in them obvious astonishment ; they would argue that such people are beyond the pale. We may not degrade our holy things by giving them to the dogs ! " <sup>2</sup>

By all means let us welcome discussion between the theologians of both Churches in order that we may the better understand each other's point of view. Although in this connection we feel that the Committee appointed by the Archbishop to consult with Orthodox theologians would be more useful if it were more representative of Anglicanism.

Let us welcome every opportunity to place at the disposal of the Orthodox Churches any experience which we may have gained that will enable them to grapple with their difficult educational and social problems. There is, for example, a unique opportunity in Palestine to serve the Orthodox in the region of Christian education. Above all let us Evangelicals see to it that our missionary witness in the Near East is as worthy of the occasion and the need as lies within our power. It is a not insignificant fact that it is Protestant missions which at present occupy the Moslem field. It is they alone which have made any impression on the Moslem mind. The Church Missionary Society has played a great part in the difficult " sowing " years of the past century. That Society is called upon to play an even greater part in the years to come. Opportunities loom large to-day for which our fathers prayed. In seizing these opportunities there will be achieved the greatest possible service to the Ancient Churches of the East. The inspiration which proceeds from a common sacrifice will bring not only life to these Churches and to our own, but also, we pray, a unity born of a living experience of fellowship in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> *Levonian Moslem Mentality*, p. 153.    <sup>2</sup> *Moslem World To-day*, p. 273.