

ECUMENISM IN THE CONTINUUM

a talk given by the Rt. Rev. Paul C. Hewett, SSC, Diocese of the Holy Cross
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Today I bring you greetings from Bp. Keith Ackerman, President of Forward in Faith, North America. He would very much like to be with us, but sends his regrets. We just had several days together in London at the Forward in Faith Assembly. He will convey my regrets to next week's Forward in Faith Council Meeting, and so you see how we are covering for each other now. Dr. Wallace Spalding, President of the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen (FCC), also sends his best wishes and regrets. The FCC, you will remember, organized the St. Louis Congress in 1977.

The pilot of an Italian airline, landing in Paris, talks to the control tower in English. A German business man in Peking, closing a deal with a Chinaman, does so in English. Who could have predicted in the 9th century, when Alfred the Great was the King of England, that the language of a small backwater island would someday be the language of the world?

English is the world's language, and God has allowed the English people and the English Church to be unique in the world. Because England sustained so many migrations and invasions, the language has the largest vocabulary in the world. As the Anglo-Saxon peoples settled in they took on vocabulary from their Celtic and Latin predecessors. But with the subsequent invasions from the Scandinavians and the Norman French, the natives absorbed massive amounts of new vocabulary to be worked into and absorbed into English. The English language and culture developed an amazing capacity to absorb and be enriched by new influences without overthrowing the original order. English remains a Germanic language. This ability to understand and absorb gives our Anglican churches the gift of understanding deeply and working closely with the Roman, the Protestant and the Orthodox. This gift may help explain why the devil has attacked our community with such ferocity. He cannot stand to see us living out our vocation.

We are great synthesizers. The early British Church was Celtic, and because of the tin trade with Phoenicia, absorbed influences from the eastern Roman Empire. The Celtic Church was given contact with the Eastern fathers, so much so that in the 1950's, Professor Hodges called Anglicanism "an outbreak of Orthodoxy in the West," and Archbishop Michael Ramsey concurred. From the Synod of Whitby on, in the 7th century, we agreed on a blend of the seemingly impossible elements of the Celtic itinerant and the Benedictine settler. They worked together to convert the Anglo-Saxon invaders. From repeated invasions, Christians in Britain had to learn to hold on to "core values" but have enough elasticity to absorb the good in what their invaders brought. The English language is itself an expression of this. English remains a Germanic language, amazingly enriched by old Norse and French. In our time the devil takes advantage of this wonderful gift. He turns our gift into an Achilles heel, and seduces us into an elasticity that absorbs heresy and error. Then, after the thirty year European civil war of 1914 to 1945, he lures us into what Solzhenitsyn calls spiritual exhaustion. But God is reforming and invigorating us so He can use us to help reveal the essential unity of His Church...to "mend the rends" in our Lady's Protecting Veil. We are in a position to help the two lungs of the Church, East and West, breathe together again.

Our Lady wears a long blue veil, the color of the veil in the Temple, and of God's glory there. There is an ancient and widespread tradition about Mary's veil, the Protecting Veil. A medieval German statue depicts Mary wearing a veil that goes to the ground, a cope. Peeking out of its

sides, from top to bottom, are diminutive men, women and children...all of us, in fact. The Blessed Mother's Veil is our protection and our home in the Family of God.

There is only one Family of God. There is only one Church. This truth was driven home by the deacon with whom I served in London in the 1970's. He used to say that we cannot make the Church one. It already is one. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." In Ephesians, chapter 4, he says "there is one body." What we can do is either reveal the unity of the body, or obscure it. We reveal the Body's essential unity through humility, forbearance, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We obscure the Body's unity through pride, prejudice and ignorance.

For the first thousand years, the Church was visibly one. We may call this the consensus of the first millennium, the patristic consensus, the time when the Fathers were combating heresy and formulating orthodox dogma and the Creeds. This was the age of the seven ecumenical councils, when all the creative juices of the Church could flow together. Our commitment as Anglicans has always been to this consensus. Traditional, orthodox Anglicans have always immersed themselves in it and pointed to it as our way of interpreting Scripture. Orthodoxy's litmus test is antiquity, ubiquity and consent: what has been believed and taught always, everywhere, by all the faithful.

Our vocation as Anglicans is wrapped up in the paradigm of the patristic consensus of the first thousand years. The consensus of the first millennium is the model for revealing our unity. It is the convergence point for the Body of Christ. Pope John Paul II used to say that as the Church moves into the third millennium, She must use the paradigm of the first millennium to overcome the divisions of the second. Roman Catholics, the Orthodox, traditional, orthodox Anglicans and many believing Protestants are now all on the same page. It is astonishing that the Patriarch of Moscow may plan a lengthy and unprecedented visit to Rome. He cites the rising tide of Islam as one reason why he and the Pope must learn to speak with one moral voice. A meeting like this begins to fulfill what Leon Bloy believed, that the Church in the West would be renewed by the Russian Church that has suffered in *fire and water*. If Rome is the shoe and Orthodoxy is the foot, then we as Anglicans can be the shoe horn. We are the only Christians who simultaneously understand Rome, Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Our Lady's Protecting Veil is torn in many places. Traditional, orthodox Anglicans are on hand, globally, to help her mend the rends we can reach.

Powerful centripetal forces are at work to draw the Body together. The Holy Spirit is drawing us from ahead. Tens of thousands of evangelicals are on the Canterbury trail. A surprising number of Anglicans in new parishes now surround Wheaton College in Illinois, where a professor expounds on the reasons for a weekly Eucharist. The sharp evangelicals today recognize that we are no longer dealing with the conflicts of the 16th century, but of the 4th. The great issue confronting us all is the incarnation. Is Jesus God in the flesh or not? Those who say He is are lining up on one side of a new divide. Those who say that He is merely a great ethical teacher, like Confucius or Buddha are lining up on the other.

The Columbia International University where I live in South Carolina was founded by Baptists and Presbyterians and now has four Anglican professors. One of our deacons is in their Seminary. The remnant community in Sweden, the Mission Province, is being helped by the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod (LCMS), who are also assisting orthodox Lutherans in the Baltic republics. There are now continuing Anglican jurisdictions in ecumenical partnership with the Missouri Synod.

ACNA's Ecumenical Relations Task Force, under the brilliant leadership of Bp. Ray Sutton of the REC, has brought us into partnership with the LCMS, the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), Roman Catholics, evangelical protestants and Messianic Jews. With all this, there are ever increasing instances of the Holy Spirit drawing us from ahead: I was in Sweden last week, and a member of the St. Stephen's koinonia in Stockholm asked if he could get a copy of the anthology on "Justification and Theosis," with contributions from professors from both Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and St. Vladimir's in New York. Another instance of the Holy Spirit drawing us from ahead is the Pentecostal pastor in Sweden, Peter Haldorf, who has discovered the fathers, and is writing about them to his fellow Pentecostals.

Last May a delegation of 38 Lutherans from Scandinavia spent two weeks with the Missouri Synod, at the seminaries in St. Louis and Fort Worth. The Scandinavian Lutherans have apostolic bishops. The Missouri Synod does not...but there is talk about it, and how the Scandinavians, or we, might someday help. The Nordic Catholic Church in Norway is sponsored by the Polish National Catholic Church, the PNCC, from Buffalo, NY. The Episcopal Church used to be in communion with the PNCC, and it looks as though someday continuing Anglicanism will reconnect with them. The Holy Spirit is drawing us from ahead.

Islam is pushing us from behind: God is using Islam to bring His Church together, more quickly than we would have thought possible. But God does not want us to be mere manufacturers of strategies. Much of what needs to be done for a unified and orthodox Anglican witness in this country comes by simple living and serving together, within and beyond our jurisdictions. The structures will follow in their own good time. Live it, and let the paper-work follow. That is the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic way. More importantly, our vocation is always to produce saints, not strategies. The ultimate goal is not to build institutional infrastructure but to proclaim the Gospel and reveal the Kingdom. Then we can go on to let God use us as He will, to fulfill our vocation as Anglicans: to help the two lungs of the Church, Rome and Constantinople, breathe together again.

In 1995 Pope John Paul II wrote an Encyclical, Ut Unum Sint, "that they may be one," from John, chapter 17. The Pope asked a daring question. "If the charism of the Petrine Office is supposed to be the charism of unity, why, and in what ways, has it become a stumbling block?" There were various replies to Ut Unum Sint. Perhaps the most profound of these came from Olivier Clement, a Russian Orthodox priest in Paris, who took the Pope seriously enough to write a magnificent book called "You Are Peter." Clement was forthright not only about the errors of Rome, but also about the failings of the Orthodox. He believes that the Holy Spirit is calling for Rome and Orthodoxy to rediscover each other at the deepest levels. In the West we need more of the East's understanding of pneumatology and eschatology. This refers to how everything in the Kingdom is in the Holy Spirit, and to how the Church, as a tree, has its roots in heaven and its branches on earth. The East needs more of the West's historical approach, of the Church living and ministering in the present, and in the long progression of time, with apostolates for every condition of man.

If Rome is the shoe and Orthodoxy is the foot, we Anglicans can be the shoe-horn. All through the centuries Anglicans have had warm relationships with the Orthodox, never more so than in the United States, after World War II. The Greeks remember that most of the blood shed to liberate Athens, first from the nazis, then from the communists, was Anglican. Many Greeks were immigrating into the United States, and were welcomed into our Episcopal churches, as members, and as communities forming their own new congregations. The Greek bishops said to their people that they should even receive Holy Communion at our altars, if there were no Greek parishes nearby. The sincere friendship and rapport the Episcopal Church had with the Greek Orthodox was grievously shattered in 1976 with the purported ordination of women. The

Greeks were betrayed. It is up to the traditional orthodox Anglican remnant in the United States to re-build the relationship with the Greeks. We may be the only ones who can do it.

If we can make some headway here, it may be the most precious gift we bring to Rome when the time comes. We go to Rome not as suppliants, but bearing a gift: a newly forged friendship with the Greeks. The Holy See would appreciate nothing more. Restoring full communion with Constantinople is Rome's first priority, and the Greeks are the greatest obstacle, even though paradoxically it is from Greece that brilliant ecclesialogists like John Zizioulas have arisen. His book, Being as Communion, is arguably the ecclesiology for the coming centuries. If we can re-build our relationship with the Greeks, then they can talk to the Holy See through us, and through us, the Holy See can talk to the Greeks. This may be the only way in which the full communion is ever restored. It is to be hoped that someday in the not distant future a delegation of Anglicans from here and abroad, and some from the Scandinavian remnant, will be able to spend a couple days with the Archbishop of Athens. But first we must rebuild our friendship with the Greeks. At every Synod I tell our priests, "take a Greek priest out to lunch." And we can join our Orthodox brethren for lunch in those places where they have an Orthodox brotherhood. Today, the two great patriarchs of the universal Church, the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople, do dine together from time to time, and have a warm and gracious friendship.

What we have to offer the rest of the Body, in realigned, orthodox Anglicanism, has now been tested and refined by a wilderness generation that has wrestled long and hard with issues of sexual identity and family life in the light of Scripture and Tradition. Rome very much wants what we have to bring as a patrimony for all time, not lost by absorption, but protected and prolonged as a gift for the rest of the Body. They want a strong dose of our Benedictine family life. Our small parishes are family units. Their parishes are so large that they have to use the Ignatian model of the Church as the *militia Christi*, the army of God. A rectory is a barracks. They want a heavy dose of what we have. Our Book of Common Prayer is a Benedictine *regula* for the ordering of all life. There are many cues they want to take from us, such as restoring the Daily Office to their laity.

The Ordinariate, so much discussed of late, was set up by Rome as a specific response to a certain community of Anglicans who requested a place in Rome. Rome knows that 99 per cent of traditional, orthodox Anglicans, who number tens of millions, are not going to accept the Ordinariate. What Rome is asking of the bulk of us is first, to get our act together in the great re-alignment. This convergence has been accelerating since the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem in 2008. First, we get our act together. Secondly, we clean up our act. Anglican dioceses that ordain women have to stop and reform and get it right on holy orders. The Federation of Anglican Churches in the Americas, comprised of six continuing bodies, is working to magnify the biblical office of deaconess. As the priestess door closes, the deaconess door opens. We can magnify women's ministries based on Scripture and Tradition: deaconesses, catechists, nuns, Church Army officers, lay canonesses, and above all, wives and mothers. And we have to get it right on holy matrimony.

Rome has also asked us, through people like Aidan Nichols in England, to tell them what gift we bring to the rest of the Body. What is our patrimony? What things do we want to keep in a Church whose unity is visibly restored? What made us so great? How is it we put together the greatest empire the world has ever known, and how did the Anglo-American alliance win the biggest war ever fought? "We can read history books, but we'd like you to tell us in your own words." The Anglican Association, a Forward in Faith think-tank in England, is working on this project. So we get our act together, clean up our act, say what our patrimony is, and re-build our friendship with the Greeks. Then, when the time comes, we go to Rome, with the Russians and Greeks. We stand tall, square our shoulders, sit at the table as equals, and say that we want the

consensus of the first millennium. We want what the Russians and Greeks have already been promised: full recognition and autocephaly, self-governance.

If God has a vocation for us as Anglicans, then the great realignment in our global Anglican community will go forward. And God does have a vocation for Anglicanism. Anglicanism is not all washed up. In the recent past, our community produced Winston Churchill and did win the greatest war ever fought, against gnostic totalitarianism. The devil then changed his tactics and set upon us from another angle, more subtly, but with even greater ferocity, with the gnostic lie about sexual identity and family life and life that is vulnerable. Anglicans have taken the brunt of the devils's attacks on the Church for over a generation now, and now God is helping us re-group and re-supply. We are no more washed up than anyone else would be under similar attack. We have a vital role to play in the Body of Christ.

The new paradigm of the consensus of the first millennium, the point of convergence, and all that it takes for separated brethren to get there, sometimes looks humanly impossible, probably because it is. It was also humanly impossible for Israel to get through the wilderness. What George Marshall did in WWII with the allies was humanly impossible. What Thomas Watson did with IBM in the 1960's, to combine nine separate computer functions into one marketable unit, was only done by the skin of his teeth, and by risking the future of the company. Jesus' Resurrection is the ultimate cosmic impossible possibility. When the Blessed Mother asked, "how shall this be, seeing I know not a man," the Archangel Gabriel replied, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."

Yes, we continuers have been a catalyst in the great realignment taking place in the Body. When the Episcopal Church turned itself into a gnostic sect in 1976, we gave Rome and Orthodoxy and believing Protestants something identifiably Anglican with which they could still relate. One point of contact with fellow Bible-believing Christians was, and is, the congregations that welcomed us through the years to get our start with them, to rent from them, until we could buy our own property. We have had cheek-to-jowel fellowship with Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and others.

The Anglican Continuum has been the reconnaissance of the Lord's army. We are the eyes of the army. We have mapped the mine-fields. We built new communications nets, like the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen, who send their greetings today. We defined the issues. We blazed a trail forward. We have shown that there is a way forward, and charted a course. That has been an enormous help to the infantry, artillery and armoured units that have been mobilizing in the last decade. They have good intel from us. We have nearly 40 years of wilderness experience behind us, and part of our message is that when we get our act together, and clean up our act, we are not then to sit on our laurels, but move it out again, to fulfill our vocation, to help reveal the unity of the Body of Christ, to help get the two lungs of the Church breathing together again, to be, more vibrantly than ever, what Ignatius of Antioch called "the Church that presides in love."

As continuers we have had a role to play in helping the ships of the Anglican convoy keep together, in England, Africa, India and many other places. We have had a role to play in the pro-life movement, in which we rub shoulders on a regular basis with believing Christians to help build a culture of life, a civilization of love.

We have of course made many mistakes and committed many sins. That is why the Lord always brings separated brethren together, not through backslapping or glad-handing, or through endless committee meetings and bureaucratic maneuvering, but through mutual repentance. When John Paul II visited Athens, he got off the plane, kissed the ground, and said to the Archbishop, "I am

here as a pilgrim. I come as a penitent, to ask forgiveness for the sins my community has committed through the ages against yours.” How powerfully the Holy Spirit can work through those words!

The Holy Spirit is gathering us in Christ, so that the Church can be the sign for shattered, splintered humanity of the unity of all men in Christ, and the return of all creation to the Father. In all this work we will have the priceless intercession of our Lady. We can help her mend the rends we can reach, on her Protecting Veil. To this end, the Father is forming in us one heart, and pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us, to reveal His Son Jesus as Saviour and Lord of all.