

THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEK CULTURE FOR AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

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The question of culture in general is of paramount importance for Church and theology. For culture is not only a substantial factor of religious practice but at the same time it is the most decisive presupposition for forming the spiritual environment; namely the proper vehicle to carry the message of the divine Revelation.

For these reasons the importance of Greek culture, as the distant common denominator of all European Christian nations which meet with so many other groups of various religious and cultural backgrounds in contemporary Australia, must be reflected upon with growing interest.

With the *above* observations we addressed a large gathering at the University of Queensland, invited by the Vice-Chancellor and later Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowan, in late 1976. The text of that address, with slight alterations, is published below for the first time, in the hope that it is still relevant to the cultural developments which will be at work for long in this blessed country.

In a gathering which aims at assessing, in an objective manner, the cultural significance of the various nationalities amidst our contemporary polyethnic society of Australia, the title of my address could perhaps be misunderstood. Whilst *methodologically* it is essential to examine separately the importance of the cultural tradition of each and every nationality, *psychologically*, for a Greek to speak of Greek culture, or for an Italian to speak of Italian culture, at first sight gives the impression of commercial competition and advertisement, which in reality are incompatible with true civilization. Therefore, in order to avoid altogether giving such an impression, I must make, from the beginning, certain clarifications which are essential for a proper assessment of our object of study.

First and foremost, it should be pointed out that the term "Greek culture" which appears in my title, neither has one exclusive meaning, nor can its content be defined easily in a positive manner. On the contrary, one approach of the content of the said term may be reached in a negative way, namely if we endeavour to state not what "Greek culture" is, but what it is not. In defining "Greek culture" in a negative way, we say that it does not constitute a monolithic heritage of one people alone, who preserved it closed air-tight and in isolation.

The Greek culture is a long existing tradition whose roots date back to prehistoric times. In the course of its formation the Greek people collaborated creatively with many other peoples, not only European, but also Asiatic and African. For this reason exactly, what is Greek and what is not, was always judged not on the basis of phyletic, but purely of spiritual criteria. And it is truly admirable that the criterion in this

matter remained unaltered from antiquity up to the present time. It is not without special significance that the most popular hero of the Byzantine and Modern Greek era remains Digenis Akritas; namely a figure deriving from two different nations and being the guardian of the borders.

We know the understanding of the ancient Greeks on this subject mainly by two widely known sayings, which have been preserved to this day in the form of a motto. The first saying is the laconic phrase: "Whoever is not Greek is Barbarian". The second one defines more closely the content of the term "Greek" by the projection and underlining of the cultural meaning of the term: "Greeks are those who participate in our culture".

As a result of the above two sayings, it becomes clear that the bearer of Greek culture is not a number of people, who are biologically or ethnologically related, but a broad community of various people, irrespective of time and place. Maybe, for this reason, we should speak rather of *communion* than of *community*; communion is deeper, more spiritual and more flexible than community. Therefore in this uniquely Greek understanding of culture, two important characteristics strongly prevail: Firstly, the element of *perpetual validity*, which is adequately expressed by the first of the abovementioned sayings. And, secondly, the element of *universality*, of which the second saying speaks explicitly.

Both these elements are expressed in one single sentence by the national poet of Modern Greece, Dionysios Solomos, when he says "The nation should consider national what is true". And it is a fact beyond question, that the ethical fullness and consumation, namely the quintessence of Greek culture was the only power which projected it before the entire known world of ancient times, the middle ages and even today. Neither the weapons of Alexander the Great nor the policy of the Byzantine Emperors constituted the most important means by which Greek culture spread and prevailed. It is an especially characteristic fact that Greece culturally prevailed more effectively when defeated by enemies than when she was victorious on the battlefields. This undoubtedly happened in the case of the Romans and, later, after the fall of Constantinople; which had as is well known, a major impact on the later phase of development of the European Renaissance.

This repeated historical phenomenon should perhaps lead us to the conclusion that the greater a civilization is the more universal it becomes when its physical powers are crushed. What Christ said is valid also in relation to this point - "a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest" (John 12:24). Let us, however, return to the general review of our subject. We were speaking about the *perpetual validity* and *universality*, which appear as the most important characteristics of Greek culture.

In addition to these two, we must mention a third element, which in some way combines the other two, or rather which constitutes their common root. It is the anthropological aspect of Greek culture. From the first narrations of Greek Mythology concerning theogony to the very last details of Orthodox Christian dogma of the Byzantines or of the

modern Greeks, Greek thought has always been, *par excellence*, *anthropological* and *philanthropic*. Exactly here lies the unique contribution of the Greek spirit to the civilization of the whole of humanity. It is necessary therefore to study a little further the meaning of these two most important adjectives "anthropological" and "philanthropic".

There is no doubt that prehistoric humanity, from very early stages, had to meet a multitude of practical and psychological needs. On the one hand, the need for its biological survival, and for its greater comfort within the natural environment, led to the development of an elementary technology. On the other hand, prehistoric humanity had to pacify its psychological fears of the elements of nature and, at the same time, to satisfy its metaphysical anxieties within the framework of unlimited superstitions, which engalfed it. Thus although these practical and psychological needs started from *within* humanity and from the immediate elements of its nature and existence, in reality, humanity was diverted to the world surrounding it. The immediate result of this centrifugal power was the creation of Geometry, Physics, Mathematics and Astronomy, combined with all kinds of witchcraft and sorcery; indeed a contradictory mixture of a *utilitarian thinking*, on the one hand, and of blind secrecy, on the other.

Such then was the standard and the content of the civilisation of the known ancient world before Greek thought and philosophy made its appearance. It was the Greeks who first brought about a kind of Copernican Revolution by placing in the centre of their search, not the world and the creatures of imagination, but humanity and the irreplaceable sacredness of the human person. Very widespread is the view that this anthropological revolution occurred at the time of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. However, this is not absolutely true, because a more careful study of the so called pre-Socratic philosophers, i.e., of the Ionian Physiologists, and of the sophists, proves that the ethical value of humanity was undoubtedly for them, too, not only the starting point, but also the aim of their philosophical quest. Before the oracle of Delphi stated the Socratic truth: "Know thyself", Heracleitus had already said "I searched for myself". And if Plato called philosophy, being the noblest occupation, "an imitation of God to the best of man's ability", Heracleitus was even more categoridal demanding a godlike attitude in every movement of humanity, by that laconic and oracular saying: "The home for man is his god".

Above all else, it could be said that Greek thought, even when occupied with searching and measuring the objective world, did not cease to be anthropological and philanthropic, but continued to be a philosophy which was *par excellence* ethical. Profane mathematics had no place in a mentality, in which the Platonic maxim "god is always the author of geometry", was in force; and in which mentality the Pythagorians were the first to underline the innermost relation of Music and Mathematics.

Still characteristic of Greek thought is the fact that even Aristotle, one of the most consistent empiricists of all times, occupied himself no less with ethical aesthetic and even theological problems, as it appears from his *Nikomachian Ethics* and similar works. This same an-

thropological and philanthropic dimension must be also considered as the deepest meaning of the often misunderstood saying of the sophists, according to which "man is the measure of all things". It is evident that one could easily distort, in the Epicurian spirit, this principle of the sophists, which is known as the *homo-mensura* maxim. However, such an interpretation of the said phrase would detach it from the cultural context of strict Greek tradition.

Indeed, an elementary analysis of any expression of Greek culture persuades us that the *homo-mensura* principle as a guiding ideal is to be found behind every private or public expression of the Greeks. It is exactly the secret of the classic harmony in all aspects of the cultural, ethical and political life of the Greeks. But if harmony means the avoidance of one-sidedness and extremities, then it follows that it is built on the golden middle road, which Plato defined epigrammatically in immortal symbolism when he said that "eros" is the offspring of "affluence" and "poverty". "Nothing in excess" becomes the noblest Greek lesson for man. Thus in the ethical field, the Greeks carefully avoid "insolence" (*hybris*), which would shake the true balance and relation between humanity and God. In the field of art, one could not expect from the Greeks either the Pyramids of the Egyptians or the fine works of the Asiatic people, but only the Parthenon an eternal monument of moderation and harmony. Also in the field of political life. Greeks could neither accept the anarchy of the barbaric tribes of the west nor the arbitrary tyranny of the East. The concept of moderation also applied in the institution of the city-state (*polis*) and the people (*demos*), where there was a harmonious balance between the rights of the citizen and the Community as a whole. This produced the best from of government, namely democracy, a concept which appeals even to dictators who would claim to serve its ideals.

Since therefore the basis of Greek culture is the ethical value "humanity" contrary to every form of *pragmatism* or *technology*, becomes evident that Greek culture could not be called by any other name than *humanism*. Humanism was the most valuable gift of Greece to humankind, as well as the highest cultural ideal, towards which all people always strive, after they have overcome the first stage of barbarism. We know that through Stoic philosophy Greco-Roman humanism reached the greatest degree of ethical perfection and by its pure monotheism wonderfully prepared the ground for the teachings of Divine Revelation generally, and in particular of Christianity.

Thus far, we have described by way of a summary the main characteristics of Greek culture, as it was formulated from the beginnings of classical antiquity. The immediate question which follows, is whether this Greek culture has continued to exist within Christianity, so that Greeks as Christians might be able to trace their unchanging cultural continuity from the ancient Greeks.

It is not possible here and now to give an answer to this essential and most crucial question, since it touches on the difficult problem of the relations between Christianity and Hellenism, and of the degree of mutual influence of these two spiritual traditions. But what we can and

must examine here is how far the main characteristics of Greek culture have been preserved in Orthodoxy, because we must not forget that, owing to these characteristics, the contribution of Hellenism to the civilization of humanity has always been considered fundamental and unique. In other words, we propose to examine in the rest of our talk, the significance which Orthodoxy gives to the value "humanity", so that we may ascertain the fate of Greek humanism with the development of Byzantine tradition and contemporary Orthodoxy.

First and foremost we should remember that, except for the first Christian Apologists, who, in defending themselves against the accusations of the Gentiles, sometimes opposed the values of Christianity against the errors of Hellenism, all the great Fathers and Teachers of the Christian Church were also scholars and admirers of Hellenic humanism. Far from thinking of rejecting Greek humanism, they rather endeavoured to justify and perpetuate it, elevating it with Christian light above its simply human aspect.

This decisive *affirmation* and at the same time *transformation* of Greek humanism by Christianity was achieved in an incomparable and final manner by the Byzantine Fathers of the Church. It is precisely this attainment that the Russian Theologian John Meyendorff regards as the monumental contribution of Byzantium to Christian thought in general. He writes:

The central theme or intuition of Byzantine Theology is that man's nature is not a static, 'closed', autonomous entity, but a dynamic reality, determined in its very existence by its relationship to God. This relationship is seen as a process of ascent and as communion - man, created in the image of God, is called to achieve freely a 'divine similitude'; his relationship to God is both a givenness and a task, an immediate experience and an expectation of even greater vision to be accomplished in a free effort of love. The dynamism of Byzantine anthropology can easily be contrasted with the static categories of 'nature' and 'grace' which dominated the thought of post-Augustinian Western Christianity; it can prove itself to be an essential frame of reference in the contemporary theological search for a new understanding of man.¹

Now after these general observations of Meyendorff, if we were to define more accurately exactly where the transformation brought about by Byzantium on the fundamental values of Hellenism lies, we would say, in a *nutshell*, that Byzantium elevated *Greek humanism* to *Christian personalism*. If the main and fundamental value in humanism is humanity *per se*, in Christianity the human person is always taken in relation to its Creator and to the other creatures. Exactly at this point lies the basic difference and distinction between the *individual* and the *person*. Even if we analyse the Greek word *prosopon* (person) as to its etymology, we find that it means the subject being brought *into sight*

(*pros opsin*), namely that subject which is consummated and fulfilled not in itself, but outside of itself, in its meaning and reciprocation with the other person. This very same transparency and centrifugal tendency is also denoted etymologically by the Latin term *persona*, a compound word consisting of *per* = through and *sonus* = sound. Christianity derives this understanding of man as a person mainly from three fundamental teachings of Revelation, which in turn constitute the key positions for the transition from classical humanism to Christian personalism.

The first of these positions is the biblical teaching that God created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). The deeper meaning of this teaching is, as we know, that the creation of the world is not an accidental or necessary work of God, but an action of absolute freedom. If God had created the world out of pre-existing matter, as the Greeks and other heathen philosophers generally believed, then His action would be a dependant work, and therefore not absolutely free. On the contrary, the creation *ex nihilo* denotes the absolute freedom of the Creator, and the action of absolute freedom is an action of absolute love. However, if the whole creation is the product of absolute love on the part of the Creator, then it becomes clear that all individual creatures, irrespective of the degree of evolution and manner of existence, are organically related, as members of one united body. Human beings of course, enjoy the central place in the creation, but they cannot be understood without the creation; nor is it possible to regard them simply as - "the measure of all things".

The bond between humanity and the rest of the creation is so deep that the great Byzantine Theologian, St Maximus the Confessor called the human person a *microcosm* and the world *macro-anthropos*. For this reason, the moral perfection of human beings as persons lies in their relation not only to the Creator, but also to the whole creation. Further, we could even say that, in the vast net of interdependent individual elements of the universe, there is no natural or biological activity which sooner or later will not have some immediate *ethical repercussions* on the whole balance of the world. We understand this tragic truth rather painfully in our society today, as we see, for instance, that pollution tends to become one of the greatest ethical and practical problems of our times.

The second position, from the Bible, which supports the understanding of the human being as a person is the teaching that God created humanity "according to His image and His likeness". This theocentrism gives humanity a dynamic interpretation, because humanity is no longer judged by its *nature*, as happens in the case of humanism, but by its *destiny*. And this destiny, in the context of Byzantine personalism, is not limited to a moralistic perfection of the human person, which does not transcend the limits of ontology, but extends towards deification (*theosis*) by grace; which constitutes the last word in the mystery of humanity's existence.

The third and final position of the Bible concerning the concept of the human being as a person is the very fact of the incarnation of God for the sake of humanity. In a final analysis, this constitutes

exactly the measure of the holiness of the human person.

In addition to the above, we should say that if the Church did not dwell in detail on the mystery of the Holy Trinity for a more appropriate formulation of the Trinitarian dogma, our understanding of the person in general would remain undeveloped and confused in the philosophical tradition. On the contrary, the finest distinctions of the Christian theology by the Cappadocian Fathers of the East between *nature* and *essence*, on the one hand, and *hypostasis* and *person*, on the other, contributed in a unique manner to formulation of great truths about the relations between the persons in the consubstantiality of the one nature, as well as about the unconfused uniqueness of each person. There are indeed many scholars in recent years who have appreciated this significant debt of European and world philosophy to Christian theology. It should be stressed that theologians were not the only ones to have studied and underlined the normative role of the Trinitarian dogma for the various structures and institutions of Church life and for Ecclesiology in general. Christian sociology has worked with the same interest in recent years in search of the social consequences of the Trinitarian dogma within Christian society.

But we may say without prejudice that, just as the formulation of the Trinitarian dogma was almost exclusively the work of the Christian East, in the same manner the significance of the spiritual laws, formulated by this dogma, which govern inter-personal relations, was in reality appreciated and respected mainly by the Christian East. For it is well known that by the addition of *filioque* to the Creed, the Western Church betrayed, be it unwillingly, the teaching concerning the equality of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Consequently the Christian East, remaining faithful to the authentic teaching of the early Church on the Holy Trinity, preserved to the present day in high honour the *synodical system* of administration and the practice of the local *autocephalous Churches* existing in communion with one another, which is indeed the strongest expression and the most realistic reflection of the Trinitarian faith of Orthodoxy.

The *filioque* destroyed the teaching concerning the balance between the three persons of the Holy Trinity and resulted in a arbitrary form of Papism. As it is known, one part of Western Christianity tried in the 16th century to throw off the arbitrary yoke of Papism and become Protestant. But even Protestantism, in its spirit of unrestrained *subjectivity*, resulted in no less absolutism - this time a kind of absolutism for each individual! - which forced the Church of Rome to resort to all known measures of Counter Reformation and to formulate, in 1870, the infallibility of the Pope as official dogma.

Now, after all these more or less theoretical observations, and the brief retrospection into Church History, it becomes necessary to return to our theme by mentioning certain more concrete points. For the abovementioned comparisons and observations demand that we now ask, on a practical level, the following fundamental question: To what degree would it be possible to prove that the belief of Orthodox in the unique value and sacredness of the human person, as described above,

is to be found in concrete examples of Modern Greek culture?

In answering this question, we should remark that all ecclesiastical traditions of contemporary Orthodoxy, from theology to worship and popular piety, as well as all aspects of modern Greek civilisation, from advanced literature to all forms of popular arts and folklore, are all characterised by the deepest degree of respect towards the sacredness of the human person. Let us mention certain striking examples. Especially characteristic for its respect for the human person and freedom of its conscience is, first and foremost, the whole pastoral care of the Orthodox Church.

The Church does not give ready and nomolithic answers to the various ethical problems with which the Orthodox faithful are confronted, but simply offers general points of direction and advice. Indeed, no official and simple answer will ever be given by Orthodoxy to such problems, because ethical problems cannot be solved as easily as mathematics with a simple *yes* or *no*. In ethical problems, each case is unique and should be judged completely by its merits. For it is not the abstract problem that counts ethically, but the concrete person of unique value and the conditions under which the problem arises. For this very same reason, Confession in the Orthodox Church has nothing to do with the casuistic attitude of the Western Church; the father confessor has the spiritual freedom to deal with each case separately and to give penance, according to the personal needs of the person who makes the confession; each moral case is as individual and unique as the person's fingerprints.

We may point to a further example from Orthodox Iconography. At first it should be noted that in the Greek language a human being's physiognomy and ethical diagram are denoted by one and the same word "person". When we say "person", we mean both the picture in sight, as well as the ethical personality of a human being. Bearing in mind the identity of these two ideas, Byzantine iconography pays attention primarily to the face and to the eyes, which reflect the holiness of the person, while all other morphological elements serve no other purpose than to mark and emphasise the face. For this reason, St John of Damascus said these significant and unforgettable words: "I saw the human form of my God, and my soul attained salvation".

As we pointed out above, we also find appropriate examples, emphasising the special respect for the person, in the popular traditions and popular piety of the Greek people. Here follows an example that is most characteristic of what we speak: In certain parts of the Greek countryside, the lady of the house does not prepare the meal only for those present. When she sets the table, she always places on the table an extra plate, which is called "the plate of Christ". This plate is ready to be used by the first visitor, who is made welcome as if it were Christ Himself. Indeed, how moving the custom of welcoming a stranger as Christ Himself still is today, at a time when the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre states that "my neighbour is my hell".

However, the modern Greek family, and the relations between its members, is the field, *par excellence*, where respect for the ethical

personality of a human being is manifested; perhaps instinctively, but certainly in a most effective and moving manner. In the traditional Greek family, which fortunately is still very solid, each member is aware that at any moment one's physical and ethical capabilities may be strengthened by the totality of members of his or her family, because each member is continually eager to do the utmost for the other members. Further, if we bear in mind the broader meaning of the word "family" in Greek, extending it to a wider circle of people than what is meant by "family" in Western Europe, then we become conscious of the tremendous ethical significance which the Greek family bears as a social and cultural entity.

In addition, although there exists a strong bond between members of the Greek family, which makes the national unity of Greek people stronger, yet the cultural traditions of modern Greeks do not aim at detaching and separating the Greek people from other nations, but at uniting them, if possible, with all other people. It is indeed remarkable that although the Greek people are few in number and are not related racially with any other Eastern or Western nation, yet they never turned to any discriminative tactics in order to preserve their national integrity. On the contrary, through all changes undergone by modern Greek civilisation, we notice that the centre of interest is not the special ethnic character of Greeks, but prototypical humanity, with all of its daily passion and eternal nostalgia. It is worth noting, moreover, that the more the subjects of Greek culture deal with national questions, the more universal are the themes examined.

In order to understand more clearly this paradox in the internal dimension of Greek civilization, let us take the following concrete example. Odysseus, Karagiozis and Zorbas undoubtedly represent the characteristically national type of Greek people in three different periods of Greek culture from the most ancient times to our days. Nevertheless, these three literary heroes at the same time represent the universal type of humanity as it is to be discovered throughout the entire history of Greek literature. Isn't this surprising?

I would even add the following: These three characteristically representative types are not just types of Greek people but are genuinely universal, for the *defining* characteristics of human beings are expressed by them in the most natural manner, as if they were usual gestures of daily life. They include no traits from the romantic exaggeration of the ancient Greek tragedy, nor from the agony of contemporary European literature, both of which display their heroes to be the incredible exception in the broader horizon of life and reality.

From these remarks, therefore, one may easily conclude that the main spiritual values of Greek culture, irrespective of time, always preserve the three fundamental characteristics, which we mentioned at the beginning of our address, namely *perpetual validity*, *universality* and the priority of the *anthropological dimension*. It is precisely for this reason that the Greek culture, whether in its ancient classical form or in its subsequent stages - the Byzantine, in the middle ages, and the modern Greek - has great educational value and power for every human society.

Now, one may ask, what is the particular significance of Greek culture for our contemporary Australian society? Is it due to the fact that in the total population of this country some five percent are of Greek origin? Of course not, since no matter how important cultural traditions of such a great and dynamic group are, to the benefit of our entire polyethnic society, we should not forget that numbers, in the final analysis, are incidental facts, which cannot be of primary importance for the ethical assessment of a culture. The reasons why Greek culture is of the utmost significance for Australia are so deep and essential that we could say *that* they would still be such even if no Greek people had ever inhabited, or were ever to inhabit, this fifth Continent!

To enable us to understand this, at first glance perhaps surprising truth, we must take into consideration three main characteristics of Australia:

- a) The size and nature of the Country.
- b) Its geographical and politico-strategic position.
- c) The general composition of its population.

In conclusion, therefore let us examine our subject in the light of these three concrete presuppositions:

a) The factor of the size and nature of the country. It is well known that in this spacious and remote continent, which until recently was unknown, inaccessible and almost entirely undeveloped, the human person risked, toiled and suffered hardships, facing chaos almost daily and experiencing, even recently, the feeling which was successfully characterized in the title of a book as "the tyranny of distance".² It was exactly for this reason that, on my arrival in Australia about a year ago, in giving my first impressions to reporters, *inter alia*, I dared make the following remark: "If in other countries of the world the shrine of the 'unknown soldier' is regarded as the first monument of honour, then in Australia the first monument should be erected in honour of 'the unknown settler'".

In this country, therefore, which was for a long time formless and which is still seeking to find its face and proper physiognomy, it is only right that the culture which regards the human person as the first value of life and of creation should indeed be cultivated and promoted.³ The culture which respects the human person who struggled to shape the shapeless chaos; the human person, regardless of colour, sex, age, religion or nationality; the human person as the image of God. And we should add that this is not only right, but also imperative. Because in a country with so many rich and yet unexploited material resources, unless respect for the human person and *their* ethical values prevail, we are doomed to have a jungle with an even greater degree of crime than any other in the history of mankind.

b) The factor of geographical and politico-strategic position. Geographically, Australia lies in the East, whereas politically and strategically it belongs more to the West. This places her in an ambiguous position between East and West, but at the same time it offers her the possibility, under certain presuppositions to initiate perhaps a unique role in the relations between East and West, and to

become the golden bridge between the two. In this task of bringing about a balance between the two extremes, Greek culture offers to Australia the most ideal means, since the position and destiny of Greece was also from the beginning to serve as the bridge between East and West. In the light of this historically significant responsibility, which was at the same time her greater privilege, Greece managed to develop such a peaceful, enlightened and ecumenical civilisation.

c) The factor of general composition of the population. The composition and structure of the Australian society is today, as is frequently noted, "polyethnic" and "multi-cultural". This is stated by all Authorities of this country, irrespective of political background, thus sufficiently emphasising the fact that the prevailing stage of Anglo-Celtic structure has made decisive concessions to a richer and more democratic composition. Of course no one can deny that such a development is a surprising blessing for this vast country and continent, whose virginity appeals to people of every tribe and language for a hopeful and manifold fertilisation.

Nevertheless, today, and as will be the case for a long time to come, the vast majority of the population of the country is European. And we know that all European people are related in one way or another by several shared elements of Greco-Roman humanism. What, then, is more natural than to make conscious, and to further cultivate, this common cultural heritage? If it is true that the Greek culture does not divide but unites people, then we must confess that our polyethnic society here will never achieve the desired democracy of cultures if it does not attain the culture of democracy as it was anticipated on behalf and for the sake of all people by the spirit of Greek nostalgia.

There is no nobler lesson for mankind than the simple truth that "the soul of civilisation is the civilisation of the soul", as someone said epigrammatically. Greeks believed in this truth; they tried to live it in various aspects of their civilisation, and, further, they tried to spread it wherever they settled in the various periods of their history.

As one may see from what is presented above, the main features of the ancient Greek culture correspond in a very substantial way to the most central articles of faith in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It seems that Tertullian was indeed tackling the very heart of the matter when he stated that "the human soul is by nature Christian". Precisely this deep relation led a famous and well-educated monk of Mt Athos, Joachim of Iviron Monastery, to speak in the early 1930's of a "secular Christianity". Needless to say, the related problematics which have been examined quite frequently from different viewpoints always remain of vital interest for theological studies, particularly in the given Australian scene.

NOTES

- 1 J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, (New York: Fordham U.P. 1974) p. 2.
- 2 G. Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966).
- 3 It needs to be again remembered that this address was delivered in 1976, not long after my arrival in Australia. As might perhaps be expected of a new arrival from Europe, these observations were made entirely from a European perspective. Full recognition must, of course, in justice be given to the fact that the Aboriginal people had been in possession of the land for some 50-60,000 years (perhaps much longer) and had not only carefully husbanded it but had, through the Dreaming, given it meaning and form. In 1976, before the lie of *Terra nullius* had been exposed for what it is, there was little understanding or appreciation of the Aboriginal heritage.