

## THE "POSITIVES" AND "NEGATIVES" OF ORTHODOXY IN THE NEW WORLD

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The title of this paper may not at first glance appear to be totally clear, nor even theologically correct. For the purpose of clarity, then, an approximate time frame should be determined in order to indicate the historical period to which this paper refers.

As far as the positives and negatives are concerned, whether taken in a quantitative or qualitative sense, it is necessary to establish right from the outset how these relate to the strictly theological meaning of Orthodoxy, which of course does not allow any alteration or adulteration, since it is a purely dogmatic entity whose main feature is that it remains unchanged, stable and undiminished over time.

It must be stated that the term *new world* does not merely signify the modern era, but rather the very socio-historical circumstances of the last two centuries in particular which, by comparison with all previous ones, have been characterised by cosmogonic changes, not only in secular history, but also in the purely spiritual aspects of Christianity - and especially of Orthodoxy - as we shall see below. To what extent the meaning of Orthodoxy can be reconciled with any addition or subtraction whatsoever, and from which point of view, will naturally be more fully understood through a thorough presentation of the following factors. It should be noted, these do not pertain to arithmetical or other fluctuating aspects of statistics, but first and foremost to fundamental - if not axiomatic - details of so-called empirical ecclesiology.

In using the term empirical ecclesiology, we have already implied, or rather stated without reservation that, in addition to dogmatic ecclesiology - which, being a part of dogmatic teaching, presents and describes the ideal model of the Church as this was prescribed by God incarnate who is the Founder of the Church - there is also empirical ecclesiology. The latter describes the embodiment of this ideal in each historical period. It may be faithful to the deontological prototype more or less, yet it is never completely identified with it in history.

It is well-known that Orthodoxy, as an historical form of Christianity, never ceased to consider itself as the faithful continuation of the undivided Church, which was characterised mainly by the adjectives "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" in the sacred Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed<sup>1</sup>. It is also well-known and universally acknowledged that these so-called *notae ecclesiae* do not in the least constitute static features of the Church, but rather dynamic gifts from above. That is, they are given and sought after simultaneously.

It follows that the self-understanding of Orthodoxy, as an historical form of authentic Christianity, includes a justifiable and permanent tension between the now and the not yet of the Kingdom of God on earth. A continual response to this tension, with the fear of God, gives the precise measure of sensitivity towards History and eschatology as these are deeply

intertwined in the entire Divine Economy. To that extent, it would be useful to remind ourselves that the fruit of this blessed spiritual tension is always the so-called sacred restlessness in the conscience of the individual faithful. The most spiritually alert of the Neptic Fathers were taken hold of by such restlessness, which Martin Luther, who has been re-appraised and more leniently evaluated in recent times, formulated epigrammatically in the familiar antinomian definition of the Christian as *simul justus et peccator*.

We could summarise by saying without any hesitation that, even in the case of the individual faithful, the awareness of this tension is undoubtedly a sign of spiritual health and an expression of responsible Christian realism. This allows, and even necessitates, a kind of self-criticism due to the incessant plea for continual renewal, even though the Protestant slogan *ecclesia semper reformanda* could never be accepted without reservation by the Orthodox who, on all vital matters, remain dynamically conservative.

When the feeling of the abovementioned inner tension does not unfortunately exist, then things are led not only to a dangerous swamp, but also to an intolerable hypocrisy. For in this case even the most fundamental distinction between the Church militant and the Church triumphant is rudely overlooked. It is tragic and indeed demonic that we who are still in an expedition "bearing in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus" (cf Gal 6:17) to act as if we have already "finished the race" and received "the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim 4:7-8), as if from now we had been numbered among the triumphant part of the Church. It is precisely this hypocrisy and diabolical hybris which we wished to censure in a spirit of responsible self-criticism when we wrote several years ago that the Orthodox who justly condemn the West as having the "conceitedness of strength" do not see that the Orthodox themselves sometimes suffer from the "conceitedness of truth".<sup>2</sup> Of course it is not by chance or without special significance that the very same people who were troubled and who furiously protested, purposely misinterpreting such self-criticism, were not the spiritually vigilant God-fearing people but rather the persons constantly blinded by hatred and fanaticism within the well-known circles of the Kantiotis movement in Greece, the worst plague in the life of the Church of Greece in the entire 20th century.

Following these necessary introductory remarks, we are now able to ascertain the positives and the negatives of Orthodoxy in the new world, having as our standard rule in researching ecclesiological data not only vague theorems and general teachings of Scripture, Patristic literature and holy Tradition in general, but also the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils and the time-tested historical structures and institutions of the first millennium. It is only natural and proper that we should have as our standard this lengthy and initial historical period, because the undivided Church had all the time it needed to develop organically, as the Pauline epistle states, "into a perfect man" and "into the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), and also because, due to its importance, the first millennium is increasingly being promoted by everyone as the indisputable ground on which today's divided Christians must seek anew the major factors which will assist us to restore our long-lost unity.

Thus in researching the major ecclesiastical structures and institutions of the first thousand years, we readily find that the following features have become fully developed: (a) a fixed form of "Church government" based upon the three well-known ranks of clergy and safeguarded for all time by so-called "Apostolic Succession"; (b) the institution of Synods in general, based apparently upon Trinitarian ecclesiology as expressed in the 34th Apostolic Canon; (c) the institution of Autocephaly and Ecumenical Councils, both of which are understood as direct consequences and expressions of the living out of Trinitarian ecclesiology, which alone guarantees the lawfulness and authenticity of Autocephaly, as well as the mutual responsibility of absolute correlation through the Ecumenical Council; (d) The institution of Pentarchy of the most significant Apostolic sees of undivided Christendom as an abridgment and culmination of the hierarchical body of the Church militant throughout the world; (e) The institution of a single supreme political leader (Emperor) who, apart from the passing caesaropapist or papocaesarist inclinations, established a system of creative "mutuality" in Church-State relations.

It goes without saying that these rudimentary structures and features of the first millenium were silently or expressly supported - and also monitored - by corresponding dogmatic foundations and nomocanonical investments, so that in time they would become the stable part of Christianity, as opposed to the various changeables of history.

In spite of this, although the second millenium was not able to officially and axiomatically reduce the authority and resistance of these stable aspects at least up until the Reformation, it still presented certain phenomena which altered to a greater or lesser extent the nature and synthesis of these exposed structures.

Thus, through the Schism of 1054, the Pentarchy was reduced to a Tetrarchy by having the Western Patriarchate (Rome) cut off, yet its spirit and hierarchical function and mission remained unchanged, perhaps with even greater similarity of character due to the absence of the claims of the Bishop of Rome over time. Another considerable factor of change in the institution of the first thousand years is of course the breakaway and subsequent consolidation of Protestantism in the West, with all the nationalistic, naturalistic and modernist philosophical-social consequences which this had upon the West, initially, but in general also in the East subsequently.

Of less importance, but not without significance, is the fact that the single political leader of Christianity, even before the second millenium commenced, began to develop into more than one figure, which meant that his initial Christocentric understanding (if not completely according to the model of the Bishop) grew more or less problematic. After the Fall of Constantinople (1453), the single Christian Emperor, at least in the Orthodox world, was replaced by the Islamic Sultan, whereby a further change in the relationship between Church and State took place since there was no common source of theocracy in the name of God incarnate.

However, it would perhaps be no exaggeration to state that the relation between this non-Christian political leader and Orthodoxy, given the transference of definite privileges, was sometimes more beneficent and creative than the relations between Church and government leaders of totally secu-

larised countries which are Christian in name only, particularly in the last few centuries. The more one researches in an unbiased way and understands the long period of Turkish rule, through publishing and studying previously unknown manuscripts and other related aspects of the spiritual physiognomy of the Orthodox people, the more one abandons the unjustifiably dominant and simplistic view that those years were a period of dark Middle Ages in the East. The most significant part perhaps is that, through this sober consideration, a more just evaluation of the post-Byzantine period was facilitated and achieved which hitherto was unfortunately not possible, either because of admiration for the first millenium and its classical, so to speak, achievements, or because of the systematic animosity cultivated towards anything byzantine, particularly after the Schism.

It was in this way that Orthodoxy, under the constant and vigilant protection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, managed to survive and develop while being governed by an unfree non-Christian political power. In a dialectical manner, this contributed greatly to the development of civilisation everywhere with endogenous *phronema* and purity, which in a miraculous way reflected the kenotic character of the incarnation of God in all aspects of life, but which also excluded the naturalistic hybris of Western rationalism.

On such terms Orthodoxy entered the 18th century, during which a whole series of structural and spiritual changes were to take place. These were supplemented by the more recent developments of the 19th and 20th centuries which together formed the framework in which we are called to verify and record the positives and negatives of the only Church which is still entitled to claim to be the most faithful continuation of the first millenium among Christian Churches.

From the original reforms of Peter the Great (1689-1725) and the gradual dissolution of the vast and powerful Ottoman Empire, conditions arose which were of cosmogonic (so to speak), importance not only for the Ecumenical Patriarchate but also for the entire Eastern Church, contributing thereby almost equally to the positives and negatives for Orthodoxy.

With the opening up towards the West and the movement of individual social groups for independence in the spirit of rising nationalism influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution, new possibilities of course arose for Orthodoxy to influence peoples and nations which were previously out of reach. By the same token, Orthodoxy became exposed to the influences of the various sirens of the West. For it appears, unfortunately, that nothing is really achieved in this world without a price.

Communication could now more easily be made between the Church of the East and the growing theological and philosophical movements of the West (characteristic of this are the 17th century confessional texts of the Orthodox which dealt with the theological and ecclesiastical issues of the Protestant movement) which could not leave totally unaffected the spirit of the ancient and, in this dispute, neutral Christian East. In this direct communication, however, a strong current of nationalism and naturalism was unfortunately in a position to influence everything in the Orthodox world, even Mt Athos<sup>3</sup>. With the passage of time, this current of naturalism was manifested in a whole range of novel ecclesiastical institutions and cus-

toms, which tended to alter not only the structural physiognomy of the local Orthodox Churches, but also their deeper *phronema*.

This naturalistic and secularised spirit was expressed in major events and movements in the organisation of the entire system of the Orthodox Churches. These can be identified not so much in the relations between Orthodox and non-Orthodox or non-Christian, but mainly and almost exclusively in inter-Orthodox relations. This is the most tragic part since, as the saying goes, castles are more easily destroyed from within. One could even say with much grief and godly shame, as angelic and ideal as today's Orthodox attempt to present historical and contemporary Orthodoxy to the world - if not always for the sake of finding human praise, at least for the purpose of proselytising - the internal affairs of the Orthodox themselves in Inter-Orthodox relations, particularly over the past two centuries, have been equally repulsive and barbaric.

It is necessary at this point to focus upon three main sectors in order to give specific and tangible examples of the situation at hand. We will restrict ourselves to (a) the formation of the new Autocephalous Churches (b) the Orthodox Diaspora as a whole, and (c) Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement.

### The Formation of the New Autocephalous Churches

The centrifugal force which led in the 19th century to the speedy and violent spread of the institution of Autocephaly throughout all peoples freed from the declining Ottoman Empire, could have proved beneficial by contributing to a unique enrichment of the Orthodox world, not only through the greater number of local sister Autocephalous Churches, but also through a deeper understanding on the part of the various peoples of the particularity and gifts of each, as they have been implanted with and enriched by the common Orthodox faith which should continually act as the firm foundation of unity and a centripetal force. Unfortunately, this was not achieved, or at least was not achieved at a satisfactory level, in order for one to justify, even in hindsight, the painful occurrences which accompanied this development.

After gaining freedom from the Turkish yoke in 1821, the Church of Greece displayed revolutionary irreverence against the Mother Church of Constantinople, the first See among all Orthodox Churches. This occurred while the Church, under Bavarian rule, was guided by the spirit of absolute state control. Disregarding the centuries-old ecclesial order and practice, the Church of Greece unfortunately made the arbitrary and sudden declaration that it was autocephalous. This matricidal act of the Orthodox Greeks was destined to become a more disastrous example for other Orthodox people to copy and perhaps the major cause of increasing changes in the ethos of Orthodox ecclesial affairs which have in many instances occurred since then.

Having been proclaimed in a naturalistic spirit, the principle - unheard of for the Orthodox - that people who have regained their political freedom cannot be governed by the external enslavement to the Church, not only indirectly laid the foundations for accursed racism, which later became the

achilles heel of the whole Church.<sup>4</sup> This principle unknowingly overturned the entire value system of the Gospel in an extremely contradictory manner, for while it believed that it pursued its own, it embraced that which was entirely other.

Once the invincible weapon of naturalism was established through rationalism in the West, it followed that, for the peoples of the East who were in Christian terms uncultivated or subjugated, that which would be considered most important would be the outer conditions, rather than the inner person, thereby brutally overlooking how passionately the direct dialectical relationship between them is described by the Apostle Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16). A natural consequence of this overturning of ethical values, albeit unconsciously, was that more attention was flippantly given to what one looks like rather than to what one *is*. How else could one explain the shortsightedness of these people who considered slavery to be only the political sovereignty of a foreign ruler, without being at all bothered by the much deeper effects on Orthodox life and self-understanding brought about through the interventions of political rulers who were of the same race and faith, but who unfortunately had practically no relationship with the Church, except silent rivalry with it about who would control the people? It is well-known that such rivalry led almost inevitably to the system of state control, which in western style democracies was more concisely called the system of "rule by the force of law".

Thus the nations which gained freedom from Turkish rule, after the ecclesiastical *coup d'état* in Greece, rushed one after the other to gain Autocephalous status for their local Church, regardless of whether they possessed the internal maturity for this or not. What was worse in all of this was that the Mother Church of Constantinople, which had for centuries defended all brothers and sisters with a common faith, was subsequently considered by many, either silently or expressly, as being an oppressor of Orthodox peoples next to, if not in conjunction with, the Sultan. Consequently, every animosity as a form of revenge was on occasions expressed towards the Patriarchate by nearly all who had been helped by it.

Of course nobody claims that those who controlled the affairs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Phanar were always without human weaknesses which created justifiable bitterness and scandals which in turn could not be silenced. This unfortunately only verifies the popular saying that "power corrupts". Perhaps there could be no exception even for the Church militant, as its administration is also controlled by human beings.

It would however be a great injustice to judge the entire historical journey of the Great Church of Constantinople on the basis of the above-mentioned shady points<sup>5</sup>, and to forget its unique contribution not only to Orthodox people in its jurisdiction, but also to the development and stability of Christianity worldwide and to the cultural history of all people in general. That contribution could be better appreciated if given that, during the Christian rule of Byzantium which lasted over one thousand years, and then throughout the centuries of the Ottoman Empire, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had developed into a moral force and authority on a world scale. It was in essence the only spiritual barrier against the unbridled naturalism of the western Christian spirit which, either as Roman Catholicism

or Protestantism, expressed almost in an identical manner - despite external differences - the unbearable narrowness and mortality of a self-governing created world, namely the endocsmic totalitarianism of the mathematicians (*immanentism*).

The enormous practical services of the Church of Constantinople - as the official negotiator to the High Gate on the vital interests of all Orthodox - which were offered with a sense of supreme duty towards God, are not the only, nor even the major factor. It is first and foremost the deeper ethos and *phronema* which it struggled to preserve - and did in fact preserve - even when it had no worldly form of support. It would be more correct to say that the true Byzantine ethos shows and triumphs, in a characteristic way, precisely where worldly assurances and securities fall short. This is probably the greatest proof of its divine origin<sup>6</sup>. In order to be convinced of this truth, let us remind ourselves of the unrivalled spiritual splendour of the Byzantine world prior to the fall of Constantinople whose transfigured nature and "other form" were recorded in unmistakable ways both in the art as well as the theology of the 14th century.

In spite of this, the unique contribution and assistance of the Church of Constantinople is often forgotten by its former daughter Churches which were guided and elevated by it into sister Autocephalous Churches. They have in recent times caused disconcerting forms of anguish, the most significant of which have been the Bulgarian Schism and the manifold expressions of Pan-Slavic Messianism which has become more widely known in Church affairs as the relentless dream of a third Rome.

This specialised form of Slavic racism was destined to become the most substantial contributing factor to the misfortune of Orthodoxy as a spiritual force in the new world, because it created out of nothing a thirst for ecclesiastical and even theological hegemony within other sister Autocephalous Churches which naturally had a negative influence on the harmony, cooperation and cohesion of the Orthodox. Being isolated and suspicious of one another, and sometimes even overtly hating each other, they were unable to restrain common external dangers, including atheistic Marxism-Leninism, materialistic and nihilistic thought from the West, or organised missionary work, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate sometimes unfortunately developed strategies and customs which did not concur in the least with Orthodox ecclesiology, either as a defensive or reactionary measure, or else out of unconscious outside influence. It therefore resembled at times the centralist and conceited spirit of Rome<sup>7</sup>. Precisely because these were mainly the results of circumstances, they did not express the authentic spiritual physiognomy of the Church of Constantinople which, remaining uninfluenced, appropriately calls itself the Church of the poor of Christ. This is why those foreign elements have either faded or vanished completely and they should disappear completely so that it may retain the incomparable beauty of its ethos in all things. The authentic ethos of this Church which is first among equals and which has undergone much suffering comes clearly and unquestionably from one extremely important fact about the Church. This surprisingly, has not been researched up until now, at least as far as we know. This fact is none other than the creation of the new Autocephalous Churches,

which most people would at first consider to be a most natural and self-evident development in Church matters for the whole of Orthodoxy. We therefore have an obligation to ask: have the daughter Churches themselves which were elevated to sister Autonomous Churches or any unbiased researcher ever properly evaluated the important and unique phenomenon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate being, in the past and present, the only Church of the whole Pentarchy of Christianity from which Autocephalous Churches have developed? No matter how much this could have been considered her obligation, given the historical circumstances under which the jurisdictional functions of the Church of Constantinople were shaped, its conduct and cooperation with all its former regions was always sincere and fraternal, just as it was sensitive and attentive to the other ancient Patriarchates. One must admit that the Church of Constantinople was graced by God to exercise its so-called primacy of honour in a truly charismatic way, that is in a spirit of creative service. This is the case not only among the Orthodox but throughout the Christian world, to which its many spiritual activities up until the present testify, even though the resources of the venerable Centre at Phanar have diminished as never before.

It is precisely because of its charismatic and coordinating ability that the See of Constantinople was able throughout the turbulent 20th century to develop initiatives and programmes for Pan-Orthodox and Christian cooperation, the importance of which for the entire modern world is increasingly being recognised with the passage of time. The historic Encyclical of 1920 to all Christian Churches made its voice prophetic in light of the enormous development of the ecumenical movement which was to follow, and it also indicated in an honorable fashion the common duty which the Orthodox Churches in particular have to initiate such a crusade of cohesion, cooperation and divine reconciliation<sup>8</sup>. This spiritual awakening is of even greater importance when one considers that it began almost simultaneously with Marxist-Leninist rule in Russia which was the harshest form of Babylonian captivity for most Orthodox Churches. It was a period of darkness and subjugation which was to last over seventy years.

Due to the tyranny imposed by the atheistic regimes, entire Orthodox populations were forced to move to the free nations of western Europe, America, Canada and Australia, thus creating new centres for the cultivation and promotion of Patristic thought and other treasures of Orthodoxy on a global level and utilising the languages of international communication. The benefits of this and other mass migrations of eastern Christians to the West had however a considerable and inevitable cost for Orthodoxy as a whole, partly through the formation of the so-called Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and other self-proclaimed Free Orthodox Churches, as well as the enormous problem of the Orthodox diaspora in general, as we shall see below.

The consequences of the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey after the Asia Minor catastrophe had a dramatic effect on the Ecumenical Patriarchate: the once flourishing Dioceses and the sacred places where our Christian forebears lived in ancient times had become totally deserted. Dioceses in Greece belonging to the Patriarchate (the so-called New Countries) were placed according to the act of 1928 under the



Autocephalous Church of Greece. Meanwhile, the mass migration to western Europe, America, Canada and Australia which occurred for various reasons mainly after the Second World War also created a counter-balance of new and populous Archdioceses and dioceses of the Ecumenical Throne in geographical regions where Orthodoxy was not only non-existent but also completely unknown. These new ecclesiastical Dioceses, through the work of their Parish-Communities, Theological Colleges and a host of other philanthropic institutions transmit every treasure of Orthodoxy not only to the up-coming generations of Orthodox migrants, but also to the broader non-Orthodox and multi-cultural milieu in which they are establishing themselves with true democratic freedoms as completely equal citizens.

Two hierarchs stand out in particular through all the activities of the Orthodox Church in the 20th century, having left their indelible mark on Pan-Orthodox and Christian affairs. Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) and Patriarch Athenagoras (Spyrou), both of whom made the Ecumenical Patriarchate renowned during very trying circumstances. They established Orthodoxy in modern times as a presence and force of world interest and hence a substantial factor in Christian developments. The pioneering spirit of Meletios with his well-known daring initiatives (the most notable being the recognition of the validity of Anglican ordination and the New Calendar) created problems for Inter-Orthodox relations, but their long-term effects proved them to be prophetically inspired, as a first step towards bridging Christian East and Christian West. The initiatives and perspective of Meletios opened broad horizons for his Archdeacon, who had served in Athens and who was strongly influenced by him, Athenagoras. He came to be the most authentic successor of Meletios in later years, particularly as Archbishop of America and later as Ecumenical Patriarch.

Beginning in the 1960's Athenagoras<sup>9</sup> managed as Ecumenical Patriarch to break the long barren isolation in which local Orthodox Autocephalous Churches remained from one another, while being almost completely cut off from the Christian West. The enterprising Patriarch Athenagoras achieved this through the establishment basically of two things. First, through Pan-Orthodox Conferences and, second, through the creation of Institutions of the Patriarchate in select locations outside Turkey.

The Pan-Orthodox Conferences, called since 1961 by the Ecumenical Patriarch on his own territory and with the agreement of the sister Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, initially in Rhodes and subsequently in Chambesy, Geneva, have proved to be the most useful and effective means of Inter-Orthodox cooperation. They ensure the most official platform for every decision of major importance, since the calling of the Pan-Orthodox Synod requires a lengthy and exhaustive preparation, as was later found out. The Pan-Orthodox Conferences succeeded not only in attaining warmer fraternal relations between the individual Orthodox Churches through a renewed appreciation of their common responsibility but they also enabled them to deal jointly with urgent matters relating to Orthodox as well as to non-Orthodox. Without these Pan-Orthodox Conferences it would not have been possible to have Pan-Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement, official bilateral theological dialogues or even the decision to prepare and call a future Pan-Orthodox Great and Holy Synod.

The Institutions of the Patriarchate outside Turkey, like guardhouses of the Ecumenical See in the modern world, which especially promoted Pan-Orthodox and Pan-Christian cooperation under the firm guidance of Patristic thought and theology are: (a) the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies in Thessaloniki; (b) the Orthodox Academy of Crete in Chania and (c) the Orthodox Patriarchal Centre in Chambesy, Geneva. Each of these institutions has, by way of a special Patriarchal and Synodical seal, a specialised range of activities and no doubt have a unique mission in serving the highest aspirations of contemporary Christianity as understood by the godly wisdom of the venerable Ecumenical Throne.

An objective researcher can easily see from the features of the personalities of both Hierarchs the gradual development of the Church of Constantinople guided - literally - by divine providence. Both were called to direct the Ecumenical Throne after the abovementioned historical events, and managed to ensure a spiritual grandeur which does not always correlate with the numbers and measurements of worldly statistics.

It is necessary to stress that the enterprising and pioneering Athenagoras I, whose daring initiatives often provoked the Holy Synod and caused commotion among conservative groups of Orthodox as well as fueling fanciful Turkish suspicions<sup>10</sup>, was succeeded by a man of apostolic simplicity and meekness - the most unpretentious and sweet Demetrios I. With his rare moral qualities, he contributed greatly to calming the commotion created by Athenagoras and to a sober utilisation of the blessed prospects of truly ecumenical proportions that had been created by him. He also assisted the most sacred and inviolable institution of the Phanar Synod to operate creatively and with ease in order to make the most of the gifts and abilities of all its members.

Only with such connectedness and atmosphere of mutually and synodically responsible innovativeness was it possible for Dimitrios I to have Bartholomew I as his successor. Among the youngest and most learned, his moral and educational qualities gave unmistakable signs of a new era right from the very beginning of his dynamic Patriarchy, not only for the Ecumenical Throne but for Orthodoxy as a whole.

Having described in general terms the formation of the new Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and the position and development among them of the Church of Constantinople, we can now pinpoint certain aspects which arose in order to modify the former official Canonical Acts of the Church. At first sight they may appear to be harmless, or even proper, yet in reality they are ecclesiologically awkward and unmanageable. They should be corrected at the first available opportunity as they have unfortunately created a situation which is unrecognisable and even contradictory to the canonical order of the Church.

By way of example we shall mention and evaluate very briefly just two examples, the significance of which should be immediately obvious. First, by elevating the Dioceses of the Autocephalous Church of Greece and making the Bishops therein Metropolitans, the Bishops and Archbishops who were previously obliged to commemorate their Metropolitan, according to the 34th Apostolic Canon, were themselves elevated to receive the title "Metropolitan". Yet the former Metropolitan of Athens received the curious

title of "Archbishop", supposedly as part of his elevation, and ceased to have the inalienable right of being commemorated by them, even though he continues to preside as the canonical head of the Standing Synod and the Synod of all the Hierarchs of the Church of Greece. Ironically, the new title stated that he was the Archbishop of all Greece! Without the canonical commemoration, the highest ranking person of the local Church, and indeed of the autocephalous Church of Greece, was unacceptably stripped of his canonical power and authority. Since then he has attempted in vain - sometimes in an unorthodox manner - to resist, either through privileges deriving from 'nomocanonical' regulations of state law, or through other means, in an attempt to protect himself against the hierarchs of the jurisdiction who constantly attempt to overstep their limits at his expense, or against the state itself. Even more curious is the fact that a vague entity of "our Holy Synod" is commemorated instead of the name of the specific spiritual Head - a unique arrangement in the Orthodox world, as far as we know. Secondly, upon the elevation of the Bishops of Crete to Metropolitans (1962), the former Metropolitan of Crete and Chairman of the island's Synod, was also curiously called the Archbishop of Crete (1967). Even while he continues to be the canonical leader of that semi-autonomous Church and Chairman of its Holy Synod, he is no longer commemorated by the other Hierarchs. They commemorate the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch, resulting in a strictly ecclesiological anomaly, the enormity of which cannot be reduced. In addition, this unfortunately led to an almost complete lack of government in the Holy Synod of Crete, as its members had the unjust and non-theological impression that they, together with all other Hierarchs on the island, who commemorate the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch, were in fact equal to the spiritual Head whom they either question or attempt to overthrow.

Such 'regulations' which are ecclesiologically and canonically unjustifiable are an outright injustice for every spiritual Head of the hierarchy. Furthermore, they establish a situation which directly undermines the very sacredness of the institution of the Synod itself, thereby severely damaging the inviolable rights and interests of every local Church of God, with the addition of unnecessary tensions and rivalries between fellow bishops.

### **The Orthodox Diaspora.**

We have already mentioned very briefly the main causes of the mass immigration of Orthodox people from their traditional homes to non-Orthodox countries of the so-called West. With the passage of time, parallel Orthodox jurisdictions arose and grew not only in the same countries but also in the same cities, creating a great scandal not only for the Orthodox but also for the non-Orthodox onlookers. The more alert members of the Orthodox are justifiably troubled at seeing themselves in another country not as one undivided Church - despite the efforts of groups such as SCOBA (Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops of America and SCCOCA, (Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Churches of Australia)<sup>11</sup> to secure a minimum of unity, cooperation and common activity- while even the non-Orthodox who are on friendly terms with the Orthodox cannot

understand how nationality can cause parallel and independent ecclesiastical structures which are not involved in the same worship, social action and Church administration. It is self-evident that this double scandal is even worse when the parallel Orthodox jurisdictions not only do not have continuous and substantial communion between them, but also opposing positions on critical socio-political issues. Their rivalry can be silent or verbal, to the point where they unfortunately openly quarrel and accuse each other in front of people of other faiths. However the extreme and unacceptable form of parallel Orthodox jurisdictions in the same part of the diaspora is of course not only that fellow Orthodox but also people of the same ethnic group who belong to sister Churches dare to ignore pre-existing Orthodox ecclesiastical organisation in one region, with total insensitivity towards the scandal that this causes. They therefore establish a special jurisdiction with proselytisers, usually as an Exarchy or other arrangement, even though they cannot claim any language, racial or other differences, which may cause practical problems. Fortunately, examples of such ecclesiological insensitivity between Churches comprised of people from the same country or racial background have almost totally disappeared<sup>12</sup>, with the only unresolved case being the so-called Russian Church Abroad which was a reaction to the situation created in Russia after the 1917 Revolution.

The disorderly inter-Orthodox relations existing in the diaspora in general have created a problem of extreme urgency. It is constantly being recorded as one of the first items on the agenda, which is being prepared from years ago, for the future Pan-Orthodox Synod. Of course, nobody can say with certainty what the final outcome of the Pan-Orthodox Synod will eventually be, especially given today's increasing racial tensions and other spiritual interests. It is not possible to expect a single, sober and undisputed interpretation of the famous 28th canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council on the basis of which most Orthodox historians and canon lawyers believe that this issue should be decided. This view is shared by those who consider the diaspora to be within the unquestioned jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Even if it were to be agreed that the reference to "the barbarous lands" contained in the 28th canon is applicable to the modern world, the development of this situation has consolidated certain Church models and facts, in which case it would be impossible for certain legitimate compromises not to be made in the spirit of true economy and for the good of peace in the Orthodox world. My personal opinion, however, is that the whole problem of the diaspora should be placed on broader and firmer foundations which are mutually acceptable, and not only on the 28th canon, as its interpretation is even problematic for those who are dedicated and faithful towards the Ecumenical See.

Nonetheless, a basic presupposition in this matter must be the position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate among the Orthodox Churches which has a universal validity derived from the spirit of the Pentarchy. The authority of Constantinople does not extend to "the barbarous lands" alone, no matter how one may interpret this geographical term today. It appears that this broader and more stable criterion is invincible and beneficial, not only for the question of the diaspora, but also in individual cases whereby one of the

Autocephalous Orthodox Churches feels that it has exclusive jurisdiction over other local Orthodox on the basis that it arrived first in a new region for missionary purposes. Such claims were repeatedly made mainly by the Russian Church, which for other reasons that we have also mentioned, displayed hegemonic tendencies. Thus, for example, it believed that, due to the Russian mission in Alaska, the American Orthodox jurisdiction should belong to them. It dared therefore to grant Autocephaly unilaterally in an auspicious stroke of policy to the "Metropolia" Russian Church in America (now called the "Orthodox Church of America"), and Autonomy to the Russian Orthodox Church which derived from the missionary work in Japan.

One must also observe that these claims for Russians of this persuasion does not mean that they, through their missionary work which has in all respects been praiseworthy, transferred their national Church to the new region, but the Orthodox faith as a whole. In Orthodoxy, no matter where the Orthodox faith is transplanted, the precedence of the ancient Pentarchy remains inviolate. In the same way, since the Ecumenical Patriarch retains first precedence always, it is only natural that his representative should be considered everywhere to be the Primate of all Orthodox bishops in a particular nation of the diaspora. Their existence and activity should be regulated in a canonical Synodical body by the spiritual Head so that the life of the various national Churches can be facilitated and developed in a foreign place according to God's will and so that canonical order and decorum can be maintained.

### **Orthodox Involvement in the Ecumenical Movement**

As has been pointed out repeatedly by serious Orthodox students of the ecumenical movement, the initial presence and active participation of the Orthodox which led to their greater representation in this global movement of Christians in the 20th century for the purpose of cooperation and - if possible - reconciliation and renewal, was undoubtedly a source of mutual benefit. For the Orthodox, a wonderful opportunity was given, by way of official platforms and an excellently organised network of services, committees and international theological conferences, to promote their faith and tradition of the first thousand years of undivided Christendom which have been maintained essentially unchanged and also developed through their authentic application during the post-Byzantine and Ottoman periods. For the other churches and Christian confessions in the ecumenical movement, Orthodox participation has brought inestimable enrichment to the movement and it has similarly raised the level of appreciation of Orthodoxy without which the ecumenical movement - as has been correctly pointed out - would have been an all-Protestant syncretism.

It follows that the more the Orthodox Churches present themselves as a united, harmonious, cooperative, and indissoluble spiritual entity in the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, the greater the benefit for both sides and for Christianity as a whole.

It is an undeniable fact that the Orthodox Churches, through their permanent representatives in the headquarters of the World Council of

Churches in Geneva and with the cooperation of enlightened clergy and lay theologians who are normally part of local Orthodox Theological Schools within universities or Church Academies<sup>13</sup> as well as through a multitude of relevant conferences and publications, have achieved an important place in the global developments of theological and Church affairs of Christianity today. It is also true that, following the responsible, official and lasting cooperation and sharing with the non-Orthodox, the Orthodox have acquired a more organised and down-to-earth, so to speak, life and action, assisted and enlightened by the more extensive and direct experience of the non-Orthodox, especially in areas such as modern pastoral psychology for those living in big cities under the new conditions and various phenomena of what are mostly pluralistic and multiracial societies. On the other hand, the Orthodox have as individuals and as Church had a great influence on other Christians through the treasures of Patristic wisdom, the living example of Orthodox monasticism, the numerous educational features of folk civilisation and through Orthodox worship and related sacred art which is unrivalled in its devotional and theological depth. With such communication and sharing, it is characteristic that highly cultivated and spiritual persons are freely turning to Orthodoxy with full knowledge of the theological priorities, while those who fall away from Orthodoxy are usually the victims of systematic proselytism who have not had an essential Church education, and who are sometimes even problematic.

These spiritual influences upon one another and their blessed productivity would of course be greater and more fruitful if the general stance of the Orthodox was more stable and responsible within the ecumenical movement, and above all, with an unreserved adaptation and dedication to Tradition. On this important point we must unfortunately admit that the Orthodox are sometimes not effective in our various roles within the ecumenical movement overall. Moreover, by strongly differentiating ourselves from others and quarreling with each other in public many times, a scandal and an obstacle is created which does not allow the non-Orthodox to discern after all which is the authentic Orthodox voice and tradition. In order to be convinced of this, one need only recall the conditions under which the Ecumenical Patriarchate became a founding member of the ecumenical movement, without being absent from any aspect of inter-Church or inter-denominational relations until the formation of the World Council of Churches, which most of the new Autocephalous Orthodox Churches joined as full members only after 1960. It is no secret that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was slandered by many Orthodox for its courageous and enlightened stand, even though it is clear that only through its active participation in today's ecumenical affairs could it have the strength and right to give a responsible Orthodox witness, as well as correction whenever this may be necessary.

The same more or less holds true for relations with Roman Catholics which also fall into the category of the ecumenical movement of our time. The so-called Dialogue of Love for which the late Patriarch Athenagoras did so much pioneering work, together with his fervent counterpart, the late Pope John XXIII, followed by Paul VI, was at first bitterly criticised by most of the new Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, some of which con-

tinuously regressed, fluctuating between being cooperative to being isolated and critical<sup>14</sup>.

Similar inconsistencies and back-trackings can unfortunately be observed among certain Orthodox Churches even in the official Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholics since 1980. Even though this Dialogue has been prepared through a series of friendly expressions between both Churches, and although it was held in great expectation not only by the two sides concerned but also by the entire Christian world which is in a position to appreciate how deeply this potential reconciliation between the two largest and most ancient Churches of East and West would influence world peace, it was slandered and opposed like no other inter-Church initiative of the 20th century. This occurred from the very first days that the Dialogue was announced and before the extremely difficult task at hand had even begun, which shows - even in a negative way - the incomparable significance of this Dialogue<sup>15</sup>. One can better appreciate that the behaviour was schizophrenic from the following: every Autocephalous and Autonomous Orthodox Church without exception agreed to this official Theological Dialogue unanimously and in complete freedom; they agreed to the conditions under which it would commence and they freely appointed their own representatives, with the mutually agreed and inviolable condition that each of the common texts produced by the Joint Theological Commission would be considered as being working papers which would be presented (*ad referendum*) to the official authorities of both Churches. For this reason, it is incomprehensible that there is, firstly, so much indifference shown by the broader hierarchy of both Churches, the people involved in the field of theology and, consequently, the entire people of God in East and West, towards such a sacred and peaceful endeavour. Secondly, it is incomprehensible why certain Churches or individuals have treated this with hypocrisy and enmity<sup>16</sup>.

Despite these hindrances, however - which are understandable up to a point, given the historical and nomocanonical factors affecting Orthodoxy in recent times - the overall involvement and contribution of the Orthodox in all areas of the modern ecumenical movement is becoming more effective in so far as it is being coordinated through all available means. Thus it is only natural that it is having an increasing influence on non-Orthodox, since it affects not only their thought but even their terminology, as can be seen from recent years.

From what has been presented in this paper regarding the positive and negative developments of inter-Orthodox relations in modern times, it is clear to any unbiased observer that Orthodoxy worldwide, as a multifaceted historical entity, presents great interest and an undisputed dynamism during the period in question. Unfortunately, much of this dynamism is wasted due to the silent and continuous rivalry, mainly between Russians and Greeks, but also other national Autocephalous Churches which are led astray or influenced like acolytes in this impermissible racial confrontation. For as long as the Russian Church remained subservient to the insatiable imperialistic ambitions and tyranny of atheistic communism, it was easy for it to throw all responsibility for every kind of rivalry and opposition against the mother Church of Constantinople onto the secular state. Now that it has,

with God's help, been released from secular and atheistic influence, it is no longer possible to excuse foolish hegemonic tendencies which seek to overturn the order and rank within the whole system of Orthodox Autocephalous Churches which has been instituted by Ecumenical Councils and sanctified over many centuries. Those who cite the words of St. Photios to Pope Nicholas that "ecclesiastical and indeed jurisdictional limits should conform to political dominion and administration according to custom" forget the fundamental presupposition by which Byzantine thought could have such an open perspective as a request, or at least as a "custom". This presupposition was the unified Christian Empire with one Christian political leader, in whose dominion any change within nomenclonical limits could not possibly overlook the unity and peace of the Church which is given from above. One can imagine the chaos that would result if Church divisions and jurisdictional redistributions had to follow the variety of political systems and models of our time. Therefore the only assurance of peace and unity for the Church will always be, at least for those who seek the Lord rather than worldly control, the scriptural words: "do not remove the ancient boundaries which your fathers have set" (Prov. 22:28).

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## NOTES

1. Following repeated and formally expressed desire of the Christian denominations in the World Council of Churches, especially in the Faith and Order commission, over recent years that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (in its original form and without the addition of the Filioque) should be made the common and official confession of faith for the entire Christian world, these features of the Church accordingly become binding and regulative for all Christians. It should be remembered that in the official message of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I to the 5th Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission (Santiago de Compostela, August 3-14, 1993) there was a proposal - which was warmly applauded - that as we approach the beginning of the third Christian millennium, today's major Church leaders state in a common and official declaration that the unchangeable text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is the only authentic confession of Christianity. This would of course create optimistic perspectives for the more speedy reunification of divided Christians, based on the rock of faith.
2. Cf. Archbishop Stylianos, *In the Margins of Dialogue* (In Greek), Athens, 1991, p.52.
3. This controversial topic was looked at anew and with very convincing arguments by Christos Yannaras in his remarkable book *Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece*, Domos, Athens, 1992. It is unfortunate that some acute comments, or even perhaps a one-sidedness in formulation, was the cause for this keen and sagacious theologian to be criticised even by sections of Mt Athos, which Yannaras never ceased to reverence and adore.
4. It must be admitted in all honesty that despite its official condemnation by the 1872 Synod of Constantinople, racism has not entirely disappeared. On the contrary, racial rivalries between sister Orthodox Churches unfortunately continue, either because of bitter memories of the past or because of ambitions and expansionist tendencies in terms of hegemony that has already been mentioned.
5. It is particularly moving that the most just and austere condemnation has always been made by way of self-criticism by the bravest Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne, even before it was criticised by others. Future historians who will be in a position to publish



relevant documents of modern Church history will come across many surprises.

6. Apart from the purely theological evaluations which have been made with regard to the differences between the Byzantine ethos as a whole and the main features of western Christianity, the work (both literary and painted) of N G Pentzikis who passed away in January 1992, is worthy of particular mention. His position in modern Greek literature has not yet been sufficiently promoted. It can however be said that Pentzikis was the most vibrant and convincing Byzantine creative artist of modern Greece.
7. An example of this could be considered to be the liturgical praxis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate according to which, on certain occasions, a Bishop is not allowed to concelebrate with the Ecumenical Patriarch. But this of course can have no theological justification, since priests and deacons concelebrate with the Patriarch.
8. Historians of the ecumenical movement always highlight the importance of the Patriarchal Encyclical for inter-Church and inter-denominational relations in the 20th century.
9. Cf. study by Archbishop Stylianos of Australia "Patriarch Athenagoras and Inter-Orthodox Relations", in a commemorative volume, *Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Epirus*, Ioannina 1975, pp.215-233.
10. There was a period in which the students of the Theological School of Halki can recall that Turkish newspapers would seriously attribute the scarcity of certain products on the market from time to time, such as petrol and coffee, to the influence which the late Patriarch Athenagoras applied to Turkey internationally. They did not take into account that he more than anyone else was criticised in Greece for his friendly stance towards Turkey.
11. The inter-Orthodox body in America is comprised only of Bishops and is called the "Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops of America", while the corresponding body which was subsequently established in Australia speaks more precisely on theological issues and evaluates more justly the presence of parallel Orthodox churches in the diaspora, regardless of whether these are overseen by a Bishop or a plain priest. For this reason, the Australian inter-Orthodox group is called the "Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Churches of Australia"
12. The only sad exception in terms of audacity and the extent of uncanonical actions was the recent unholy invasion of a fully developed Parish-Community of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia (St John in Carlton, Melbourne) by Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem. This unprecedented invasion, although fiercely dealt with and responsibly condemned by Archbishop Stylianos as the canonical spiritual leader of the region, resulted in an open rupture with the Ecumenical Patriarchate by way of a completely baseless jurisdictional claim not only over all of Australia but over many areas where Greek Orthodox live, such as America, western Europe, Africa etc. He therefore finally called for the convocation of the historic Greater and Supreme Synod, chaired by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in 1993, which in turn defrocked the leading Jerusalemite figures in the atrocity, namely Bishops Timothy of Lydda and Hesychios of Kapitolia together with five accompanying priests (cf. *Ecclesia* (in Greek), 1-10-93, p.526).
13. To the many older Theological Schools (University of Athens, Halki, Universities of the Slavic countries and parallel Orthodox Academies), the 20th century has now added the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki, the the Orthodox Institute of St Sergius in Paris, Holy Cross College in Boston and St Vladimir's Seminary in New York, the Theological School of St John of Damascus in Balamand, Lebanon, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College in Sydney, Australia, and the Orthodox School of Theology in the Joensuu University of Finland. It was very gratifying to hear that, after the fall of the communist regime in the countries of Eastern Europe, a whole range of Theological Academies and ecclesiastical seminaries are re-opening. It is also significant that during the 1970's many Chairs of Orthodox theology were established in Roman Catholic or Protestant Theological Schools of Europe, particularly in Germany.
14. During the Dialogue of Love and even during the subsequent Official Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholics which, as is known, commenced in 1980 through the agreement and participation of all the autocephalous Orthodox churches, nondescript inconsistencies and extemporaneous behaviour were repeatedly displayed by some of the Orthodox churches, including the Autocephalous Church of Greece unfortunately. A most characteristic example of such vexing behaviour was in certain instance shown by the Church of Russia during the Dialogue of Love. At the first Pan-Orthodox meeting in Rhodes, the leader of the Russian delegation, Metropolitan Nikodemos of Leningrad, was the first to make critical statements about the Church of Rome, and the

decision taken by all the Orthodox with regard to sending observers to the impending Vatican II Council - whom Rome sought - was unanimously negative. Yet shortly after, the Church of Russia decided unilaterally to send observers to the first part of the Second Vatican Council which in turn forced the Ecumenical Patriarchate to convene the second Pan-Orthodox Meeting as quickly as possible in Rhodes. The purpose of this was to find a way to avoid both a rupture in relations between the Orthodox, and world ridicule of the unity boasted between them. Not only this, but the Russian Church also decided, almost simultaneously in its own Synod, to allow the Sacrament of holy communion to be administered to the Roman Catholics, without any previous Pan-Orthodox decision on the issue which no other Orthodox Church dared to do by Synod. Of course it is not without significance that the adamant Metropolitan Nikodemos who spoke so strongly against the Roman Catholic world as a whole during the first Pan-Orthodox Meeting in Rhodes, wrote a voluminous work on Pope John XXIII only a few years later, as if there were no outstanding Fathers for that Orthodox hierarchy to study. It was translated into German for obvious reasons of ecclesiastical and political expediency (cf. Nikodim Metropolit von Leningrad, Johannes XXIII: *Ein Inbequemer Optimist*, Benziger, 1978)

15. Cf. the response to indicative opposition and slanderings in: Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, *In the Margins of Dialogue*, Athens, 1991.
16. Unfortunately, the main Churches to commit this are those of Jerusalem and Greece, not only from the time Unia was revitalised approximately eight years ago and the unexpected and unacceptable conduct of the Vatican gave real cause for everyone to become disillusioned, but long before that. To be more precise, the official representatives of the Church of Greece on the Dialogue - who were not always the same so as to give the necessary continuity - never ceased to be an unnecessary obstacle, and often a sterile negation of that historic effort, in addition to a host of other difficulties and temptations which accompanied it. Yet, it is not only the official delegates who would obstruct the Dialogue without cause many times. It is also a host of other hierarchs and theologians who take pride in considering themselves to be enlightened Bishops and spiritual people of our times. We need only recall the things which Professor K Mouratides, President of the Pan-Hellenic Association of Theologians has stated and written on this topic, as well as Metropolitan Christodoulos of Demetria who would use every chance to judge the Dialogue and ecumenical activities in general. One can then appreciate the disjointed and irresponsible age in which we are called to live out the commands of the Holy Gospel and the responsibilities placed by the Church upon each of us through its specific and official mandate.