

heit, blindness to Apocalypse, here lack of faith in the God who comes in judgment. Where the mystery of iniquity seems to have reached its climax we may once again be able to recover the sense of sin before the approach of God in the Second Coming; not in fear and distress merely, but in the urgent expectation of the manifestation of the children of God. For sin is revealed in the drawing near of God: that is the common witness of the Bible and, say, St John of the Cross. If we say—and we *must* say—‘Come Lord’ and ‘Thy kingdom come’, our longing must include and surpass in hope our involuntary solidarity with the mystery of iniquity; for although we are exposed, precisely in the dimension of our transcendence, to the hostility of principalities and powers, yet we hold fast in faith that we are ‘in Christ’ who has been enthroned at the right hand of the Father above every principality and power (cf. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, and, more recently, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament*).

And we have a pledge of the power of that love which reveals and overcomes sin, which surpasses our fear, first in the eschatological encounter of the Cross, and then in its daily commemoration. As Herbert tells us again:

Who would know Sinne, let him repair
Unto Mount Olivet . . .
Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as bloud, but I as wine.

The Pan-Orthodox Meeting at Rhodes

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Eight hundred electric lights brilliantly outlined the façade and cupola of the new market that looks out on the Mediterranean quayside. On the top of the building, angled eastwards, was a large illuminated X P (Chi Rho) symbol, surmounting the words, *Pan-Orthodox Meeting of*

Rhodes 24.9 - 1.10.1961.

Rhodes gave a warm official welcome to the congress. Ecclesiastics and civic dignitaries spoke. There were dinners, concerts, trips. Perhaps the visiting naval vessels of the United States and Britain did introduce what someone described as 'unfortunate over-tones' to the atmosphere in which religious matters are best discussed. But, on the whole, everything was calm, apart from puzzled speculation among journalists and observers; the extra hundred or so attracted by the congress were easily absorbed among the sun-worshipping late season holiday-makers; taxis did a roaring trade; excitement seemed to be well contained within the closed church where the delegates met generally in private.

Religious inscrutability is intensified when ecclesiastics are bearded. Of the nine or ten Catholic priests on the island that week, four wore beards, but only Father Dumont, with the added advantage of his white Dominican habit, looked in place. The impression was forced on one that here was a man fully aware of the issues involved at Rhodes, who understood what the dignified prelates and their theologians were about: so far, an Orthodox might say, as a Latin can understand us.

Orthodoxy's view of the meeting was succinctly and forcibly expressed in an admirable sermon by the Metropolitan of Myron, Monsignor Chrysostom Konstantinidis. At the Holy Liturgy when the meeting began, he addressed not only his Orthodox brethren but also the Reverend Delegates of friendly churches. After insisting on the way the offering of the Divine Sacrifice would inaugurate the labours of the Pan-Orthodox Meeting, he emphasized how the Holy Orthodox Church, on its own initiative, was undertaking new advances to carry out God's will in the present age. He outlined briefly the meaning of Orthodoxy by mentioning many of its characteristics—its metaphysics of eternity (i.e., other-worldliness), the spirit of liberty and the authority of Canons or Laws, its multiplicity and unity, the different Orthodox churches, and the One and Indivisible Orthodoxy. In reference to Tradition, he quoted from Saint Irenaeus in the context of the Church which is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

In the eyes of the uninitiated, he pointed out, Orthodoxy presented quite a different picture. They judged against a background of the first eight centuries and seven Ecumenical Councils, and considered Orthodoxy was a divided church, diversified by linguistic, national and other factors. Whereas, he said, despite bad times in the past and local schisms, Orthodoxy today was experiencing an effulgence throughout

the entire world. And the diversities in Orthodoxy, the external features people noticed, were nothing in comparison with the strength of the unity of Orthodoxy and the unification that existed. 'One and Indivisible and, finally, this very unity of Orthodoxy presented as an antinomy in its varieties—these are the positive factors for a true appreciation of our Orthodoxy'.

A true understanding of Orthodoxy explained the purpose of the Rhodes Meeting. The meeting was to project Orthodoxy on a pan-orthodox, pan-christian and world level. So far as the future was concerned, that lay in God's hands. The Orthodox Church must shine gloriously immaculate—a body of men purified, such is God's Church, in the words of Hermas's *Pastor*.

In the Pan-Orthodox Meeting of Rhodes, held between September 24 and October 1, 1961, His Holiness Athenagoras I, the Patriarch of Constantinople, achieved a personal success on several accounts. It was his idea and it took place. Originally planned for 1960, it was intended to finish off matters left over from the Mount Athos Pre-Synod of 1930. As the affair turned out, the 1961 meeting developed into the most representative Eastern Orthodox assembly for nearly twelve hundred years. So the message at the close of the congress stated: 'After a very long stretch of time, this is the first occasion that Orthodoxy has come together in such a fully representative meeting'.

Twelve major Eastern Orthodox churches sent official delegations, consisting of ecclesiastics, theologians, and advisers. Through his representatives, the Ecumenical Patriarch presided. The main work of the delegates was to go over the list of subjects for a future Pre-Synod, a seven page scheme, which had been approved by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on May 4, 1961.¹ After long discussions held in private by the official Orthodox church delegates, this list was accepted without much alteration. To prepare these matters for a Pre-Synod (which would make proximate preparation for a General Council of Orthodoxy), six commissions were appointed, with chairmen chosen from six churches. The commissions correspond more or less with the headings I to VI of the List of subjects proposed. Everything connected with the working of the commissions and their findings and

¹The main headings of this list of subjects were:—I. Faith and Dogma. II. Divine Worship. III. Administration and Ecclesiastical Order. IV. The Relations of Orthodox Churches with each other. V. The Relations of the Orthodox Churches with other Christian Churches. VI. Orthodoxy throughout the World. VII. General Theological Subjects. VIII. Social Problems.

recommendations will be co-ordinated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This role of Constantinople in Orthodoxy is extremely important, and may well presage a much greater *obvious* unity (expressed thus in view of the inaugural sermon) in the Orthodox body of churches. Reasons for thus thinking rest in the deep awareness Orthodoxy maintains concerning the oneness of the Church with Christ as Head, and the apostolical continuity of priesthood and baptismal regeneration that lives on in Orthodoxy.

In no way would we suggest that Orthodoxy is inclined to grant an over-all pre-eminence to the Patriarch of Constantinople, but a desire does seem to exist to promote the goodwill and co-operation necessary to enable this Patriarch to play a useful practical part as leader, and possibly initiator. To understand his position, some consideration of the churches that attended the recent meeting may help. They were the major churches of Orthodoxy which, as Christ's Church, they claim has a total membership of one hundred and eighty millions.

Other features to which attention must be drawn are among the superficial things explained in the inaugural sermon. Linguistically, the churches appear as Greek, Arab, and Slav or Russian. By organization, they are limited largely within national boundaries, so that individual churches can be referred to as national, local, or ethnic communities. Churches of less than patriarchal dignity, though autonomous, autocephalous or self-governing, naturally preserve affinities with one or other of the patriarchates, but for many centuries no machinery has existed in Orthodoxy for the regular interchange even of ecclesiastical news. This weakness may find a partial remedy in the measures decided upon at Rhodes, as preparations are made for a Pre-Synod, and then a full Synod or General Council of Orthodoxy.

The continuing prestige of the Ecumenical Patriarchate—spoken of as *The Phanar* in much the same way as the Holy See is called *The Vatican*—does not depend on any numerical strength. Even though Constantinople assumes responsibility for Orthodox members living outside Orthodox countries (in the Diaspora, as is said), and is thus assured of numerical superiority over the ancient patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, her membership is still reckoned only in hundreds of thousands. Constantinople's special position in Orthodoxy, with a precedence of honour over the older patriarchates, is due simply to the historical fact that Constantine's city became the imperial New Rome. In course of time, Christendom of the East fell apart from that of the West: again, this is simply fact. And the fact that today,

after so many centuries during which national considerations tended to predominate in the different local Eastern Orthodox churches, there appears to be a movement towards increased external unity and solidarity, with the Ecumenical Patriarch as initiator, does indicate a new policy in what mostly interests us, namely, Reunion.

Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church was one of the sub-headings in the list of subjects submitted to the meeting at Rhodes. It was decided to study the *disputable issues on which the two Churches differ in reference to: 1. Faith and Doctrine. 2. Administration. 3. Ecclesiastical activities such as proselytism and the Uniat Movement.* But Rhodes also accepted the cultivation of friendly relationships within the spirit of the Patriarchal Encyclical (Orthodox) of 1920, and more generally in accordance with the present favourable trend towards rapprochement and unity among Christian Churches.² Seeing that most of the business at Rhodes was conducted in the privacy of secret sessions, it would be impertinent to pretend to know what was not afterwards made public, and it is hard to estimate the feeling of the delegates when this was discussed. But the intention of understanding the *disputable issues on which the Churches differ* offers more hope for the future, than the mere expression of a vague wish to follow the *present favourable trend towards rapprochement and unity* would have done.

At the risk of seeming superior, a Catholic must hope that the Second Vatican Council will add great splendour to the Church and shed light on these matters which divide Christians. Undoubtedly Catholics would benefit by learning to appreciate more the heritage of the ancient Eastern Church which we claim belongs to us as well as to Orthodoxy. But if the westerner needs to regard and revere the religious glories and traditions of the Eastern Church, there is a compensating requirement that the Orthodox should learn about the glories of the Western Church. Perhaps this task is the harder for the Orthodox, seeing that on many scores he must first forgive, not our Church, but mismanagement by men in great social and historical issues. Justifiably we can plead the magnificent effort of the Council of Ferrara-Florence to re-establish the unity of Christ's Church. But the Papacy was not at its strongest, human and political considerations played more than their proper parts: the reunion was short-lived, It ended with the loss of Constantinople as a bastion of religion and empire, and this event still rankles in

²Cf. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America: Ecumenical Patriarchate: Pan-Orthodox Meeting of Rhodes. *List of Subjects for a Future Pre-Synod.* p. 5.

the minds of many as prime proof of the religious and political perfidy of the West. Disclaiming responsibility five centuries afterwards is no answer, nor would vicarious breast-striking for the faults of our ancestors help. Catholics today must realize what Constantinople stood for during centuries of Christianity in Greece, in the Balkans, and in Asia. When Constantinople fell, the entire people of the West were shaken; but they did not act.

Constantinople had been for centuries a symbol and a centre to encourage Christian peoples threatened by the Turks. Unfortunately, it spelt nationalism in religion, so that, in Western reckoning, Constantinople was associated even by the unlearned with the crime of religious schism, with a metaphorical rending of Christ's seamless robe, symbol of Christian religious unity. But under Turkish rule, Orthodox Christians seemed to have little option; force made them identify religion with nationality if they were to survive at all. And while, during many centuries, Ecumenical Patriarchs were either puppets of the Turks or martyrs, Orthodoxy still hoped for the eventual restoration of the great Patriarchate. In men's minds it was the ultimate Greek institution.

During the religious eclipse of Constantinople, the power of the Slav and Russian Orthodox churches grew and became established. Especially strong were the Georgian and Russian churches, with Moscow following an Erastian policy and freely accepting state domination in religious affairs. For Western Catholics, these chapters of religious history in the Balkans and the East were telescoped, and a grossly inaccurate picture was given of half-and-half Christians comprising two churches, one of Russian, the other of Greek, Orthodoxy. Even today, the quite educated Catholic has little conception of the true state of religion in Orthodox countries. He has the excuse that the Russian revolution and the penetration of Soviet influence into Europe during recent decades has made the situation ever more difficult to understand. And precisely now, in the context of Rhodes, one must try to know why so many churches from Communist lands were present at the meeting.

It would be downright prejudice to see in their presence at the Pan-Orthodox Meeting a mere desire to serve the ends of Communist policies: it would also be untrue. For in all the countries that have come under Communism, Orthodoxy has been savagely persecuted, and most of all in Russia. At the same time, the speech delivered by the leader of the Russian delegation, the Archbishop of Yaroslav and Rostov, contained many of the peculiar accusations you expect from

a Communist Party speaker rather than a churchman. Although Archbishop Nikodemus spoke in private session, enough leaked out to prove his nineteen page delivery was thoroughly prepared. (Not much of it, happily, went to the world press.) Besides attacking colonialism, imperialism, war-mongers and *hoc genus omne*, the Russian spokesman indulged in two fierce attacks on the Holy See. When the sharp discussion that followed his speech had subsided, Archbishop Nikodemus smiled to those about him, and distributed chocolates. This I was told and I would rather like to believe; it shews the Archbishop is human. But one must ask whether his words really expressed the convictions of the churches he represented: if they did, then our answer is to pray for these churches: but if his words were insincere, he should be given the lie direct. For when tolerance is carried too far, there follows grave disservice to truth.

The delegation of the Church of Russia represented 'many, many' Orthodox. This vague estimate of Orthodoxy's strength in the Soviet Union was given by the delegation during informal conversations at Rhodes; it was further qualified with 'No statistics'. So the guessing game begins in the important field of the numerical strength of convinced Orthodox. A majority of the Orthodox (their total has been set as high as 180,000,000!), sometimes said to be eighty-five per cent live, in Communist countries, and by far the largest proportion of these men and women are in the U.S.S.R. In 1949, Father De Vries, S.J., gave a figure of ninety-five millions of Orthodox for the whole of Russia, but he was using old statistics and admitted that the matter was problematical. But even with that high figure, his total, which included more than eight million Monophysites and Nestorians, only reached over one hundred and thirty-six millions. So, the realistic view certainly is that the numerical strength (unrevealed) of Orthodoxy lies enslaved in Russia. By sending a delegation to the Rhodes Meeting, the Church of Russia gave nothing away, and had nothing to lose.

Next to Russia in numbers is the Orthodox Church of Rumania, with about thirteen million. They also suffer persecution, but their church lives: alongside these Orthodox are nearly two million Catholics of Eastern Rite.³ Because Communism has not been so long in the saddle, there seems more hope for religion in Rumania: in the context of this country, it was interesting, though not completely reassuring, to be told by an Orthodox bishop that what sometimes appears from

³The so-called *Uniats* constitute a special problem in church relations. As they were mentioned at Rhodes, this matter will be touched on.

the actions and words of Orthodox churchmen to indicate sympathy with Communism should not be construed as such. But, as with the Russians, there is no denying that 'double-talk' and ambiguous behaviour are bizarre interpretations of the Gospel maxim to be as wise as serpents and as simple as doves. Trimming tactics were widely employed when Orthodoxy was in subjugation under the Turks, and hard though it is to justify such practices under present-day atheistic materialism, one must allow for the possibility of their being used in these countries.

Of other state-dominated churches present at Rhodes, Bulgaria (membership about six million) is traditionally unfriendly to anything Greek, and aligns herself in Orthodox relations with the Russians. Czechoslovakia's Orthodox body is tiny, round the hundred thousand mark. Poland is exceptional, with Orthodoxy the minority religion in a country where most believers are Catholics. Only the Church of Serbia remains, the body of Orthodox in Jugoslavia.

In Jugoslavia, a great deal of sympathy exists between Catholic and Orthodox churchmen, where the heroic leadership of the late Cardinal Stepinac impressed everyone. Orthodoxy has been persecuted; parade of religion is still not allowed, and clerical attire may not be worn in public, but there is no mistaking the Orthodox clergy. Jugoslavia has Catholic as well as Orthodox strongholds; the Orthodox muster between six and seven millions. Representatives of this church at Rhodes sided, so one heard, with Constantinople and the Greeks in issues that required a vote. What a piece Saint Jerome would have written about all this. Illyricum was disputed territory, as also were parts of Greece, between the patriarchates of Rome and Constantinople in trials of strength before schism occurred.

Had Greek been better utilized in administrative circles at Rome, and if there had been more bishops of the calibre of Saints Cyril and Methodius, practical men of great vision, the break-up of the Church into Latin, Greek and Slav might never have happened. But as things are, one saw at Rhodes the quite fantastic spectacle of the representatives of self-governing churches worshipping together (which the inaugural sermon referred to) for all the world as though it was of daily occurrence. From Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, they came; Russia, Serbia, Rumania, and Bulgaria sent delegates; the church of Cyprus and the church of Greece, Poland, too, and Czechoslovakia—in all twelve churches. Worship and meeting took place in the church of the Annunciation, a recent building on the

waterside, about fifty yards from where the Colossus once bestrode an entrance to a famous port.

Rhodes has belonged to the Kingdom of Greece since 1947. Ecclesiastically it falls within the province of Constantinople, but there is a Metropolitan of the island, and he headed the Arrangements Committee.⁴ The personnel of the delegations, between fifty and sixty, accepted chairmanship from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but they did their best to neutralize the venue by not permitting the Metropolitan of Rhodes to attend secret sessions. The church was almost extra-territorial. Further to this point, anyone who knows the island is aware of what is meant when people say jokingly, 'Rhodes is not Greece'. A meeting of this kind just could not conceivably have been held in Athens, for that city is altogether too Greek. And it is ironic in the extreme that the country whose national church is so closely connected with the Patriarchate of Constantinople should have played host to the meeting, but 'not in Greece'.⁵

'Not in Greece', for the religious phenomenon of Greece puzzles Orthodoxy at large, just as it seems to puzzle the Greeks themselves. As Belloc hit on 'Poland is the Test' to decide eventually the justice of the Second World War, one might proclaim that 'Greece is the Test' as regards the future of Orthodoxy. Greeks would never say this, partly from good manners, partly from regard for Constantinople, and partly from a superficial cynicism which prevents them admitting too much religious conviction. But Greece is the only completely free country in which Orthodoxy is the national religion, with over ninety per cent of the people at least nominally Orthodox. (The Church of Crete—and Crete belongs to the Kingdom of Greece—is a small one.) The Orthodox of Greece number more than seven million. If strong religious leaders rose among these people, if there were a new flowering of religious life and practice, Greece might well be instrumental in promoting a renewal of Orthodoxy such as was prayed for at Rhodes. But to avoid any charge of *simplisme*, one had best say what was said

⁴It is not widely known that there is a Catholic (Latin) Archbishop of Rhodes. He resides in Rome, and is entered in the *Annuario Pontificio* as *impedito*.

⁵During Turkish domination, the Patriarch of Constantinople was the chief Greek ecclesiastic. As Greek independence was achieved, the National Greek Church was proclaimed by parliament in 1833. The Patriarch accepted the fact seventeen years later. Under the Turkish Government today, the Ecumenical Patriarch has to be a Turkish citizen, but he must also be of Greek descent to qualify religiously. With grand nostalgia, Greeks still look back to the days when Constantinople was the Greek city without equal.

at Rhodes, that the future lies in God's hands: but there are very, very many good Orthodox, clergy and layfolk, close to God. And Catholics make a tremendous mistake if they try to assess goodness entirely in terms of union with the Holy See.

Such union in faith and practice is the ardent desire of the Pope and the Church. 'God wills it', one should say, but impatience with God's ways and the fulfilment of his will is never justified. And if anyone asks what fresh hope of reunion has come from Rhodes, the truthful answer is that nothing new emerged. At the same time, since the matters for preparation for the Pre-Synod cover everything needed for reform and renewal, that is a good sign. So, too, is the Orthodox insistence that the idea of the Rhodes Meeting, of a Pre-Synod, and of an eventual Synod, is their own, and not something sparked off because of the coming Vatican Council. Provided that differences and weaknesses in Orthodoxy are not solved on principles of the lowest common denominator of agreement, much good must result from the programme envisaged at Rhodes. And the higher the present-day ideals of Orthodoxy reach, the nearer reunion comes.

Those matters in which the Catholic Church is misunderstood by Orthodoxy—proselytism and the so-called *Uniat* movement, to give but two examples—may be appreciated when properly studied, even though not approved of. For what is mistakenly referred to as proselytism on the part of the Catholic Church is simply carrying out Christ's command to preach the Gospel to every creature, and to insist on the truth of that Gospel, in season and out of season. The continued use of ancient Eastern liturgies for worship is a policy necessitated by recognizing the truth that the Church is neither Latin, nor Greek, nor Slav, but in the proper sense Catholic and, therefore, Universal.