

MELETIOS METAXAKIS: A HISTORIC DOCUMENT

By
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For the last ten years I have been working on many different aspects of a History of the Church, giving much emphasis to the events which were related with the history of the Greek Orthodox Church. I devoted most of my time in searching in various archives and libraries of Western Europe, America, Russia and now Africa.

I now present an important letter written by Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis when he occupied the Throne of Constantinople¹. In the 20th century Greek Orthodox Church History, Meletios Metaxakis must occupy a very important place: from the time he started his ecclesiastical career until his death he devoted his life to the Orthodox Church in many parts of the world. Meletios served the Churches of Antioch, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Greece, America, Constantinople and finally Alexandria². The legacy which he left behind is something which the mentioned churches are still experiencing and living in their ecclesiastical and spiritual endeavours.

The historic letter which I publish today is a long memorandum of Meletios to the Nicholas Politis³. This letter was composed by Mele-

1. Lately I have been editing a number of Meletios's documents, hoping to complete this work in four years. *'Meletios Metaxakis 1871-1935'* in «*Εκκλησία και Θεολογία*», (1983), pp. 655-929. Additional bibliography may be found in: B. T. h. Stavrides, *Οι Οικουμενικοί Πατριάρχαι 1860—σήμερον. Α' Ιστορία. Έταιρεία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών*, 14, Thessaloniki, 1977, pp. 438-480. *Ibid.*, 'Ο Οικουμενικός Πατριάρχης Μελέτιος Δ', in «*Θεολογία*», vol. 46, October-December 1975, pp. 763-774 and vol. 47, January-March 1976, pp. 159-176.

2. '...Three times has Meletios been driven into exile. Each time he has been recalled to a high and important office. In Jerusalem he proved himself a man of quite exceptional force of character: in Cyprus and Athens he showed himself a fearless reformer: in Constantinople he won universal admiration by his bravery and fearlessness. His great mental gifts have never been denied...' cf. in *Bible Lands*, vol VII, January 1925 - January 1930, pp. 704-706.

3. Nicholas Politis was born in Corfu on the 27th January, 1872. He read Law at the University of Paris and then taught International Law at the Universities of Ex-Poitie and Paris. During the years 1914-1916, he was the General Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece; During 1916-1917 he was Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government of Eleftherios Venizelos in Thessaloniki. In the years 1920, 1923 and 1924 he was the first representative of Greece in the League of Nations. During 1924-1925 he was Ambassador of Greece to France. [*Μέγα Έλληνικών Βιβλιογραφικών Λεξικών*, 2 (1959) 496].

tios shortly before his removal from the Oecumenical Throne. Meletios Metaxakis, always a friend of the Anglican Church, in this letter shows his disappointment with the attitude of the Roman Church towards the Orthodox Church.

THE ORIGINAL GREEK TEXT
OF THE LETTER OF MELETIOS METAXAKIS

Ἀγαπητὴ φίλε Κύριε Πολίτη,

Ἀργὰ ἔφθασεν εἰς χεῖρας μου ἡ ἀπὸ 17/30 Δεκεμβρίου π.ἔ. ὑμετέρα ἐπιστολή, ἀργὰ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀνταποδίδω, θερμὰς ὅπως πάντοτε, τὰς ἐπὶ τῷ Νέῳ ἔτει εὐχάς.

Ἀπαντῶ ὑπὸ ὄλως ἀτομικὴν ιδιότητα εἰς τὸ μετὰ τὰς εὐχάς περιεχόμενον τῆς ὑμετέρας ἐπιστολῆς τὸ ὅποιον ἐπέσυρε τὴν προσοχὴν μου οὐχὶ ἀφ' ἧς ἀπόψεως θέτει τὸ ζήτημα τῆς ἐνώσεως τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν Καθολικῆς καὶ Ὀρθοδόξου τὸ διαβιβαζόμενον σημεῖωμα, προερχόμενον ὡς ἀντιλαμβάνομαι ἐκ μέρους μελῶν τῆς ἐπὶ τῶν ἐράνων ὑπὸ τὴν Προεδρίαν τοῦ Καρδινάλιου Dubois Ἐπιτροπῆς, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ ἐκείνης εἰς ἣν ἡ ὑμετέρα σύνεσις κατέληξεν ἐκθέτουσα τὰς σκέψεις της ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ.

Ἡ ἰδέα ἡ ὑποκειμένη ὡς βάσις τοῦ σημειώματος, ὅτι μεγάλα πολιτικὰ ἀποτελέσματα θὰ προκύψωσιν ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐκ τῆς ἐνώσεως εἶναι αὐτῇ ἐκείνῃ ἤτις ὠδήγησεν εἰς Φλωρεντίαν τὸν Αὐτοκράτορα καὶ τοὺς μεγιστάνους του καὶ τὸν Πατριάρχην μὲ τοὺς Μητροπολίτας του εἰς τὰς παραμονὰς τῆς πτώσεως τῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας. Ὑπὸ τὸ κράτος τῆς ἰδίας ἰδέας ἐπεβλήθη ἡ τεχνητὴ ἔνωσις διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ Ναῶ τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας κοινῆς λειτουργίας τὴν 12 Δεκεμβρίου 1452, καθ' ὃν δηλ. χρόνον ὁ Μωάμεθ Β' ἐξεκίνηει ἤδη ἐξ Ἀνδριανουπόλεως πρὸς ἄλωσιν τῆς πρωτευούσης. Ὅπως ὁμως ἡ καὶ τότε τραγικὴ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας κατάστασις δὲν ἴσχυσεν ὅπως καταστήσῃ εἰς αὐτὰ συμπαθῆ τὴν ἰδέαν τῆς ἐνώσεως μετὰ τῆς Ρώμης, οὕτω καὶ σήμερον. Ἐτι πλέον πιστεύω ἀκραδάντως ὅτι ὅπως κατὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν οἱ ἐκ πολιτικῶν ὑπολογισμῶν ἐνωτικοὶ ἠῤῥῆξαν τὴν συμφορὰν διὰ τῆς ἐξάρσεως τῶν θρησκευτικῶν παθῶν, οὕτω καὶ σήμερον κίνημα ἐνωτικῶν μετὰ τῆς Ρώμης θὰ ἐδημιουργεῖ πάλιν διαίρεσιν πρὸ τῆς ὁποίας θὰ ὠχρία καὶ αὐτῇ ἡ ἐπὶ τῆς πολιορκίας τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως.

Τὸ φαινόμενον δὲν εἶναι ἀνεξήγητον. Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐκκλησία ἤτις καὶ ἐπὶ Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου ἀκόμη βαρέως ἔφερε τὴν ἔπιημένην ὄφρον' τῆς Ρώμης, δὲν δύναται νὰ συγχωρήσῃ εἰς αὐτὴν ἰδίως τὴν χαιρεκακίαν μεθ' ἧς προσηρέθη πάντοτε εἰς τὰς συμφορὰς της. Ὅλη της ἡ συμπεριφορὰ ἀπέναντι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐμπνέεται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅτι οἱ Ἕλληνες

εἶναι φυσικὸν νὰ πάσχουν συμφορὰς ἀφοῦ δὲν ὑποτάσσονται εἰς τὸν θρησκευτικὸν Αὐτοκράτορα τῆς Ρώμης. Τὰ γεγονότα ἐν οἷς ἀπὸ τοῦ 1918 διαρρέει ὁ βίος τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους παρεῖχον θαυμαστὴν εὐκαιρίαν εἰς τὴν Ἑῤῥίαν Ἐδραν' νὰ ἀποδείξῃ τὰ γεγονότα τῶν σταυροφοριῶν, τῆς Φλωρεντίας, τῆς Ἀλώσεως, τὰ ἐπὶ Κυρίλλου Λονκάρεως καὶ τὰ τούτοις ὁμοια, ὡς ἔργα αἰῶνων ὀλιγώτερον τοῦ ἡμετέρου φωτεινῶν. Ἐν τούτοις μετὰ τὴν ἀνακωχὴν ἐπὶ τῇ πιθανότητι ἀποδόσεως τῆς Ἑῤῥίας Σοφίας εἰς τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν ἢ Ρώμη ἀντέστη καὶ διεκήρυσεν ὅτι προτιμᾷ νὰ μείνῃ ὁ περίφημος Ναὸς μᾶλλον εἰς χεῖρας τῶν Τούρκων. Ἐπὶ τῇ καταστροφῇ τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τῆς Θράκης μόνον ἢ Ρώμη ἐξ ὅλου τοῦ Χριστιανικοῦ κόσμου ἔμεινεν ἀδιάφορος, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ εὐχαρίστησις φανερὰ ἐξεδηλώθη εἰς τοὺς κύκλους Βατικανοῦ ὡς ἀνέγραψεν ἀνταπόκρισις ἐκ Ρώμης εἰς Παρισινὴν ἡμερηίδα. Ὡς συνέχεια τῆς καταστροφῆς ἤλθεν ἡ ἀξίωσις τῆς ἐκδιώξεως τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Θρόνου ἀπὸ τῆς Νέας Ρώμης. Εἰς τὴν γενικὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ Πατριαρχείου ἐνέργειαν δὲν ἠθέλησε νὰ μετὰσχη ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Παλαιᾶς Ρώμης.

Βεβαιώθητε ὅτι θὰ μοι ἦτο λίαν εὐχάριστον νὰ εὐρίσκωμαι μετὰ τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Ρώμης εἰς τὸς αὐτὰς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Καντερβουρίας φιλικὰς σχέσεις, ἀλλ' ἰδοὺ ὅτι ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Παλαιᾶς Ρώμης δὲν ἠθέλησεν εἰς τόσον ἐξαιρετικὰς συνθήκας διὰ τὴν Ἀνατολικὴν Χριστιανωσύνην νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ τίτλους ἐπὶ τῆς εὐγνωμοσύνης ποιμένων τε καὶ ποιμαινομένων τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι μόνον ἡ ἔλλειψις καταλλήλου ἀτμοσφαιράρας ἢ ἐμποδίζουσα τὴν ἐπιδίωξιν σχέσεων μετὰ τῆς Ρώμης· αὐτὴ ἔτι ἡ φύσις τῆς διαφορᾶς μεταξὺ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ τοῦ Καθολικισμοῦ ἰσχυρῶς ἀντιτίθεται. Μετὰ τῶν Ἀγγλικανῶν δυνάμεθα νὰ διαπραγματεύωμεθα ἐνωσιν ἐν πνεύματι ἰσότητος καὶ μὲ θεμέλιον τὰς αὐτὰς περὶ διοικήσεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἀρχάς. Ἡ μετὰ τῆς Ρώμης ὁμοῦς ἐνωσις σημαίνει ὑποταγὴν εἰς ἓνα Μονάρχην, ἰστάμενον ὑπεράνω πάντων ὅσον οὐδεὶς τύπος ἀπολυταρχισμοῦ ὅλων τῶν αἰῶνων ἐφαντάσθη τὸν Μονάρχην του. Ἐὰν οἱ φίλοι μας Γάλλοι κατώρθωσαν νὰ ἀποστρέφονται μὲν τὴν ἀπολυταρχίαν ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ νὰ συμβιβάζονται δὲ μετ' αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀλλ' εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ Ἑλληνος τοιαύτη ἐναντιότης ἀποβαίνει ἀφόρητος, ἢ, διὰ νὰ ἐκφραστῶ ἀκριβέστερον, τὴν Πολιτικὴν Μοναρχίαν ἀνέχεται καιρικῶς, ὁ Ἕλληνας, ἀποκρούει ὁμοῦς ἀπολύτως δι' ὅλης τῆς μακροαίωνος ἐθνικῆς ὑπάρξεως τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν. Εἰς τὴν Βυζαντινὴν περίοδον χιλίων ἐτῶν στέργει τὴν Μοναρχίαν ἐν τῇ πολιτικῇ του ζωῇ ὡς κληρονομίαν ἐκ Ρώμης πολῦτιμον τόσον διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτοῦ τούτου τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους ἐνότητά, ὅσον καὶ διὰ τὴν συγκράτησιν τοῦ Ἐθνικοῦ ψηφιδωτοῦ τῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας. Εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ὁμοῦς περίοδον ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ ἐδάφους ἐννοεῖ νὰ συνεχίσῃ, τελειοποιούμενον μάλιστα, τὸ ἀρχαῖον δημοκρατικὸν πνεῦμα τῶν «πόλεων» ἐξ ὧν ἀπαρτίζονται τὰ κατὰ τόπους «Κοινὰ»

ἐν δὲ Πελοποννήσῳ καὶ Αἰτωλικῶ αἱ «Συμπολιτεῖαι» τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ Ἀράτου, μὲ τὰς «Συνόδους» συγκροτούμενας ἐξ ἑνὸς ἀντιπροσώπου ἐξ ἑκάστης «πόλεως». Ἐν τῷ Ἐκκλησιαστικῷ πολιτεύματι ἡ «Πόλις» ἔγινεν «Ἐπισκοπή» καὶ ἡ «Σύνοδος τῶν ἀντιπροσώπων τῶν πόλεων» μετεσχηματίσθη εἰς τὴν «Σύνοδον τῶν Ἐπισκόπων» ὑπὸ Πρόεδρον τὸν τῆς Μητροπόλεως ἢ τὸν Μητροπολίτην. Πολλοὶ Μητροπολιτικαὶ Σύνοδοι ἀπήρτισαν τὸ Πατριαρχικὸν κλῆμα αἱ δὲ πέντε Πατριαρχικαὶ δικαιοδοσίαι ἀπήρτισαν τὴν ὅλην Ἐκκλησίαν μὲ ἀντίστοιχον Νομοθετικὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν «Οἰκουμενικὴν Σύνοδον». Τὸ δημοκρατικὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ Ἐδαγγελίου εὔρεν ἐν ταῖς Ἑλληνικαῖς χώραις τοὺς τύπους ὧν εἶχεν ἀνάγκη πρὸς ἐκδήλωσιν. Ὅπως ἡ «Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ» οὕτω καὶ ἡ «Σύνοδος τῶν ἀντιπροσώπων τῶν πόλεων» ἔγινεν («ἡ Σύνοδος τῶν Ἐπισκόπων»). Ὁ Πάπας ἠδύνατο νὰ εἶναι καὶ σήμερον ὅπως ἦτο μέχρι τοῦ 10ου αἰῶνος ὁ Πρόεδρος τῶν Προέδρων τῶν Αὐτοκεφάλων Ἐκκλησιῶν. Ἄλλ' ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Ρώμης ἀπορροφήθεις ἀπὸ τὰς αὐτοκρατορικὰς παραδόσεις τῆς ἑδρας του ἐξειλίχθη εἰς Θεοκρατικὸν Μονάρχην. Ἡ Ἀνατολὴ ὅμως ἄλλου οὔσα πνεύματος ἠρνήθη νὰ παραδεχθῆ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν ζωὴν τὸν ἀπολυταρχισμὸν καὶ ἐπιμένει ἔνδεκα ἤδη συναπτοὺς αἰῶνας εἰς τὴν στάσιν ταύτην παρὰ τὰς τρομακτικὰς θυσίας ἃς ἐστοίχισεν αὐτῇ ἢ ἐκ Δύσεως διὰ τὴν στάσιν τῆς ταύτης δυσμένεια.

Ἄλλ' ἐὰν εἰς χρόνους καθ' οὓς ὅλος ὁ ἄλλος κόσμος πλήν τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ δὲν ἦτο εἰς θέσιν νὰ ἐννοήσῃ τὴν ἀξίαν τῆς δημοκρατικῆς ἀρχῆς, ἢ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐκκλησία τόσον σταθερῶς ἐπέμενεν ἀποκρούουσα τὴν ἀπολυταρχίαν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησιαστικῇ συγκροτήσει ὡς τι δεινότερον τῆς σωματικῆς δουλείας, βέβαια θὰ ἦτο σφάλμα καὶ νὰ λεχθῆ μόνον μετὰ σοβαρότητος ὅτι εἶναι δυνατόν ἢ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐκκλησία νὰ προσχωρήσῃ εἰς τὴν Ρωμαϊκὴν ἀντίληψιν σήμερον ὅτε ὅλος ὁ κόσμος ἐνθουσιᾷ διὰ τὴν δημοκρατίαν καὶ τὴν δημοσπονδιακὴν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ομάδων ὀργάνωσιν.

Ἐγὼ φρονῶ καὶ νομίζω ὅτι εἶπον εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν Παρισίοις τὴν σκέψιν μου ὅτι τὸ ζήτημα τῆς ἐνώσεως τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν εὐρίσκεται εἰς χεῖρας τῆς Γαλλίας περισσότερον ἢ οἰασθήποτε ἄλλης χώρας. Ἀρκεῖ νὰ ἐνθυμηθῆ αὕτη τὸν Βοσσοῦέτον τῆς καὶ τὴν περιφημοῦ αὐτοῦ *Déclaration de l'assemblée du clergé de France*, τὴν ὅποιαν δυστυχῶς διὰ τὸν κόσμον κατέπτυσεν ὁ ἀπολυταρχισμὸς τοῦ Λουδοβίκου XIV, συμμάχου ἐν ἀπολυταρχισμῷ τῆς Ρώμης. Πότε θὰ ἐγερθῆ ὁ νέος Βοσσοῦέτος διὰ νὰ ὠθήσῃ τὴν Γαλλίαν εἰς τὴν ἀπόκτησιν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς τῆς ἀπὸ τῆς Μοναρχουμένης Ρώμης χειραφετήσεως; Ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη θὰ σημειώσῃ ἐν κοσμοϊστορικῶν γεγονόσ. Γαλλία εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἐκκλησιαστικῶς ἀνήκουσα καὶ τὸ συνοδικὸν σύστημα καὶ δημοσπονδιακὸν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς συγκροτήσεως ἀσπαζομένη, θὰ γίνῃ ἢ ἡγέτις τῆς λύσεως τοῦ προβλήματος τῆς ὀργανώσεως εἰς ἐνιαῖον σύνολον πάντων τῶν εἰς Χριστὸν ὡς υἱὸν Θεοῦ πιστευόντων. Θὰ ἴδουν τότε οἱ ἐν Γαλλίᾳ φίλοι τῶν

Ἑλλήνων μὲ πόσῃν προθυμίᾳ τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἡ ὄλη ὁμοσπονδία τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν θὰ ἐπιζητῶσι τὴν μετὰ τῆς Γαλλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὡς ἀδελφοῦ ἰσοτίμον ἔνωσιν. Τότε καὶ ὁ Πάπας θὰ ἐννοήσῃ ὅτι εἶναι καὶ ἀνθρωπινώτερον καὶ θεοφιλέστερον τὸ ἀξίωμα τοῦ «Πρώτου ἐν ἰσοίς», τοῦ Προέδρου δηλ. τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ὁμοσπονδίας μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἀξίωμα τὸ εἰδωλολατρικὸν τοῦ *Pontifex Maximus*.

Τὰς σκέψεις μου αὐτὰς θὰ χαρακτηρίσωσιν ἐν Γαλλίᾳ ἀσφαλῶς ὡς σχέδιον χιμαιρικόν. Ἐν τούτοις κατ' ἐμὲ εἶναι ὀλιγώτερον χιμαιρικὸν ἐκείνου τὸ ὁποῖον δι' ὑμῶν ἀτόθεν προτείνεται.

Μετ' ἀγάπης καὶ εὐχῶν ἐγκαρδίων
(ὕπ.) ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Μελέτιος

Ἐν Κων/πόλει τῇ 1 Μαρτίου 1923

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION
OF THE LETTER OF MELETIOS *

Constantinople 1 March 1923

To His Excellency, M. N. Politis, Prime Minister of Greece, our well beloved, grace and peace from God.

Dear friend,

Your letter of December 17/30 was belated in reaching my hands. I am belated therefore in reciprocating its warm wishes for the new year.

The contents of your letter other than your good wishes have engaged my attention not only to the point of view from which the note emanating from some members of the Relief Committee presided over by Cardinal Dubois discusses the question of the Union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, but also to that point of view in which after setting out in your letter its deliberations, your own wisdom concludes. The idea which serves as the basis of that memorandum concerning the great importance of the political consequences of Union is precisely that which brought the Emperor with his Court and the Patriarch with his Metropolitans to Florence on the eve of the Fall of the Empire. Under the power of that idea a fictitious Union was established through a common Liturgy celebrated in Saint Sophia on the 12/th December, 1452, at the time when Mohammed II had already started from A-

* Ed. Note—The translation which follows herein is based on that made by J. A. Douglas and later published in «The Christian East». Cf. reference below, p. 928 n. 6.

drianople for the capture of the Capital. But just as it is the case that the tragic position of the Greek Nation and Church were not strong enough to make the idea of Union with Rome acceptable to them, so is the case, and in an even greater degree, to-day. I am firmly convinced that as at the time of the capture the advocates of Union for political reasons increased the disaster through kindling religious passions, so now movement for Union with Rome would crown the national catastrophe, in result of the dissension which would again break out and before which that of the time of the Siege of Constantinople would pale. The phenomenon is not hard of explanation. The Greek Church, which even in the day of Basil the Great had resented 'the haughty brow' of the bishop of Rome, cannot pardon Rome the malicious satisfaction which she has always displayed at its misfortunes. The whole attitude of Rome towards the Greek Church breathes the fundamental conception that it is natural that the Greeks should suffer misfortune since they do not subject themselves to the religious Autocrat of Rome. The happenings in which the material life of the Greek Nation has been overwhelmed since 1918, afforded the Holy See an admirable opportunity of showing that the things done in the time of the Crusaders, of Florence, of the Capture, and of the Cyril Lukar, with others like them, were the deeds of ages less enlightened than our own.

But when there was a likelihood of the restoration of St. Sophia to the Greek Church, the Holy See opposed it and made it known that it preferred it to remain in the hands of the Turks. Of all the Christian world, Rome alone remained indifferent at the catastrophe which has befallen Asia and Thrace. More, according to the reports made to the Paris Press satisfaction was manifested at it in the circles of the Vatican. Further, as a consequence of that catastrophe a demand was made for the expulsion of the Oecumenical Throne from New Rome. The Bishop of Old Rome, however, would take no part in the general emotion or in the effort made for the Patriarchate. It would be a satisfaction indeed to me to find myself in the same friendly relations with the Bishop of Rome as I am with the Archbishop of Canterbury⁴, but I would ask

4. Meletios sent the following telegram to the Archbishop of Canterbury: 'It is announced to us from Lausanne that the demand for the expulsion of the Oecumenical Patriarchate has been defeated. Giving thanks to God the fountain of good we acknowledge also the debt which we owe to your Grace for the help which you afforded us in the establishing of justice. Receive our warm thanks'. G. K. Bell Randal Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, Oxford Uni-

you to mark that the Bishop of Old Rome has not willed such an understanding with Eastern Christianity as alone would enable him to win a title to the goodwill of the laity and clergy of the Eastern Church. Not only, however, is there lacking the mutual atmosphere for the pursuit of ties with Rome, but the nature of the great difference between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism forbids them. With the Anglicans we can treat of Union in a spirit of equality and on the same fundamental principles of Church polity. Union with Rome signifies subjection to a single Monarch to a degree which no Absolution in all the centuries has ever pictured its Autocrat. Our French friends may have succeeded in ridding themselves of Absolution in the state only to make terms with it in the Church; but to the nature of the Greek such an inconsistency is quite intolerable — or to express myself more clearly, the Greek at times bears with political, but through the age-long existence of his nation has always rejected Ecclesiastical absolute Monarchy. In the years of the Byzantine epoch, he cherished the monarchic principle in his political life as a precious inheritance from Rome for the sake of the Unity of the very Greek Nation itself and for the preservation of the national creation, (lit. mosaic), the Empire. But in the epoch it knew how to preserve in perfection in the ecclesiastical world the ancient democratic spirit of 'cities' which in some places constituted 'communities' — in the Peloponnese and Aetolia in the days of Aratos, 'confederations' — with representatives, one from each 'city' coming together to a 'synod.' In Ecclesiastical Polity the 'city' became the 'Diocese,' and the 'Synod' of the cities' representatives' was transformed into the 'Synod of the Bishops'. Further, since it was necessary that the particular Synods should be connected together, the Greater Synod, which is constituted from the many particular Synods, was fashioned. Thus we reach the highest unification of the whole Church on earth and the Oecumenical Synod sees the light. To apply ecclesiastical nomenclature to these units, the group of parishes makes up the Diocese; the group of Dioceses makes up the Metropolis; the group of Metropolies makes up the Patriarchate; and the Patriarchates united together the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church. The Pope can be today President of the Presidents of the Autocephalous Churches in the same way that the President of each particular Church is President of the Bishops around him. But, carried away by the imperial

versity Press, 1935, pp. 1102-1103; Methodios, Metropolitan of Axsum, *Οἱ Ἄγγλοι περὶ τοῦ Πατριάρχου Μελετίου καὶ τῶν σχέσεων αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, in «Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος» 53 (1971), p. 523.

traditions of Rome, the Bishop of Rome has been developed into a Theocratic Monarch. The East is of another spirit, and has refused to admit the monarchical conception into the life of the Church and has now maintained her stand for eleven successive centuries in spite of the appalling sacrifices which the hostility of the West has cost her.

If in those times in which all the rest of the world was not in a position to realize the value of the democratic conception, the Greek Church rejected Absolutism in the ecclesiastical system, as something more to be feared than bodily slavery, assuredly it would be a blunder that today when the whole world is enthusiastic for Democracy and federative organisation, serious mention should be made of the possibility that the Greek Church might yield to Roman propaganda.

France holds the problem of the Union of the Churches in her hands. It is sufficient to think of the great Bossuet⁵ and his celebrated «*Déclaration de l'assemblée du Clergé de France*»—which the Absolutism of Louis XIV, itself the blind tool of the absolutism of Rome, suppressed. When will a new Bossuet arise to impel France to win the emancipation of its ecclesiastical life from monarchical Rome? That day will indeed be notable in the history of the world. France thus belonging ecclesiastically to herself, and accepting the synodic and federative system of the Church, will become the pioneer in solving the problem of the organizing all believers in Christ as God's Son into a single organisation. Then the Greeks' friends in France will see how readily the Oecumenical Patriarchate with the whole Federation of Orthodox Churches will seek union with the French Church as with an honoured and equal sister. That done, the Bishop of the Roman Monarchy himself will then perceive that the rank of *primus inter pares*, i. e., of President of the Christian Federation, is more in accordance with human need and the Divine Will than the idolatrous rank of *Pontifex Maximus*.

These reflections of mine will be described in France as chimerical. None the less to me the suggestion made from that source through you is even more chimerical.

With love and heartfelt good wishes.⁶

5. E. K. Sanders, *Jacques Benigne Bossuet: A Study*, 1921.

6. Douglas Papers, *Lambeth Palace Library*; Compare also, J. A. Douglas, 'A letter of the late Patriarch Meletios on the Papacy' in «The Christian East», vol. XVI, No. 344, July-December 1936, pp. 73-78.