

The Church of Greece.

FOUR years ago, in view of the Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order, we gave a brief account of the Orthodox Church, which has such a great attraction for some members of the Church of England. Since then, the Lambeth Conference has drawn the two bodies closer. The appearance of a little book by the Great Archimandrite, who has quickly become at home in Bayswater, enables us to see that Church as it desires to present itself to Englishmen. While some of the fourteen allied churches are more important for their historic lineage than for the actual present, yet the deportation by the Turks of all Christians from their Asiatic territories has enhanced the population of Greece; and it is well to understand the position there.

The Hellenic Republic may have about seven million people, in 49,000 square miles; the area slightly less than England, the population slightly more than in Wales and Scotland. Practically all the people belong to the Church of Greece, which since 1850 has been acknowledged by the Ecumenical Patriarchate as independent. The relation of this Church to the State has often varied in detail, but the government is statutory, and all legislation is subject to confirmation or rejection in Parliament. There is constant administration by a Holy Synod, which meets thrice a week; the Archbishop of Athens presides, with four Metropolitans from old Greece, four from new Greece, and a representative of the government; election to this is annual. Every year the Synod receives from each Metropolitan a detailed report as to ordinations, new buildings, trials of clergy, parochial life, charities; and for this purpose the Metropolitan must in person visit each parish every year.

The Metropolitans therefore appear to be the key officers; there are 77 of them, besides 9 bishops; this is an interesting development of the ancient Greek city-independence, that bishops are almost extinct (for the only two on the mainland are assistants) and that nearly every town of the faintest importance has an archbishop. Each of these Metropolitans therefore has to supervise about 150,000 people in an area 25 miles square. Those of us who can learn from foreign experience, will wonder how ecclesiastical affairs would prosper in England if it consisted of dioceses the size of Hertfordshire, with half its population, all in one communion, with no dissenters. Evidently a General Superintendent in such an area could know the villages and the ministers very well. The

Metropolitans are paid from a General Ecclesiastical Treasury managed by a joint committee, much as Queen Anne's Bounty and other centralised funds of the Church of England are administered. Each Metropolitan must live in his diocese, leaving it only by special permission of the Synod.

Metropolitans apparently are all unmarried, though Dean Constantinides does not refer to this point. And apparently most are still selected from the monasteries. These have been investigated, and out of 540, 394 have been abolished, on the precedent set by Cardinal Wolsey in England, and carried out so thoroughly by Henry VIII. The figures given are not on the surface self-consistent; perhaps more have been founded since the abolition, for to-day there are over 250. All the estates of the suppressed monasteries were sold, and the proceeds were the nucleus of the General Ecclesiastical Treasury; to this is paid annually the surplus from each surviving monastery, after providing for upkeep of buildings and maintenance of the monks. No light is thrown on the education within the monasteries, but the training possible may be illustrated by the career of the present Archbishop of Athens. He had three years at the sacerdotal schools of Constantinople, two in Jerusalem and Smyrna, two at the university of Athens, four in Russian academies; he then was appointed professor in the theological school at Jerusalem, still a layman. This probably shows the system at its best, and many English bishops may envy such opportunities.

The parish clergy have very different training and careers. They apparently must be married, and if the old rule is still in force, they must retire when widowed, and may not re-marry. Their leading duties, as of old, are the administration of six out of the seven sacraments; marriage, baptism, chrism, the eucharist, penance, unction. But to these are now being added the conduct of Sunday-schools, and preaching. Therefore, sacerdotal schools to equip them are flourishing, and at Athens there is a Theological School within the University, while there are also eleven other Theological Colleges, some being on the islands. It is hoped that within twenty years there will be no new non-college men needed. At present there is strict supervision, both of men and of money; "offences of the diocesan clergy" are dealt with by a standing tribunal in each diocese, while each parish is responsible for all local expenditure.

Mount Athos is the most important centre of monastic life. Though politically it is part of the Hellenic Republic, yet in ecclesiastical matters it is subject only to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. There are 17 Greek monasteries

on it, a Russian, a Serbian, and a Bulgarian; all are governed by representatives who meet twice a year; no bishop may officiate without express leave from Constantinople.

Greeks abroad look up to Metropolitans in Vienna, London, Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Sydney, all subject to the Ecumenical Patriarch. The present holder of that office was educated at Philippopolis, Athens and Munich.

There is an earnest desire that the Church shall adjust itself even more fully to actual conditions in Greece. Professor Alivisatos brought together in Athens this January a congress of theologians, over which he presided. It was attended by the Minister of Education and Religious Worship; this may be read either as a survival of Byzantinism, or as a token that theologians are expected to deal with sociology as well as with dogmatics. Various measures of reform were discussed, and it was agreed that the parish clergy should be better trained and better paid, that their preaching should be more practical, their visitation more frequent, that superannuation pensions should be provided. It was also agreed that many parishes might be amalgamated, and many dioceses; but the reason was that not enough good men are available, and it is not said that the average parish or diocese is unwieldy; apparently Greeks are not heeding a vocation to the ministry, though the better financial suggestions may remedy this. The financial resources from monasteries should be re-arranged, and the first charges should no longer be the maintenance of buildings and support of the monks, but more practical ends; after the needs of the parish clergy are met, charitable purposes figure as the remainder objects. How far these theologians represent general opinion in lay and clerical circles we cannot tell, but the Minister may be encouraged by these voices within the Church to wide measures of reform.

In the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the following points are emphasized as unfamiliar to some Englishmen:— Holy Tradition is older than the Holy Scripture; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, not from the Son; Divine Grace has its source in the Church and is transmitted to us through the Sacraments; the Church, represented by all her bishops in a general council, is infallible; Apostolic Succession is fundamental to the Church; spiritual life is given in baptism; the eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice offered by the priest for all present and absent, the quick and the dead; the Mother of God, by His grace, never committed any actual sin, and was cleansed from original sin when Gabriel visited her, therefore her intercession is sought; veneration is given to the persons represented in ikons and relics.