

## **The Orthodox Church Tradition and the Missionary Task of Syndesmos.**

### **Introduction to the study group.**

4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Thessaloniki, Greece. 04/09-07/09 1958.

Mr. Jean Meyendorff

Missionary work is not strictly speaking an aim of SYNDESMOS, since it is not even mentioned in our Statutes. But mission is a consequence of unity. To be short, if there is one Truth we must be united in believing in this Truth and if there is One Truth we must let others know it and not keep selfishly to ourselves. The Apostles felt an urgent need to evangelise the world. The two things are unbreakably united.

In the West the urge for Missionary work was not created by evangelistic zeal only. It was part and parcel of the general national expansion and colonial policy of the European nations, encouraged and supported in many ways by the state. This partly accounts for the lack of Orthodox missions in modern times, since most Orthodox people had hardly become independent, not to speak of colonial expansion and missions.

Nevertheless, in spite of all handicaps, the Orthodox Church has always carried out missions and is at present doing so. There are three Orthodox missionary Churches: In Japan, Korea and Uganda. These people and perhaps many more will be converted *for the Church*. Therefore this is our chance to serve the Church. All initiative of course belongs and will come from the Church; but at present we are the only existing Pan-Orthodox body a manifestation of the spirit of unity, which is the source of missions. We are left no choice, we must simply do it.

These Churches need both men and material help, but essentially and mainly devoted men. Not necessarily theologians and preachers but doctors and social workers and any inspired men. What can we do to meet this need of our brethren? I suggest that we try to form a missionary Society.