

Nineteenth Gathering for Orthodox Awareness

*Sunday of Orthodoxy
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The Light of Orthodoxy and the Darkness of Ecumenism¹

*† Bishop Klemes of Gardikion
Secretary of the Holy Synod in Resistance*

Right Reverend Holy Hierarchs;
Reverend Fathers and Mothers;
Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

I

“There is no communion between light and darkness”

With the blessing of our ailing Metropolitan and Father Cyprian, and at the behest of our Standing Holy Synod, I enter with devout fear into the light of pristine Orthodoxy on the day of its splendid triumph over heresies. The Light of Orthodoxy is none other than the Light of Christ, which—as we exclaim at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts—“shineth upon all”! In the Hymns of Light (Φωταγωγικά) we seek Divine illumination from the Source of Light: “As Thou art the Light, O Christ, illumine me



¹ A presentation on the occasion of the celebration of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 2012, by the Holy Synod in Resistance at the Holy Convent of St. Paraskeve, Archarnai, Attica. The text here is published in its entirety, expanded and with footnotes.

in Thee, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, and save me.”²

“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”³ This is Divine Light, true and uncreated, joyous Light, Grace and Truth, which came and manifested itself in Christ, in order to clothe us in the primal raiment of incorruptibility. It is the Light of the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and Pentecost, the eschatological Light of Life that knows no evening. Communion with the Divine Light presupposes that our eyes are open to faith and virtue. The soul of a man should not be apportioned or divided between Truth and error, between virtue and sin. At a moral level, we cannot perform at the same time deeds of light and deeds of darkness, nor can we serve “two masters.”⁴ Conversely, at the level of faith, it is not possible for us to become “unequally yoked,”⁵ that is, to form close bonds with heretics—at an ecclesiastical level, of course, not at a social level. Dialogue in good faith is not forbidden, but confusion and admixture are to be rejected.

“What communion hath light with darkness?”⁶ asks the Holy Apostle Paul. And Theodore the Studite, the Holy Confessor of the Light of Truth, responds decisively: “There is no communion between light and darkness!”⁷

It is in Holy Orthodoxy that the “marvellous” light of God⁸ resides and is poured forth and diffused, and those who are truly baptized and illumined in an Orthodox manner become “the light of the world”⁹ and “sons of light,”¹⁰ and walk in truth and love “as children of light.”¹¹ And when these same people fall, or when they call others into “the inheritance of the saints in light,”¹² they realize that there is no other path [forward] than repentance. “For repentance,” says St. Symeon, the New Theologian of the Divine Light, “is a door

² *Great Horologion*, Service of Orthros, Hymn of Light in the Plagal of the Fourth Tone.

³ I St. John 1:5.

⁴ St. Matthew 6:24.

⁵ II Corinthians 6:14.

⁶ II Corinthians 6:14.

⁷ “Epistles,” Bk. II.197, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xcix, col. 1597b.

⁸ I St. Peter 2:9.

⁹ St. Matthew 5:14.

¹⁰ St. Luke 16:8; St. John 12:36.

¹¹ Ephesians 5:8; I Thessalonians 5:5.

¹² Colossians 1:12.

that leads out of darkness and into the light. Therefore, he who has not entered into the light has not properly passed through the door of repentance; for, if he had passed through it, he would have come into the light.”¹³

Faithful and prudent servants of Christ keep the flame of the Grace of Christ alight in their souls, in love and thanksgiving, and await the Bridegroom of the Church with vigilance and attention. This immaterial and Divine Fire enlightens souls, but it also tests them. It is truly “the power of resurrection and the effectual working of immortality,” according to St. Macarios of Egypt,¹⁴ but it is also “the banishment of demons and the destruction of sin.” Those who are illumined in Orthodox fashion it attracts, warms, and strengthens, whereas those impenitently held captive in the “darkening”¹⁵ of sin, error, and heresy it repudiates, puts to shame, and dismisses.

On the night of Holy Pascha, in our compunctiously darkened Churches, shortly before the proclamation of the Resurrectional acclamation, “Christ is Risen; Indeed, He is Risen!” the serving Priest comes out of the Altar with his lit torch, in order to impart the Divine Light, chanting majestically and joyously: “Come, receive the Light, from the unwaning light and glorify Christ, Who is risen from the dead!” An inexpressible joy and emotion then permeates the entire being of the worshippers of Christ’s glorious Resurrection. And, as we all know, every year the Conqueror of death and the Destroyer of Hades, our Lord and God, works the most radiant miracle of the manifestation of the Holy Fire as early as noon on Great Saturday, at the All-Holy Sepulchre in the Church of the Resurrection in the Holy City of Jerusalem. All who have been present at this sacred rite know from experience the indescribable culmination of their prayerful anticipation, as well as the fulfillment of this Divine Mystery, which astounds and wondrously transforms the participant. It has always constituted not only the triumph of the Resurrection of our Lord, but also the boast of the Orthodox and the glory of our

¹³ “Catechesis xxviii,” §7, in *Symeon le Nouveau Théologien*, *Catéchèses* 23-34 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965), p. 138.

¹⁴ “Spiritual Homily xxv,” §10, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxiv, col. 673d.

¹⁵ Niketas Stethatos, “Concerning the Heavenly and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,” §30, in *Μυστικά Συγγράμματα* (Mystical Writings), ed. Panagiotes Chrestou (Thessalonike: 1957), p. 75.

Faith against unbelievers, those of other religions, and the heterodox. The Lord gives the Holy Light to the Orthodox, because they alone uphold and behold, liturgically and spiritually, the True Light, and not to the misbelievers, who have distorted the Truth of the revealed Faith that has been handed down to us and who are trapped on gloomy paths that lead nowhere.

It appears, however, that the heretical Latins have not taken this into serious consideration, though they *have* learned from events not to tempt the Lord! We pray sincerely that the ecumenists of our day might learn and understand this, so as to emerge from their befuddlement and return in repentance to the Divine Light of the Truth, in order that we might verily celebrate a new Victory of Orthodoxy!

II

The Holy Light did not appear when the Latins controlled the Holy Sepulchre

We find ourselves in June of 1099, when some thousands of the Pope's Crusaders, during their First Crusade for the liberation, as they alleged, of the Holy Places from the Muslim infidels, arrived outside the walls of Jerusalem. After a siege of forty days, on July 15, they entered the Holy City and indulged in savage slaughter of the Muslims. As for the Jews, they burned them alive in their synagogue.¹⁶ After three days of appalling bloodshed, in which the blood reached as far as the bridles of their horses, the Crusaders remembered to go to the Church of the Resurrection—oh, the tragic irony!—to thank the Lord of love and charity for their success! So great was the benightedness and such was the blindness of those men, who, although they bore on their persons the emblem of the Cross, put everyone to the ruthless terror of the sword. In reality, however, they were “enemies of the Cross,”¹⁷ crude and idolatrous lackeys of

¹⁶ Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, *Ιστορία της Εκκλησίας Ιεροσολύμων* (History of the Church of Jerusalem) (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis P. Pournara, 2010), pp. 415-416. See also the lengthy and analytical presentation, fully documented, in the excellent study by Charis K. Skaralakides, *Άγιον Φῶς – Τὸ Θαῦμα τοῦ Μεγάλου Σαββάτου στὸν Τάφο τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Σαράντα Δύο Ἱστορικές Μαρτυρίες (9ος-16ο αἰ.)* (The Holy Light: The Miracle of Great Saturday at the Sepulchre of Christ: Forty-Two Historical Testimonies [9th-16th Centuries]) (n.p.: Ekdoseis “Elaia,” 2010), pp. 107-110.

¹⁷ Cf. Philippians 3:18.

a heretical man, the haughty Pope of Rome, who had deviated from Orthodoxy and who desired to set his throne “above the stars.”¹⁸

These new and cruel conquerors had not, in essence, come to liberate the Holy Places and to entrust them to the true and untrammelled worship of God; they had invaded Jerusalem in order to impose their heresy, hateful to God, upon the Holy Land. Thus, although the canonical Patriarch of Jerusalem, Symeon II, who was in exile in Cyprus,¹⁹ was still alive, they proceeded wholly uncanonically and unlawfully to the election and installation of a Latin pseudo-patriarch of Jerusalem, Arnulf of Chocques, something which truly caused a shock (!), since this polemarch of the Crusader army was not even a subdeacon and led such a prodigal life that vulgar songs were sung about him!

A public outcry forced the administration of the then newly established Latin Kingdom to replace Arnulf with the Papal legate, Archbishop Daimbert of Pisa, who had arrived in December of 1099. He arrived in the Holy Land with a fleet of one hundred and twenty ships, having previously passed through the Ionian Islands and wrought dreadful acts of pillage. Daimbert, who had in reality been elected Archbishop by simony and had even received confirmation from the Pope of Rome,²⁰ immediately imposed restrictions on the Orthodox guardians of the Holy Shrines.²¹

Thus it was that, on Great Saturday of 1100, Daimbert was the first Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to preside over the traditional ceremony of the Holy Light. However, for the first time in history the

¹⁸ St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, *Ακολουθία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μάρκου Εὐγενικοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Ἐφέσου* (Service of Our Holy Father Mark Evgenikos, Archbishop of Ephesus), third Sticheron at the Praises (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 2010), p. 34.

¹⁹ Various Western historians assert, without any evidence, that Patriarch Symeon II reposed in 1099, shortly before the Crusaders captured Jerusalem (see Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955], p. 87), in order to justify the election of a Latin pseudo-Patriarch, but this is completely untrue (see the well-documented rebuttal in Papadopoulos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, pp. 417-418). In fact, Patriarch Symeon died only in 1106. The aforementioned work by the renowned Byzantinist Steven Runciman, apart from some erroneous comments and appraisals regarding the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, is an insightful and interesting presentation of the relations between East and West, as these developed during the period of the Crusades.

²⁰ Papadopoulos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, p. 418.

²¹ Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, pp. 87-88.

Holy Light did not appear, despite the fact that the ceremony went on for many hours. The Latin clergy then urged the Crusaders to repent and confess their misdeeds. It was finally after nightfall, as one historian relates, that the Holy Light appeared. The following year, 1101, the Holy Light did not appear at all as long as the Latins were present.²²

But before we see what happened in 1101, we wish to emphasize that the failure of the Holy Light to appear on Great Saturday in 1100 was not due simply to the moral unworthiness of the Crusaders, or at least was not due solely and primarily to this. For the appearance of the Holy Light—as is the case, moreover, with every Mystery and rite—does not depend on the moral quality and worthiness or unworthiness of the celebrant. The Mystery is celebrated objectively, whereas the subjectively unworthy celebrant is chastised. The non-appearance of the Light was due first and foremost to the falling away of the Papists from the right Faith. The fact that the Holy Light appeared only at night, and absent any specific account of a liturgical context for its appearance, demonstrates the Divine condescension of the Thrice-Radiant Godhead in assurance of the light-bearing Resurrection, and not in validation and confirmation of the faith of the Latin conquerors. The problem was not rectified by the confession of the sinful Crusaders but by the repentance of the heretical Latins, or at least by their departure from the site where the miracle occurred.

On Great Saturday of 1101, therefore, as seven non-Orthodox chroniclers (four French, one German, one English, and one Armenian) unerringly describe it for us,²³ the Latin Patriarch Daimbert, with an innumerable crowd, again presided over the ceremony for the appearance and distribution of the Holy Light at the All-Holy Sepulchre. However, the hour of its manifestation passed by and the blessing of Heaven did not descend. The Latins redoubled their prayers, night fell, and yet the Holy Light failed to materialize, and thus their souls were overcome by the darkness of despair. The All-Holy Sepulchre was locked, and the following day, the morning of

²² Skarlakides, *Ἁγίον Φῶς*, pp. 111-112.

²³ For an extended discussion of the testimonies and the seven chroniclers, see Skarlakides, *Ἁγίον Φῶς*, pp. 112-150.

Pascha, after Daimbert had gone to the All-Holy Sepulchre and ascertained that the Holy Light had not appeared, he addressed the despairing people, in the presence of the envoy of the Roman Curia, Cardinal Maurice of Porto. In his speech, he attempted to console his flock with the artless excuse that they should not be distressed over the non-fulfillment of the miracle, but should, on the contrary, rejoice: for the miracle occurred when the Holy City was in the hands of the infidels, whereas, now that it was in the hands of the Christians, it was no longer needed!²⁴ Daimbert then headed a procession of Latins to the shrine of the Dome of the Rock, on the site of the former Temple of Solomon, which the Crusaders had turned into a Christian Church.

At that time, before the locked Edicule (Κουβούκλιον) of the All-Holy Sepulchre, the keys of which Daimbert alone possessed, the Greek and Syrian Orthodox began to process around it with ardent prayers, accompanied by dirges and lamentations. While this was going on, one of the Syrians observed through an aperture that a vigil lamp had been miraculously lit inside the All-Holy Sepulchre, and the lamentation was then transformed into cries of joy and thanksgiving. They immediately hastened to notify the Latin Patriarch to come and open the All-Holy Sepulchre for the distribution of the Holy Light. In the meantime, however, all present with awe and astonishment saw the vigil lamps that hung outside the Sepulchre lighting spontaneously and miraculously, one after the other in succession! Sixteen lamps were lit, or fifty, according to some, or all of them, according to others.²⁵

This Divine event filled the Orthodox with joy and enthusiasm and put to shame the misbelievers, who came and endeavored to show their satisfaction, even though the downfall of their prestige and the ignominy of their corrupt régime were obvious and indisputable to all.

For this reason, several months later the Latin authorities dismissed and banished Daimbert, as the supposed cause of the fiasco, and installed Evremar in his place. But the most important point

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132; Παπαδόπουλος, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, pp. 426-427; Ioanna Tsekoura, *Τὸ Ἅγιον Φῶς στὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα* (The Holy Light in Jerusalem) (Lamia: 1987), pp. 85-86.

was that the Latins seriously took “into consideration the lesson”²⁶ of what had happened and, unable to endure any new public disgrace, handed the keys of the All-Holy Sepulchre over to the Greek Orthodox, decreeing that the Abbot of the Lavra of St. Sabbas the Sanctified preside over the rite of the Holy Fire each year. The Abbot at that time was the *Locum Tenens* of the exiled canonical Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem.

III

The Anti-Papist Tradition in the Holy Land

About six years later, in 1107, the Russian Abbot Daniel, who was present at the ceremony of the Holy Light, confirmed that, when the Holy Light made its majestic appearance, it miraculously lighted the lamps of the Orthodox Greeks and Russians, which were on the tombstone of the All-Holy Sepulchre, but not those of the Latins, which were hanging above or outside it!²⁷

The Papists, unable to endure the shame of God’s turning away from them, instead of coming “to themselves”²⁸ and repenting, so as not to walk “in darkness” but to have “the light of life,”²⁹ became so hardened and benighted that, through a bull issued by Pope Gregory IX in 1238, they disavowed the validity of the miracle of the Holy Light and strictly forbade their flock to participate in or attend the ceremony!³⁰

A little earlier, however, that same Pope did something equally dreadful and blasphemous. Emperor Frederick II of Germany, who had led the Fifth Crusade, succeeded, through a treaty concluded in 1229 with Sultan al-Kāmil of Egypt, in gaining suzerainty over Jerusalem, where he crowned himself and then returned to his own country. However, Pope Gregory IX, who was a mortal enemy of Frederick, was so enraged by this act that he unleashed the terri-

²⁶ Skarlakides, *Άγιον Φῶς*, p. 152; cf. Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), Vol. II, p. 85.

²⁷ Skarlakides, *Άγιον Φῶς*, p. 155; Papadopoulos, *Ιστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, pp. 428-429.

²⁸ Cf. St. Luke 15:17.

²⁹ St. John 8:12.

³⁰ Skarlakides, *Άγιον Φῶς*, p. 203.

ble punishment of interdict against the Holy City of Jerusalem and against the All-Holy Sepulchre! “Thus, Papal arrogance reached even as far as excommunicating the Holy Sepulchre,”³¹ notes one Church historian in amazement.

As one might have expected, there was a resplendent tradition of anti-Latinism in the Holy Land in the ensuing centuries, and all the more because the aggressiveness and rapacity of the Papists was always demonstrable and baleful.

Thus, in the period after the false union of Lyon in 1274, the confessional stand of the illustrious Patriarch Gregory I is worthy of especial mention. In 1281, the Patriarch of the Holy City issued a refutation, composed in his name by the distinguished Orthodox theologian George Moschabar, entitled: “Refutatory Chapters Against the Doctrines and Writings of Bekkos.” Therein “the spurious and corrupt doctrines and writings of the present-day heretics [Latins and the Latin-minded]” are refuted, “lest the souls of those who are more naïve be deceived through such distorted doctrines and writings and be seduced into impiety.”³² Just one year later, in 1282, the Latin-minded Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos died, the heretical Patriarch John Bekkos was deposed, and the false union was condemned.

Also noteworthy is the dissolution of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which the Crusaders had established—with Papal approval, of course. When the Saracens recaptured the Holy Places, in May of 1291 they entered Acre (Ptolemaïs) in Palestine, and the few Crusaders who remained there with the Latin Patriarch Nicholas set out on the sea in a skiff in order to save themselves. However, the skiff capsized owing to the haste of its eminent passengers, and the Latin Patriarch drowned together with the rest.³³

The Crusades began, supposedly, with a good purpose, but one which was accomplished in barbarous manner, and thus they turned

³¹ Papadopoulos, *Ιστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, p. 456.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 452-453. George Moschabar, a staunch opponent of Church union, flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century. In addition to the refutation of Bekkos cited in the body of this lecture, he wrote a “Dialogue with a Dominican on the Procession of the Holy Spirit.” An extract from the former was printed by Andronikos Demetrakopoulos in his *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἑλλάς* (Orthodox Greece) (Leipzig: Typois Metzger kai Wittig, 1872), pp. 60-62. The latter, unfortunately, remains unpublished—TRANS.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

out to be a veritable scourge for the East and proved “most detrimental” to the Orthodox Church and people. The warfare waged by the Crusaders, as the great Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem observes, “was called ‘sacred’ in the way that leprosy is called the ‘sacred disease.’”³⁴ It is certain that, had the Crusaders prevailed, Orthodoxy would have disappeared in the cradle of Christianity.

During those terrible years, the Church of Jerusalem remained in the vanguard of the struggle for Orthodoxy. Thus, a Synod in Jerusalem in 1443, in the presence of Patriarchs Joachim of the Holy City, Philotheos of Alexandria, and Dorotheos II of Antioch, condemned the treacherous unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), at which, as we well know, St. Mark Evgenikos of Ephesus, the “Atlas of Orthodoxy,” worthily represented the three aforementioned Eastern Thrones. The Synod of Jerusalem denounced the proceedings at Ferrara-Florence as “abominable,” because its decisions were in favor of Papism: that is, the addition to the Symbol of Faith (the *Filioque* clause), the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, the commemoration of the Pope, and all of the other violations of the Canons. Likewise, the Synod of Jerusalem turned against the “vile metropolises” and “loathsome episcopacies” promoted and imposed by the Latin-minded Patriarch Metrophanes II of Constantinople for the error, corruption, and scandals that they spread. The verdict against those “corruptors” was that they be “suspended and disbarred” (ἀργοὶ καὶ ἀνίεροι) from every sacerdotal function and ecclesiastical standing “until the true Faith be examined in common and universally”; in the event that they were defiant, the Synod judged that they be “excommunicated, sundered, and estranged from the Holy Trinity.”³⁵

Another miracle involving the repudiation of heretics occurred in 1579, when the Armenians bribed the Ottomans to ensure that it was they who would bring forth the Holy Light. The banished Orthodox had assembled outside, in the courtyard of the Church of the Resurrection before the Holy Portal. Even as the Armenians were

³⁴ Dositheos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, *Δωδεκάβιβλος* (Bucharest: 1715), p. 788.

³⁵ Papadopoulos, *Ιστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, pp. 483-485. The Synod in question, we might add, characterized Patriarch Metrophanes, in a play on words, as “Μητροφόνος” (“Mother-slayer”), on ground that he had uncanonically seized the throne of Constantinople! See Meletios, Metropolitan of Athens, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία* (Church History) (Vienna: Jozef Baumeister, 1784), Vol. III, p. 300—TRANS.

processing inside the Church in order to attain their desire, the Orthodox, with the then Patriarch Sophronios IV, were weeping and praying for consolation from on high. At that moment a loud noise was heard, there was a violent gust of wind, and the middle column of the left doorpost of the Holy Portal was split, and from it the Holy Light issued forth for the Orthodox—a miracle which is attested to this day!³⁶

In this brief treatment of the Confession of the Faith, it would be an omission for us not to mention the illustrious and heroic Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem (1669-1707), who “on account of his theological activity was described as the ‘teacher and wise leader of the whole body of the Orthodox,’ surpassing all of his contemporaries in the breadth of his learning, his boundless zeal for Orthodoxy, and his fervent faith in God. He had in his hands, so to speak, the direction of the life of the entire Orthodox Church,” since, *inter alia*, he tirelessly “warred against Latin and Protestant influence and strove to preserve the integrity of Orthodoxy.”³⁷

When, for example, in 1689 the Ottoman Empire was compelled, for political reasons, under pressure from Austria and France, to cede a significant number of the Shrines in the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, and also in Bethlehem, to the Latins, the latter committed acts of vandalism and sacrilege and persecuted the Orthodox; in particular, in order to intimidate the Orthodox, they disseminated the rumor that Patriarch Dositheos, who was at that time in Constantinople, had been hanged. When he heard of all these tragic events, the holy Dositheos hastened first of all to deny the malicious rumor concerning his alleged hanging and severely censured the ridiculous notion of the Latins that they had acquired the Shrines by reason of the correctness of their faith. The holy Confessor Dositheos affirmed that the Latins had always been “schismatics and chief among the heretics” and openly and fearless-

³⁶ Andreas Papamoyse Zakos, *Μέγας Ὁδηγὸς τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἁγίᾳ Γῆ Ἱερασμιῶν Προσκυνημάτων τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ* (Great Guide to the Venerable Christian Shrines in the Holy Land) (Cyprus: Astromerites, 1970), p. 283; Archimandrite Panteleimon D. Poulos, *Εὐλαβικὸ Προσκύνημα στὴν Ἁγία Γῆ καὶ τὸ Θεοβάδιστο Ὄρος Σινᾶ* (A Pious Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Mount Sinai, Where God Walked) (Athens: 2008), p. 34; Tsekoura, *Τὸ Ἅγιον Φῶς στὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα*, pp. 86-87.

³⁷ Papadopoulos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, pp. 598-599.

ly proclaimed: “As for the Latins, we hold, as did our fathers, that in every time, in every person, and in every place they are heretics and outcasts from the Holy Orthodox Church. The Latins are deranged in supposing that they are Orthodox because they have seized some walls.”³⁸

Also worthy of note is the fact that Patriarch Parthenios of Jerusalem took part, in 1755, in a Synod in Constantinople comprising the Orthodox Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem (the Patriarch of Antioch was away in Russia on a fundraising mission), which decided that the Latins and the other heretics should be baptized in a canonical and Orthodox manner when coming to Orthodoxy, being viewed, according to exactitude (κατ’ ἀκρίβειαν), as “unhallowed and unbaptized.”³⁹

The same Patriarch Parthenios also took part in repulsing the Uniatism that had at that period been propagated in Syria, “aiding Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch and condemning the Papist ‘antipatriarchs’ of Antioch.”⁴⁰

Our discussion of the Resurrectional Holy Light of the All-Holy Sepulchre and of the confutation of the Papists, who in their heretical madness reached the unbelievably blasphemous point of denying the miracle itself, brings us directly to the connection between this issue and deviation of the Latins from the Festal Calendar. Their alienation from the Illuminating and Life-Creating Holy Spirit, from the Body of the Church, and also from the Life-Giving and All-Holy Sepulchre of our Lord, led them to a new method of calculating the Feast of Pascha, supposedly for the sake of achieving astronomical accuracy, through the innovation of their notorious calendar reform in 1582, under Pope Gregory XIII. In this way, of their own accord they became visibly estranged from the Feast of Pascha with regard to the Festal Calendar, since they could no longer celebrate together with the Orthodox on the actual day of Pascha. Thus, they exiled

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 628-630.

³⁹ For the text of this decree (Ἔπος), see *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, ed. J.-B. Martin and L. Petit, Vol. xxxviii (Paris: Expensis Huberti Welter, 1907), cols. 617c-621a. For an English translation, see *I Confess One Baptism...*, by Protopresbyter George Metallinos, trans. Priestmonk Seraphim (Holy Mountain: St. Paul’s Monastery, 1994), pp. 133-136—TRANS.

⁴⁰ Papadopoulos, *Ιστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων*, p. 695.

themselves to a “far country,” sitting in the shadow of death, not allowing the Light of the Resurrection to approach them or the Risen Christ to shine upon them with the radiance of His Divine Glory,⁴¹ that they might awake from the sleep of heresy and apostasy. However, repentance and resurrection from the dead are required for the heroic and salvific act of arising, in order that there might be “joy”⁴² in Heaven and on earth. Persistence in heresy is a sin: “He who is unrepentant sins, since he does not repent.”⁴³

IV

Falling away from the Truth means falling away from Grace

The Holy Light, which appears miraculously at the All-Holy Sepulchre and lights the vigil lamps and the candles, being diffused throughout that sacred place at noon on Great Saturday every year, undoubtedly has its provenance in the Uncreated Grace and Energy of God. However, since it is a perceptible and created product of Grace, we cannot call it Uncreated, even though it is accompanied by miraculous spiritual phenomena (it does not burn during the initial moments, does not start any fire, and brings about changes in people’s souls, etc.). For the Uncreated Light is not something perceptible or circumscribed, but is noetic and beyond comprehension; it is beginningless, changeless, and endless; it illumines the mind of man by the power of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁴ and consequently transcends the

⁴¹ Cf. Ephesians 5:14.

⁴² St. Luke 15:7, 10.

⁴³ St. Symeon the New Theologian, “Catechesis xxviii,” §7, p. 138.

⁴⁴ Metropolitan Hierotheos of Navpaktos and Hagios Blasios, “Τὸ ἅγιον Φῶς καὶ ἡ μητέρα τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν” (The Holy Light and the Mother of the Churches), *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση*, No. 63 (April 2001). Regarding the non-perceptible nature of Uncreated Light, see Iakovos Potamianos, *Τὸ Φῶς στὴ Βυζαντινὴ Ἐκκλησία* (Light in the Byzantine Church) (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, 2000), pp. 62, 70.

• According to the great theologian of the Uncreated Light, St. Gregory Palamas, all such things that occur in the ontological realm are not products of nature, nor do they arise from some deficiency, but on account of their superiority; they are all spiritual, but not uncreated: “Therefore, the Resurrection of the Lord is spiritual, as the Golden-mouthed Father says, but resurrection is not uncreated, nor is the very act of resurrecting; for it is the resurrection of a fallen creature, which is the same as to say a recreation and a refashioning. Such are the new creation, the new man, and the new and pure heart.... [Everything] that is inf-

senses and the intellect. “It is immaterial and is not apprehended by the senses.”⁴⁵

If, however, the Latins were not, and are not, vouchsafed the miracle of the created Holy Light of the All-Holy Sepulchre, all the more are they, and do they remain, of their own will without a share in the Uncreated Light of Grace. For their philosophical scholasticism is incompatible with any acknowledgment that the Divine Energies of the Trihypostatic Godhead are Uncreated, and in essence they reject the possibility of conscious communion with God.⁴⁶ For this reason they have formed different conceptions of man’s ultimate destiny and of his blessedness, salvation, and deification. If man does not truly commune with the eternal and supratemporal Light of God, which shone at the Divine Transfiguration and was given in the form of fiery tongues at Pentecost, then he remains truly unredeemed within a created and closed this-worldly reality; or he thinks, erroneously, that he can see, albeit in the future, the absolutely inaccessible and imparticipable Essence of God! These errors and false teachings constitute blasphemies, and heresies have a direct impact on salvation. Falling away from the right Faith of the Church and the distortion of revealed Truth lead to a falling away from the Church and from sanctifying Divine Grace.⁴⁷ Papism became a dead body, and the pure in heart among the Orthodox recognized experientially that in its churches “*there was no descent of the fire of the Holy Spirit; that is*

fably accomplished by God is spiritual, but not everything [that He brings about] is uncreated.” Spiritual things are expressed “perceptibly” and are subject to the “perceptual faculty,” which is unable to apprehend not only things that transcend the mind, but even things that transcend the senses, that is, noetic realities. “Uncreated things are beyond the mind, and those who are united to these things are united to a higher power which surpasses the nature of the mind, according to the great Dionysios” (*Fifth Refutatory Discourse Against Akindynos*, ch. 23, §§87, 88, 89, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Ἄπαντα τὰ Ἔργα*, Vol. VI, Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας [Thessalonike: Paterikai Ekdoseis “Gregorios ho Palamas,” 1987], pp. 252, 254, 256). See also St. Dionysios the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, ch. VII.1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. III, col. 865c—TRANS.

⁴⁵ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), p. 221.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Archimandrite George Kapsanes, “Ορθόδοξος Παράδοσις και Παπισμός” (Orthodox Tradition and Papism), *Ορθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 332 (November 10, 1978).

⁴⁷ For an analysis of what it means to fall away from the Body of the Church, see “On the Status of Uncondemned Heretics,” <http://hsir.org/p/th>.

to say, that in the Latin Church the bread was not transformed into the Body of Christ nor the wine into [the] Blood” of Christ.⁴⁸

In a more practical vein, let us mention two relevant and almost contemporary examples, which demonstrate the spiritual deadness of the Latins.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, it so happened that in a Greek Orthodox monastery on an island in the Cyclades the Orthodox Metropolitan of the island was present together with the Roman Catholic bishop of that region. While they were sitting on a balcony in the monastery, they saw one of the brothers carrying a sack of manure on his shoulders for the monastery garden. When the Catholic bishop learned that the one carrying the sack was a Hieromonk of the monastery, he expressed his disgust and perplexity as to how it was possible, after such filthy work, for this Hieromonk to celebrate the Divine Mysteries. Although the Orthodox Hierarch assured him that this work did not cause the Hieromonk any defilement of soul or body, the Latin prelate persisted in his objections. The Orthodox Hierarch then asked the Latin prelate if he would be willing to test which man was well-pleasing in the sight of God: the Orthodox Hieromonk who engaged in arduous and grimy toil or the well-dressed Papist bishop. The latter agreed to this, and the Hierarch proposed that he summon the Hieromonk and, after he had washed himself well, that he celebrate the Small Blessing of the Waters. The Latin bishop would then also perform a Blessing of the Waters, and the water blessed by each man would be kept in sealed containers. After the passage of a year, they would be unsealed, so that it might be evident which quantity of water was blessed and therefore acceptable before God. And indeed, after the respective Blessings of the Waters had been performed, the flasks were placed, well-sealed, in a special box. After a year had elapsed, in the presence of the Orthodox Metropolitan, the Abbot and the Brothers of the monastery, and also of the Roman Catholic bishop and his retinue, the flasks were unsealed and opened, and all beheld quite clearly that the water blessed by the Orthodox Hieromonk was very limpid and fragrant, whereas that blessed by the Latin bishop was turbid, murky,

⁴⁸ “The Orthodox Views of His Grace, Bishop Daniel of Budapest,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. xv, Nos. 2-3 (1998), p. 13.

and smelled like stagnant water!⁴⁹

In another instance, a Priest explained, *inter alia*, to a young man who had gone to venerate the Relics of St. Gerasimos on Kephallenia and had seen awesome miracles wrought through demoniacs, which revealed the hidden sins of other pilgrims, that demoniacs cannot reveal anything to one who has repented of his sins and confessed them sincerely. In that case, they are “blocked.” However, in one case—the Priest continued—he had got to know two Italian Roman Catholics who admitted that a demoniac on Zakynthos revealed to them all that they had confessed to their own Catholic priest. And this was because they were in essence unconfessed. The demoniac was a Greek and did not know Italian, and yet he revealed to the Italians in flawless Italian sins which they had supposedly confessed.⁵⁰

In our estimation, these true testimonies corroborate the age-old view of the Orthodox that the Latins have fallen away from the Grace of God and that they are not, and do not constitute, the Church of God.

When, for example, in the twelfth century Patriarch Mark of Alexandria asked the eminent canonist Theodore Balsamon, the Patriarch of Antioch, whether an Orthodox clergyman could “without peril impart the Divine Gifts to them,” that is, to heretics, Balsamon responded in the negative. With specific regard to the Latins who, as prisoners of the Saracens, presented themselves in Orthodox Churches asking to commune, Balsamon affirmed that the Western Church had been in schism for many years from spiritual communion with the assembly of the four remaining Orthodox Patriarchs. Rome “was separated from the Catholic Church with respect to customs and dogmas and was estranged from the Orthodox,” and for this reason the Pope had been struck off the Diptychs, such that “the race of Latins ought not be sanctified at the hands of Priests through the Divine and Immaculate Mysteries, unless they agreed beforehand to abjure Latin doctrines and customs, they have been instructed in accordance with the Canons, and they have been assimilated to

⁴⁹ Archimandrite Gabriel Dionysiates, *Άγιορειτική Μαρτυρία* (The Witness of the Holy Mountain) (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” n.d.), pp. 185-186.

⁵⁰ See the article “Άγιος Γεράσιμος και Δαίμονισμένοι” (St. Gerasimos of Kephallenia and Demoniacs”) on the website “Ορθόδοξος Κόσμος,” (accessed April 5, 2008). This text is also available elsewhere on the Internet.

the Orthodox.”⁵¹

The Holy Archpriest John of Kronstadt in Russia wrote the following at the beginning of the twentieth century, expressing the Orthodox spiritual assessment of Papism:

The communion of the Western Church with the Heavenly Church is meagre and lukewarm, and is devoid of life. The Orthodox Church is quite different: here, the communion is living, wise, full, sincere, and reverent. There, the Pope is everything, everyone honors him and not the Saints. The Saints of the East and the West are devalued; they are hidden, they have fallen into oblivion; never are their Relics ever displayed to the faithful, but far more often for tourists.... There, the Pope determines the fate of the earthly and the heavenly Church and arbitrarily administers the ‘surplus’ of the works and graces of the Saints, sending people to Purgatory and freeing them therefrom by his own decision, and issuing indulgences. Laughable as these things are, they really would be laughable if they were not so harmful and distressing. And how is it that the Popes themselves, the cardinals, and others do not see this?... The faith of Catholics is superficial. There, everything is for sale and everything can be bought; there, the Pope possesses all authority and the salvation of Catholics is in his hands. This is why Catholics today do not have real, recognizable Saints; they have only ‘contrived’ saints, those whom the arbitrariness of the Pope has made saints, whereas the Orthodox Church is like the Garden of Eden, filled with Saints.⁵²

Another revered clergyman, a professor of Orthodox dogmatic theology, avers that “Catholicism has not fully preserved either Apostolicity or life in Christ and holiness.... Catholic theology regards Grace as created, and thus it is not an Energy that flows from Christ” and that “in Catholicism only to an insignificant degree is the power of Divine Grace received.”⁵³

In view of these considerations, one might ask what it was that impelled the Orthodox ecumenists to enter into contact with het-

⁵¹ “Canonical Questions from Patriarch Mark of Alexandria and Responses Thereto by Patriarch Theodore Balsamon of Antioch,” Nos. 14-15, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CXXXVIII, cols. 965c-968b.

⁵² *Νουθεσίες Ἀγιοπνευματικές καὶ Παρακλητικὸς Κανὼν* (Spiritual Counsels and Canon of Supplication) (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 2008), pp. 157-158.

⁵³ Views expressed by Protopresbyter Dumitru Staniloae (†1993) in Hieromonk Ioanichie Balan, *Πνευματικοὶ Διάλογοι μὲ Ρουμάνους Πατέρες* (Spiritual Dialogues with Romanian Fathers) (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 1986), pp. 205, 206, 208.

erodoxy, not in order to lead it to repentance and conversion, but in order to confer on it distinctions and merits which it does not have, which do not belong it, and which it could not even conceive or desire! We know that the ecumenists have a ready answer: They are impelled by love, for the union of Christians. However, if love is separated from Truth—and we will show in what follows that this happens, and has prevailed from the outset, in contemporary ecumenism—then we are face to face with an error and a distortion which have spread to a perilous degree among both the leaders and the largely indifferent flock of the lukewarm faithful who constitute the overwhelming majority of so-called Christians today. This is why the false shepherds no longer have any inhibitions; for they are not afraid, as they were at one time,⁵⁴ that the true Flock, the Guardian of Orthodoxy, will rise up against them!

V

An upsurge in ecumenism

Unorthodox views concerning the boundaries of the Church of Christ have been articulated in Orthodox intellectual circles, especially from the beginning of the past (twentieth) century. Perhaps it was on account of the diversity concerning the reception of the heterodox exhibited by the local Orthodox Churches, which applied *oikonomia* in particular circumstances, that many of the Orthodox came up with the erroneous idea that, even though the heterodox had in the past been declared heretics with regard to the Apostolic Faith and Apostolic Tradition by Holy Synods, whether Œcumenical

⁵⁴ The following historical incident is very telling: When the Synod under Patriarch Germanos II of Constantinople (1222-1240) wanted to appear compliant for the time being and to permit the Hierarchy and clergy in Cyprus, who were under the harsh yoke of the Latins, to conform “by *oikonomia*” to the terms put forward by the Papists, yielding to the demands [of the Latins] for submission in order to serve the faithful and to avert impending calamities, they provoked a great uproar: “As soon as they learned that such a decision had been taken, enraged crowds of clergy, monks, and faithful rushed into the chamber in which the Synod was in session. After declaring to the members of the Synod that they regarded this submission as a veritable denial of the ancestral Faith, they demanded that the Patriarch alter the Synodal resolution, which is in fact what happened” (Archimandrite Hieronymos I. Kotsones, *Ἡ Κανονικὴ Ἀποψις περὶ τῆς Διακοινωνίας μετὰ τῶν Ἑτεροδόξων* [Intercommunio] [Intercommunion with the Heterodox from the Canonical Standpoint] [Athens: Ekdoseis “He Damaskos,” 1957], p. 75).

or Panorthodox, nonetheless since the heterodox demonstrably preserve “Apostolic succession,” that is, unbroken continuity vis-à-vis their episcopal consecrations, they possess true and valid Mysteries. Among the Orthodox ecumenists, some restrict the existence of Mysteries to Roman Catholics, others include every heterodox community that has maintained or formed an episcopate, and finally others extend sacramental validity to every Christian gathering, even to those who believe in a purely subjective way. The first group—at least in part—is of the opinion that the time has not yet come for communion with the Latins, though solely for “disciplinary” reasons; the second group is ready for communion with any heterodox community that maintains a hierarchy and simply awaits ecclesiastical approval for this; the final group is impatient for communion with all Christians!⁵⁵

The ecumenist notion that ecclesiality and Mysteries exist in heterodox communities of every description, both older and more recent, is based on the heretical Encyclical “To the Churches of Christ Everywhere” issued by the Church of Constantinople in 1920. This Encyclical, as is well known, was the primary catalyst and the moving force for the institutionalization of ecumenism by way of the World Council of Churches and, in general, for the participation of the Orthodox in various expressions and manifestations of ecumenism.

⁵⁵ See the discussion in the article from some fifty years ago by the Serbian theologian Father Danilo Krstić, later Bishop of Budapest (†2002), “The Divine Fire and Man-made Stream,” in *The Faithful Steward*, No. 14 (2003), p. 8. In this interesting text, the author makes mention also of the “strictly Traditionalist” Orthodox, who equate the “boundaries” of the Church with the charismatic boundaries of the Divine Eucharist. There is no Divine Eucharist outside the Orthodox Catholic Church. The Traditionalists maintain two different practices in receiving the heterodox. The strictest, following St. Cyprian of Carthage, baptize converts (it is primarily the Greeks, including those on the Holy Mountain, who do this), whereas others are content to anoint them with Holy Chrism, reckoning that in this way their baptism outside the Church becomes valid and efficacious (this is done chiefly by the Slavs).

- For an historical perspective on the difference in practice in dealing with the reception of the heterodox on the part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and of the Church of Russia, see Kotsones, *Η Κανονική Άποψις περι της Διακοινωνίας μετὰ τῶν Ἑτεροδόξων*, pp. 121-122.

- For statements and activities of the ringleaders among the Orthodox ecumenists, who laid the foundations for the further development of such heretical ecumenist “theologies” as “Baptismal theology” and the “theology of the Broad Church,” see “Ecumenism as an Ecclesiological Heresy,” <http://hsir.org/p/rd>.

We will mention, here, by way of example, the meeting between Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople— this year being the fortieth anniversary of his repose (July 7, 1972 [N.S.])—and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem, in 1964. That meeting in the Holy City, where—as we have ascertained from all that has been set forth—God expressed His aversion towards the heretical Latins, initiated the unfolding of a depressing series of events, with the lifting of the Anathemas in 1965 and the first steps down the slippery slope of ecumenism, especially regarding relations with the Latins.

For its part, Rome, through the Second Vatican Council, launched its “assault of love,” namely, Rome-centered ecumenism, for the purpose of achieving a new Uniate-style union with the Orthodox. The Papists decided on the meeting in Jerusalem in 1964 following the persistent entreaty and efforts of the Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV.⁵⁶ Prior to the meeting with Patriarch Athenagoras, Pope Paul VI had met with “the Catholic [i.e., Uniate] patriarchs and hierarchs of the Eastern [Uniate] Churches, to whom he delivered a momentous address, calling upon them to remain faithful to their ancient traditions and liturgical *typika*, by which the entire Church of Christ was made radiant.”⁵⁷ “Under such conditions did the Vatican inaugurate the Dialogue of Love in Jerusalem!”⁵⁸ The meeting with the Patriarch of Constantinople was conducted in a ecumenist framework, in which the bases and principles for what followed were established. Speaking in Bethlehem just two days after the meeting with Athenagoras, Pope Paul VI, sincere in his attitude, called upon the “separated brethren,” that is, the Orthodox, to return to the Roman Catholic flock!⁵⁹ The Pope presented himself as the “proprietor and interpreter of the patrimony of Christ,” emphasizing his primacy and infallibility over and above union.⁶⁰

In spite of this, those of an ecumenist bent characterize this meeting as an “historic” event,⁶¹ whereas many of the “official” Or-

⁵⁶ Archimandrite Spyridon Bilales, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμός* (Orthodoxy and Papism) (Athens: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxou Typou,” 1969), Vol. II, p. 343.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

⁶¹ See the article “Ἀθηνᾶγορας Α΄, Οἰκουμηνικός Πατριάρχης” (Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch), in *Μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη Χριστιανικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία* (Great Orthodox Chris-

thodox rose up at that time and vigorously expressed their opposition to it. A “Proclamation” by Athonite Abbots and Fathers of that time, for example, denounces pro-unionism, declares its adherence to Tradition, and rejects any union of the ecumenist stripe. Moreover, it calls all heretics who so desire to repentance and to return to Orthodoxy and contains a clear threat: “We appeal to our Ecumenical Patriarch to desist from pursuing his pro-unionist activities, for if he persists, we will disavow him also.”⁶²

Orthodox sensibilities functioned for some time, and, as we know, there were even Hierarchs, aside from the Abbots and monks, who broke off commemoration of the Patriarch for a certain period of time, only to return to “obedience,” since they thought, strangely enough, that after Athenagoras a new wind of Orthodoxy was blowing in Constantinople and in the local Churches in general, even though the heresy of ecumenism had waxed bold!

Patriarch Athenagoras preferred the “currency of love,” despite the reactions, and not that of Truth and stated that the purpose of dialogues and relations with the heterodox, and especially with the Roman Catholics, was “to prepare our peoples psychologically to understand that there is one Church and one religion.”⁶³

It is no surprise that in 1993 we ended up at Balamand, Lebanon, under Patriarch Bartholomew, the faithful lackey of Athenagoras, who proclaimed officially in the context of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue that both Churches are recognized as “Sister Churches” in the full sense of the term; it was, rather, to be expected. Papists and Orthodox ecumenists recognize that “profession of apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, above all the one priesthood...the apostolic succession of bishops—cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our Churches. In this context, it is evident that all rebaptism is excluded.”⁶⁴

Likewise, a condemnation of “the proselytism of Christians of

tian Encyclopedia) (Athens: Strategikes Ekdoseis, [2010]), Vol. 1, p. 388.

⁶² Archimandrite Gabriel, *Αγιορειτική Μαρτυρία*, p. 161.

⁶³ “Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople (1886-1972): His Statements, Messages, and Activities,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. xviii, No. 1 (2001), p. 10.

⁶⁴ “The Balamand Statement,” §13, *Eastern Churches Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1993-1994), p. 19. We have corrected the wording of the final sentence on the basis of the French original of the Balamand Statement (see http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/i_o-rc_07_balamand_fr.html).

other Christian traditions” was issued in the context of the World Council of Churches,⁶⁵ while the Patriarchate of Constantinople signed at the Phanar in September 2004, together with the Evangelical Church in Germany, a rejection of “rebaptism,” since the baptisms of both Churches are equated and recognized.⁶⁶

All of the goings-on in contemporary ecumenism, a few of which we shall mention, demonstrate that, in essence, the distinction between Orthodoxy and heresy and the boundaries between truth and falsehood, between light and darkness, have been effaced. Its real aim is not the attainment of union, still less the putative conversion of those in error to Orthodoxy, as Patriarch Bartholomew sometimes hypocritically maintains before “conservative” audiences, since the ecumenists believe that union between them already exists, that “the parties engaged in dialogue are Sister Churches and that they express this unity of theirs through sundry ecumenical displays.”⁶⁷

Just this past January (2012) there was an upsurge of ecumenical activities, particularly in the context of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

⁶⁵ E.g., “Within the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches the concern for common witness and the unity of the churches has always been a priority, and proselytism has been recognized as a scandal and counterwitness”; “[One] of the characteristics which clearly distinguish[es] proselytism from authentic Christian witness [is] [p]resenting one’s church or confession as ‘the true church’ and its teachings as ‘the right faith’ and the only way to salvation, rejecting baptism in other churches as invalid and persuading people to be rebaptized”; “Proselytism is a perversion of authentic Christian witness and thus a counterwitness. It does not build up but destroys. It brings about tensions, scandal and division, and is thus a destabilizing factor for the witness of the church of Christ in the world. It is always a wounding of *koinonia*, creating not fellowship but antagonistic parties” (“Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism,” <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/towards-common-witness.html>).

⁶⁶ “Although ecclesiastical communion does not yet exist between our Churches [Orthodox and Protestant], we each regard the other’s members as baptized, and in the case of a change in confession, we refuse to undertake a new baptism. The participants in the dialogue salute the efforts of the Churches in Germany (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen) to reach agreement regarding a mutual recognition of baptism” (Joint Communiqué, Phanar, 2004), in “Participation in the ‘World Council of Churches’ as an Ecclesiological Heresy: ‘Invisible Unity’ and ‘Baptismal Theology,’” <http://hsir.org/p/ac>.

⁶⁷ Archimandrite Cyprian and Hieromonk Klemes Hagiokyprianitai, *Οικουμενική Κίνησις καὶ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἀντι-οικουμενισμός – Ἡ κρίσιμος ἀντιπαράθεσις ἐνὸς αἰῶνος* (The Ecumenical Movement and Orthodox Anti-Ecumenism: The Crucial Confrontation of a Century) (Vol. VII in *Συμβολὴ στὴν Ἀντι-οικουμενιστικὴ Θεολογία*; Athens: Ekdoseis Hieras Synodou ton Enistamenon, 2001), p. 53.

An ecumenical ceremony to welcome the New Year was held in a Roman Catholic church in Cologne, Germany, with, of course, the participation of Orthodox ecumenists. It had for its motto: “TOGETHER. Witnessing to Christ.”⁶⁸

In Dubrovnik, Croatia, Bishop Grigorije of Herzegovina (Patriarchate of Serbia), a spiritual son of Bishop Atanasije (Jevtić), took part, on January 17, in an ecumenical ceremony in a Roman Catholic church, together with the local Catholic bishop and his clergy, and, among other things, he asked forgiveness for the horrors of the recent war.

In Syros (an island in the Cyclades), the Roman Catholic bishop Frangiskos Papamanoles delivered an address in the Metropolitan Cathedral to Dorotheos, the local Bishop of the New Calendar Church of Greece, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his Episcopate on January 19, emphasizing, *inter alia*, the following:

The people of Syros have welcomed you united, without any dividing lines between them, united in the love of Christ, united in the joy that the bells of our Churches, Orthodox and Catholic, rang out to the heavens in a common melody, announcing your arrival.... Beloved Brother, ...we can work together, or rather, we can increase our coöperation in harmony, love, and peace, with mutual respect, not only for our persons, but also for our Churches, as our yardstick. We bear responsibility for the present and for the future of our Churches. We can contribute to the speedier arrival of the blessed day when we share the common Cup.

In Thessalonike, on Saturday, January 21, an ecumenical evening of common prayer was held in the Roman Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Theotokos. Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Armenians, Anglicans, and Evangelicals took part in this event. The keynote speaker was the Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Theological School of the University of Thessalonike, Charalambos Atmatzides, who made the following revealing statements about the meeting on a television channel:

It is a custom observed almost every year by all of the Christians and all of the Christian communities of Thessalonike. All Christians who

⁶⁸ See the presentations of this and the other ecumenical events mentioned subsequently, together with audio-visual material, according to the date of their posting, at the extremely informative website “Aktines” (<http://aktines.blogspot.com>).

have a common credo in Jesus Christ, that is, we Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenians, and Evangelicals, gather together to pray together and offer entreaties to God.... The purpose of this joint prayer is for us to remember our roots and our common religious lineage, which used to unite all of us a very long time ago, although after a period of time it divided us for reasons which, in our view, are not so justified. This endeavor, however, is based, is founded on the common will of the leaders of the Orthodox Church, namely, our Ecumenical Patriarchate, of the Pope of Rome, and also of the episcopal Evangelical Churches and of the Armenians, as a joint effort to find common points of contact and communication.

Ecumenical ceremonies, joint prayers, and activities took place between January 19 and 25 in Rome (under the leadership of the Pope), in Budapest, in Brussels, in the Holy Land, in Moscow and Novosibirsk, in Bucharest and other cities in Romania, and in many other parts of the world, in a climate and a spirit of syncretism and relativism.

In Trier, Germany, an “International Ecumenical Forum” commenced on January 30 with joint prayer and speeches about the “seamless Robe of Christ.” Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, the World Council of Churches, the Metropolis of Germany (Ecumenical Patriarchate), Methodists, *et al.* were all represented among those taking part in this forum, in the context of which, interestingly enough, “the participants were symbolically weaving the Robe of Christ”!

While we are on the subject of such ecumenical lunacy, it is worth emphasizing the new “tradition” that the Patriarchate of Constantinople is establishing. It now enthrones its new Metropolitans, in foreign countries in which a large Cathedral of its own jurisdiction may not be available, in Roman Catholic churches. This occurred recently both at the enthronement in Budapest of the new Exarch of Hungary and Central Europe, Metropolitan Arsenios, and at the enthronement in Singapore of Metropolitan Constantine of Singapore, at which Hierarchs of the New Calendar Church of Greece were present.

We should also advert to the ecumenist dimension of the charitable ministry of the Apostole society of the New Calendar Archdiocese of Athens. Apostole recently began to cooperate officially, for

the successful accomplishment of its goals, with both Anglicans and Roman Catholics, and in particular with their counterpart organization, Caritas.

VI The responsibility of the Orthodox

In the face of this distressing and discouraging reality, which is unfolding in the context of eschatological “apostasy,”⁶⁹ for the purpose of bringing about a world religion and the coming of the man of sin, that is, the Antichrist, for the final tribulation of humanity, we cannot but express our grief and sorrow, not so much over the terrible economic crisis and social degradation of our homeland—which is also extremely disquieting—as over the downfall of Orthodox Churches and the continuing captivity of souls, on account of those who champion the heresy of ecumenism, as St. Basil the Great wrote in connection with the events of his era: “For we are lamenting not the demolition of earthly buildings, but the overthrow of Churches; what we behold is not bodily enslavement, but a captivity of souls that is effected daily by the champions of heresy.”⁷⁰

In our opinion, our prime concern today is that we preserve at all costs our Orthodox identity, which is being grievously assaulted amid the tempest of confusion that surrounds us, and that we correspondingly heighten the awareness in every way of as many of our brothers and sisters as possible, so that they might act in a correct and God-pleasing manner.

For those enmeshed in reprehensible communion with our ecumenist brethren there is always the possibility of shaking off this “yoke” through Orthodox confession and walling-off and through incorporation into the realm of Truth, far removed from the darkness and falsehood of error. Few of them, however, do we see being drawn by the Light of Truth; few walk in the Truth, far away from the wickedness of sin and apostasy. A variety of erroneous assessments or misguided commitments and dependences, it seems, darken their souls and drive salutary reproofs away from their consciences.

⁶⁹ 11 Thessalonians 2:3.

⁷⁰ “Epistle LXX,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxii, col. 436b.

es. And not only this, but they also muster artful excuses in sins, so as to appease their consciences and lull themselves into a Uniaste-style communion with ecumenists. The harsh words of our Lord Jesus Christ befit those in our day who defend innovation and insult the Truth and correct confession: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”⁷¹

St. Basil the Great, for example, believed—as did all of the Holy Fathers—that the issue of communion with heretics is of direct soteriological significance, and for this reason he prayed that he not fall away from communion with that segment of the Church which abides on the basis of “sound and undistorted doctrine,”⁷² since communion in Orthodoxy places one with the “lot” of the righteous; conversely, communion with those who distort the Orthodox confession of faith either as a whole or in part places such communicants outside the communion of the Church.⁷³ For this reason, St. Basil the Great, even as a Deacon, “walled himself off” in 361 from Bishop Dianios of Cæsarea, who had ordained him, because, out of weakness of character, he had signed the un-Orthodox confession of faith of the semi-Arian Synod of Constantinople (360).⁷⁴

The hopeful thing is that a few sensitive and elect servants of God, disregarding insidious threats, marginalization, and the bootless “assurances” of this world, are being drawn to the Light of Truth, walling themselves off, in accordance with the example of the Fathers and with Synodal and canonical injunctions, from the so-called official Churches, thereby eschewing communion with the heresy of ecumenism.

Some, like our spiritual ancestors in the Faith, did this much longer ago, on account of the ecumenist imposition of the calendar innovation (1924–). Others, like our spiritual progenitors in the Lord, did this later, by reason of the increasingly audacious ventures and excesses of the ecumenists. Others are doing so today, while quite

⁷¹ St. Matthew 23:14.

⁷² “Epistle CCLI,” §4, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxII, col. 940a.

⁷³ See “St. Basil and Resistance: Communion with Heretical Bishops is Inadmissible,” <http://hsir.org/p/2a>.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* (See St. Basil, “Epistle LI,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxII, cols. 388c-392a.)

a few are vacillant about this salvific course of action, remaining in reprehensible communion with the ecumenists. At any rate, the upsurge in anti-ecumenism, which perturbs the heresiarchs of ecumenism and their sundry apologists or colleagues, is a comforting fact and one which confirms that the struggles and even the ordeals of many decades have not been in vain.

May the Lord of the Church strengthen the plenitude who confess the Faith, to the end that Divine Truth might prevail!

May we be numbered with the faithful and wise servants of God in the Kingdom of the Light of Divine Love, if nothing else for the sake of our patient endurance and our good intention for the welfare of the Church. May the majestic vision of the Divine Kingdom, which the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian describes for us in the Apocalypse, console us in whatever sacrifices we make for Faith and virtue: “And there shall be no night there; and they [the saved] need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”⁷⁵ Amen!



⁷⁵ Revelation 22:5.