

## *The Orthodox Informer*



*“For it is a commandment of the Lord not to be silent at a time when the Faith is in jeopardy. Speak, Scripture says, and hold not thy peace.... For this reason, I, the wretched one, fearing the Tribunal, also speak.”*

(St. Theodore the Studite, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xcix, col. 1321)

Sunday of Orthodoxy  
February 16/March 1, 2015

### A Synodal Gathering of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece at the Port Authority of Piræus

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

## Ecumenism in the Homestretch and the Orthodox Witness of a Contemporary Saint and Confessor

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

Your Beatitude;  
Most Reverend and Right Reverend holy Brethren;  
Venerable Fathers and Mothers;  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

### I

## The Genesis and Development of Ecumenism

**A**t the behest of the Holy Synod, and invoking your prayers, attention, and patience, with God’s help I will expound, at this great Synodal Gathering and on the radiant day of the Triumph of Orthodoxy over heresies, on a matter of grave importance.

You are familiar with the endeavor, about a century ago, to create a “League of Churches,” modelled on the “League of Nations,” an inter-Christian confederation between different confessions, notwithstanding

their doctrinal differences, for the purpose of coöperating in common service and with the ultimate goal of their union. Such was the genesis of ecumenism.

That vision was Protestant, but, as we know, the Church of Constantinople took the unprecedented step of proposing, in its “Patriarchal Declaration of 1920,” the establishment of a “League of Churches” for the benefit, supposedly, of the “whole body of the Church,”<sup>1</sup> that is, of the Orthodox and the heterodox. This initiative was based, not on Orthodoxy, but on cacodoxy: the heterodox were regarded as members of the Church of Christ *without qualification*, by reason of their alleged baptism in the Name of the Triune God, and, in an atmosphere of dogmatic syncretism, despite the unbridgeable differences, there was potential for inter-Christian coöperation, a common witness of faith and common service of the world, and also for a common struggle to eradicate social ills.

The other local Orthodox Churches individually accepted the Declaration of 1920, which was officially endorsed at the “First Pan-Orthodox Consultation” in Rhodes, in 1961.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, ecumenism was proclaimed and entrenched among the Orthodox Churches, and it eroded them from within.

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On the basis of the 1920 Declaration, the calendar reform of 1924 was recklessly implemented, in order that through concelebration with the heterodox “the rapprochement of the two Christian worlds of the East and the West”<sup>3</sup> might be accomplished.

<sup>1</sup> Gennadios Limouris (ed.), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement, 1902-1992* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Dionysios M. Batistatos (ed.), *Πρακτικά και Αποφάσεις του έν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Πανορθόδοξου Συνεδρίου (10 Μαΐου-8 Ιουνίου 1923)* (Proceedings and decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople [10 May-8 June 1923]) (Athens: 1982), pp. 57, 72. See also Vasilike Stathokosta, *Όρθόδοξη Θεολογία και Οικουμένη (Μελέτες-Άρθρα)* (Orthodox theology and the Oikoumene [studies and articles]) (Athens: Ekdoseis Parresia, 2011), p. 44.

The result was tragic: the sundering of the unity of the Orthodox in the Festal Calendar for the sake of achieving “contact” with the heterodox outside the Church!

Those who rejected the innovation of the New Calendar, our forefathers, did so under the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth, in order to safeguard the Church from pollution by the ecclesiological heresy of ecumenism.

It is, of course, well known from our Patristic Tradition that “a minor deviation from the truth affords access to impiety,”<sup>4</sup> as St. Gregory of Nyssa emphasizes.

St. Photios the Great affirms: “Even a slight violation of traditions is wont to permit complete contempt for dogma.”<sup>5</sup>

And as we in fact observe, by means of ecumenism the dogma of the Church has been, and is being, deplorably contemned, while a seemingly small violation (the calendar issue) has opened the door to blatant and unheard-of impiety, such as has never before appeared in the two-thousand-year history of the Church of Christ!

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In 1948, in Amsterdam, Holland, the so-called World Council of Churches, that is, the very “League of Churches” envisioned in the 1920 Declaration, was founded. Dozens or even hundreds of Protestant heresies constituted, at the outset along with the Churches of Constantinople, Greece, and Cyprus, a kind of monstrous “Ecumenical Church.” The ecumenists did not make the right Faith a unifying and cohesive factor, since they took, and take, for granted the existence, despite dogmatic differences, of a putative “invisible unity” of the “Churches,” which, by means of “spiritual relationships,” “common prayer and a common journey,” and “common witness and service,” is unfolding “visibly,” through “admitted and acknowledged diversity.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “Homily V on the Beatitudes,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLIV, col. 1249D.

<sup>5</sup> “Epistle XIII,” §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CII, col. 724D.

<sup>6</sup> Morris West, “Toronto Statement,” in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicolas Lossky, José Míguez Bonino, John S. Pobee, Tom F. Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Pauline Webb (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), pp. 1008, 1009, and T.K.

By 1965, all of the local Orthodox Churches, without exception, had joined this ecumenical organization, which is headquartered in Geneva, and as “organic” members at that,<sup>7</sup> in coöperation, in joint prayer, and in joint proclamation—with a medley of heresies—of the views of the Church or of the Churches.

But it was thereafter that the World Council of Churches became ever more estranged from Evangelical truth and morality, secularized, broadened through interfaith dialogue, and de-Christianized. And in spite of its diverse this-worldly activities, it supposedly advances the “Unity of the Church” with a purely Protestant mentality, in complete contradiction to the principles of Orthodox ecclesiology, as has become very evident in the pertinent documents and resolutions of its two recent General Assemblies, in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006 and in Busan, South Korea in 2013.

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Now, what has become of Rome?

Roman Catholicism was originally negative toward the ecumenical movement, that is, until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). It was then that a spectacular change occurred: by virtue of that council’s “Decree on Ecumenism,” which decree is founded upon the myth of Papal Primacy and Infallibility, Papism, representing itself as the One and only Church, inaugurated its own inter-Christian relations through dialogue and joint prayer, and also through partial mysteriological (sacramental) communion with heterodox communities.

In order to help their “separated brethren” to unite under its protection and, in essence, to embrace an acceptable form of Papal Primacy (for herein resides the entire essence of Papism), the Vatican devised a “Roman,” “Rome-centered,” or “Papocentric” ecumenism, based on Latin ecclesiology.<sup>8</sup>

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Thomas, “WCC, Basis of,” *ibid.*, p. 1096.

<sup>7</sup> Limouris, *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Archimandrite Spyridon S. Bilales, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμὸς* (Orthodoxy and Papism) (Athens: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxou Typou,” 1969), Vol. I, pp. 339-358.

Vatican II affirmed that “Catholics” and “non-Catholics” are “united by a common baptism and a common faith in Jesus Christ and his gospel,” and that insofar as there already exists a “real but imperfect communion...between the churches,” they can work together and offer a “common witness” to the world in order to express in a vivid way their bond of unity.<sup>9</sup>

Papism now accepts that there is a “Communion of Churches,” to which all “Christian Churches” somehow belong, and relations between them are defined as relations between “Sister Churches.” And although Papism supposedly does not accept the idea of annexing the other “Churches,” according to the model of the Uniate “Churches,” nonetheless its proposal for the attainment of “visible unity” is nothing other than the acceptance on the part of the others of the Primacy and Infallibility of the Pope, since the Church of Rome regards this as a “conviction of faith,” an institution of Divine law, and a revealed dogma, which cannot for any reason be relinquished.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, that which constitutes precisely “the greatest heresy, one which has distorted the dogma of the Church”<sup>11</sup> does not appear to intimidate the Orthodox ecumenists. Even though the Papists essentially laid out, at Vatican II, a “new ecumenist Unia”<sup>12</sup> for the purpose of their Uniatization, the Orthodox ecumenists responded positively, spearheaded by Constantinople in a wholly arbitrary manner, with three “Pan-Orthodox Consultations” in Rhodes, in 1961, 1963, and 1964.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Richard P. McBrien, “Roman Catholic Church,” in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, p. 860, and Tom Stransky, “Common Witness,” *ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> Giannes Spiteres (Yannis Spiteris), “Ἡ Καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία καὶ οἱ ἄλλες Χριστιανικὲς Ἐκκλησίαι,” (The Catholic Church and the other Christian Churches), in *Ὁ Καθολικισμός* (Catholicism), ed. Theodoros Kontides (Athens: Ekdoseis Hellenika Grammata, 2000), pp. 245-247, 251.

<sup>11</sup> Bilales, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμός*, Vol. I, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357.

<sup>13</sup> See Archimandrite Cyprian and Hieromonk Klemes Hagiokyprianitai, *Οἰκουμενικὴ Κίνησις καὶ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἀντι-οικουμενισμός – Ἡ κρίσιμος ἀντιπαραθέσις ἐνὸς αἰῶνος* (The ecumenical movement and Orthodox anti-ecumenism: a century of critical confrontation) (Σειρὰ Β΄: Συμβολὴ στὴν Ἀντι-οικουμενιστικὴ Θεολογία, Vol. VII; Athens: Hiera Synodos

The ecumenist Patriarch Athenagoras—Patriarch by Divine sufferance—unrestrainedly aided and abetted the Papists in the promotion of their objectives.

In 1964, he met with Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem and subsequently made the following revealing admission before a group of pilgrims: “The two of us went hand in hand into his [the Pope’s] room and the two of us had a secret conversation.... What did we say?... We formed a common program, on absolutely equal terms, with no disagreement.”<sup>14</sup>

There followed, fifty years ago, in December of 1965, the so-called Lifting of the Anathemas between Rome and Constantinople, which signalled the inception of a new phase and a new period in relations between them. For the Vatican, this constituted “an act of sacramental communion,”<sup>15</sup> and according to the French original of the Papal “Act” it involved the “removal of the sentence of excommunication”<sup>16</sup> against the Orthodox.

This is why thenceforth the ecumenists, whether Catholic or Orthodox, have not, in essence, been pursuing union. For them, the union already exists: it is between “Sister Churches,” and they are endeavoring in every way to express this union of theirs until they achieve official intercommunion.

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ton Enistamenon, 2001), p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> See Protopresbyter Georgios D. Metallinos, “Οι διάλογοι χωρίς προσωπεϊόν” (The dialogues unmasked), in *Παρακαταθήκη*, No. 25 (July-August 2002).

<sup>15</sup> John S. Romanides, “Ορθόδοξος καὶ Βατικάνειος Συμφωνία περὶ Οὐνίας” (Orthodox and Vatican Agreement on the Unia), §29 (available on the website [romanity.org](http://romanity.org)).

<sup>16</sup> See “A Common Declaration made by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, expressing their decision to remove from memory and from the midst of the Church the excommunications of 1054,” §4, at [http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/e\\_o-rc\\_oiacommon\\_eng.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/e_o-rc_oiacommon_eng.html); for the French original, read aloud at the final session of Vatican II by Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, see [http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/e\\_o-rc\\_oiacommon\\_fr.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/e_o-rc_oiacommon_fr.html). See also Athanasios K. Sakarellos, *Ἐγινε ἡ Ἐνωσις τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν* (The union of the churches has taken place) (Athens: 2007), p. 37.

When Patriarch Athenagoras said that “we are discovering all the more our profound identity of faith,”<sup>17</sup> he meant this literally. Hence, they have ever since been commemorating each other and doing whatever is consonant with their corrupt faith, with full acceptance of the baptism and sacramental life of both sides.

They also proclaimed this officially in Balamand, Lebanon in 1993, and they reify and emphasize it at every opportunity, such as recently, when the ecumenist Patriarch Bartholomew, in an address at the ecumenical Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna, spoke about the “imperfect ecclesiastical communion” between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, about the rediscovery and recognition of one another as brothers belonging to the same family,<sup>18</sup> about a common faith and tradition that both Orthodox and Catholics supposedly possess,<sup>19</sup> and about both sides teaching aright the word of truth in sincerity, as the fallen Patriarch assured Pope Francis at the Phanar, during the semi-concelebration that they held there last November.<sup>20</sup>

Is it really necessary to remind you that, all of the foregoing notwithstanding, “the heresies of the Vatican persist,”<sup>21</sup> as the late dogmatic theologian Father John Romanides explicitly stated in denouncing the treasonous Balamand union of 1993?

How is it that they are brothers in the Faith when, by reason of their heresy, they are “estranged from God,”<sup>22</sup> according to our canonical Tradition?

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<sup>17</sup> See Archimandrite Damaskenos Papandreou, Archimandrite Bartholomaios Archontones, Fr. Pierre Duprey, and Fr. Christophe Dumont, *Τόμος Αγάπης/Vatican-Phanar* (1958-1970) (Rome-Istanbul: 1971), p. 375.

<sup>18</sup> *Επίσκεψις*, No. 768 (November 30, 2014), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> As stated also by Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon; see *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, No. 318 (2007).

<sup>20</sup> *Επίσκεψις*, No. 769 (December 31, 2014), p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Romanides, “Ορθόδοξος καὶ Βατικάνειος Συμφωνία περὶ Οὐνίας,” §30.

<sup>22</sup> Canon XXXIV of the Synod of Laodicea.

St. Athanasios the Great exclaims that “heresy is excluded from communion with the Church and alien to the Heavens,”<sup>23</sup> while, on the contrary, the Latinized innovators, as well as those who commune with them, identify with, and are united with, the pan-heretical Papists, and also with the Protestants, by way of the World Council of Churches, in a spirit of dogmatic syncretism, through unceasing joint prayers and mutual commemorations, celebrating together, blessing together, preaching together, acting together, and serving together, etc.

Are they perhaps disposed to hear the voice of Truth? No! Recently, at the Pro Oriente Foundation, Patriarch Bartholomew bombastically urged his confrères of every shade and description: “Let us turn a deaf ear to all manner of negative and fundamentalist vociferations from those who have zeal not according to knowledge.”<sup>24</sup>

Since, therefore, he imputes to us “zeal not according to knowledge”—nowadays, for the ecumenists, confessing Orthodoxy counts as fundamentalism (!)—let us bring him and his lamentable cohorts face to face not with “vociferations,” but with the “entreaties and appeals” uttered in obedience to God and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by an elect servant of God, a contemporary Saint and Confessor, whom God has glorified in an indisputable manner through the incorruption of his Relics and extraordinary miracles: the Holy Metropolitan Philaret, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, who reposed exactly thirty years ago, in 1985, and who commenced his confessional struggle against the panheresy of ecumenism exactly fifty years ago, in 1965, at the very time when the fetters of ecumenism were choking the Orthodox ecumenists, as we have explained in the foregoing—for it became clear that from 1965 onwards ecumenism had openly entered into its homestretch.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sole and invincible Head of our Holy Church, did not leave His inheritance unprotected during that critical

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<sup>23</sup> “Epistle to His Brother Serapion,” §4, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXV, col. 689A.

<sup>24</sup> *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 768 (November 30, 2014), p. 13.

period. It was precisely then that He put “on a candlestick”<sup>25</sup> an earthly Angel, a heavenly man, shining with right Faith and transparent virtue, appointing him to take up the burden and responsibility of denouncing what was happening, confronting these events from a theological and canonical standpoint, and with sorrow, love, sobriety, wisdom, and spiritual sensitivity to set before all those held fast in the grip of ecumenism the account that they must give on earth and in Heaven.

However, before my necessarily concise presentation of his Divinely inspired witness and confession of the Faith, let us see in brief what manner of man Metropolitan Philaret was.<sup>26</sup>

## II The Holy Metropolitan Philaret

This elect, faithful, and prudent Steward of the Grace of God was chosen by Divine Providence, at a time when the ecumenism of Rome, Geneva, and Constantinople, and also of Moscow, had become brazen and was luring the Orthodox ecumenists into a pitiful fall, to be the voice of the Truth and of the conscience of the Orthodox Church, and to confess this before the entire world, as a last-ditch attempt to ward off the downfall of the Latin-minded and their flocks.

Georgiy Voznesensky (as he was known in the world) was born in pre-Revolutionary Russia in Kursk, in 1903. His father was a clergyman, Protopresbyter Nikolai, a pious and educated man. He had four siblings. He grew up in a pious and Church-centered atmosphere.

In 1909, the family moved to Blagoveschensk, in the missionary territory of the Far East, on the border of Manchuria, China. Subsequently,

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<sup>25</sup> St. Matthew 5:15.

<sup>26</sup> For biographical information about the Holy Metropolitan Philaret from different sources, as well as some of his writings and a collection of publications about him in English, see the website dedicated to him: <http://blessedphilaret.blogspot.gr>; see also, on the website of the Eastern American Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (Moscow Patriarchate), “Biography of Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky),” <http://cadiocese.org/History/mp.en.htm>.

from 1918-1920, in view of the Soviet occupation of the region, the family of the future Saint relocated to Harbin, Manchuria. There, his mother Lydia reposed in 1921, when he was eighteen years old. Georgiy studied electromechanical engineering at the city Polytechnic, from which he graduated in 1927, and worked for a short time as a teacher.

Thereafter, he took classes in pastoral theology until 1931 at the newly established theology department of the Russian Institute in Harbin. That same year, he was ordained a Priest and tonsured a monk with the name “Philaret.” He was truly a friend of virtue, with his asceticism, abstinence, and compassion. He lived the monastic life with integrity, shepherded the rational flock with love, liturgized with compunction, preached Grace-filled sermons, diligently instructed the youth, gave alms to those in need and support to the infirm and elderly, and was in general a man of faith who gave of himself. He was a clergyman who made no compromises, who lived and breathed the unconditional love of God, fought against lukewarmness in matters of Faith and virtue, and imparted Christian hope as an antidote to despair and depression.

He underwent severe tribulations, first from the pagan Japanese, who occupied Manchuria from 1932-1945. They wanted to force the Orthodox Russians to bow to a statue of one of their deities, which they set up opposite the St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, and only after this to enter the Church. The Saint, by then an Archimandrite, staunchly resisted their syncretistic machinations and suffered ill-treatment for so doing: they beat him on his face, seriously injuring one of his eyes, and burned his back with an electric iron, and it was only by a miracle of St. Nicholas that he was saved from martyrdom. Thereafter, he bore the marks of our Lord Jesus on his ascetical body.<sup>27</sup>

From 1945 onwards, the Saint suffered further tribulations from the atheistic Soviets, who drove out the Japanese and occupied Harbin. At that time, they attempted to entice the Russian émigrés into taking Soviet passports and returning to the alleged Soviet “paradise.” Archimandrite Philaret again put up resistance and refused to accept the lies of the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Galatians 6:17.

Soviets or to commemorate them at the Divine services, although during that period, for the sake of his flock, he maintained the appearance of belonging, albeit under duress, to the Moscow Patriarchate. He denounced the atheists in his sermons and maintained a correspondence with the ecclesiastical administration of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The Soviets arrested him several times and beat him, in order to intimidate him.

In October of 1960, they tried to burn him alive while he was asleep in the house in which he lived, opposite the Church, but yet again he was preserved as though by a miracle, sustaining severe burns, wounds, and a ruptured spinal column. On at least two other occasions they attempted to murder him, but God rescued him.

On account of his struggles to confess the Faith, God granted him the gift of his prayers being heard in response to various requests from the pious faithful, who hastened with confidence to their good Shepherd.

Only in 1962 did Archimandrite Philaret succeed in escaping with his flock from Manchuria, in Communist China, and in reaching Australia via Hong Kong. In Australia, he was received into the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

The following year, 1963, at the request of his flock, he was consecrated Bishop of Brisbane, Australia, at the age of sixty.

In 1964, he took part for the first time in a Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in North America, at a time when the resignation of the very elderly First Hierarch, Metropolitan Anastassy, had caused a split within the Hierarchy, which was divided into two factions with an equal number of votes, each tenaciously supporting a different candidate. At that critical moment, the Holy Archbishop John of Shanghai and San Francisco, quite evidently inspired by God, proposed, as a way out of the impasse, that Philaret, the youngest of the Bishops, be appointed First Hierarch and Metropolitan. This is, in fact, what took place, although the newly elected felt—as he said—as if they were leading him to a firing-squad, on account of the heavy burden that they were entrusting to him against his will. The outgoing and aged Metropolitan

Anastassy enthroned him as Metropolitan and First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, the third in succession.

Thereafter, Metropolitan Philaret threw himself into a titanic struggle for the confession of Orthodoxy, for the preservation of unity and peace in his Synod through a balancing of different and opposing tendencies, for the severance of his Synod's communion thitherto with the so-called official Orthodox Churches, and also for the provision of protection for beleaguered brethren such as ourselves, the Greek Old Calendarists.

First and foremost he defended the Confessors of the Catacomb Church inside the then Soviet Union, that is, the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Russia who did not recognize the Sergianist Moscow Patriarchate, which had by then also become involved in ecumenism.

It should be noted that the Holy Metropolitan Philaret, together with his Synod, officially recognized the Hierarchical Consecrations of us, the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, which were performed by Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in 1960 and 1962, and in 1969 entered into full Eucharistic communion with our Holy Synod, of which Archbishop Auxentios was then the President, thereby dispelling the artful and malicious dismissal or discrediting of us by various New or Old Calendarists who were at odds with us.

The Holy Metropolitan maintained his lofty spiritual way of life and temperament: he was always prayerful, unflinching in carrying out his liturgical duties, and was especially resolute in warring against sinful passions: "Take a knife and cut it out," he would say about every passion, whatever it might be, that impeded anyone's spiritual progress.

However, it is for his struggle against the panheresy of ecumenism throughout the last twenty years of his life until his repose in 1985 that he was chiefly distinguished, and therein lay his enduring greatness and uniqueness.

He was truly an ardent Zealot of Orthodoxy, without fanaticism or extremism. He was steadfast and consistent, a man of moderation and balance, irreproachable, gentle and restrained, with great and unfeigned humility. In short, he was a man who imparted Grace and benediction.

### III

## The Orthodox Witness of the Holy Metropolitan Philaret against Ecumenism

Let us review very succinctly the most important confessional documents,<sup>28</sup> which remain to this day unrivalled monuments of true Patristic Orthodoxy.

- Immediately after the Lifting of the Anathemas, Metropolitan Philaret sent an epistle to the ecumenist Patriarch Athenagoras in 1965,<sup>29</sup> in which in a spirit and a tone of firmness, replete with confessional candor, he emphasized, “as the leader of the free part of the Russian Church,” that it is not possible to make decisions regarding Western Christians which are not concordant with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and especially Sts. Photios the Great and Mark of Ephesus. He also denounced the Lifting of the Anathemas and demonstrated its illicitness and invalidity, since it betokened, in essence, a levelling of truth and error. The

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<sup>28</sup> For a collection of St. Philaret’s anti-ecumenical writings in Greek, see Hieromonk Kallinikos Hagiorites (ed.), *Ὁρθόδοξος Μαρτυρία* (Orthodox witness) (Holy Mountain and Athens: 1985). These texts, with a brief biography, are available on the website of the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle, “Special Series for 2005: The Saintly Metropolitan Philaret, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad,” <http://hsir.org/p/kw>. It behooves us to point out that principal theological advisor of Metropolitan Philaret in the composition of his confessional texts was Father George Grabbe, who served for decades as Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and as its consultant on canonical matters. After becoming a widower, he was consecrated Bishop of Washington and Florida.

<sup>29</sup> “An Appeal to His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople,” in *The Orthodox Word*, No. 7 (January-February 1966), pp. 27-30; see also <http://hsir.org/p/ca>. In this text, as also in the others, St. Philaret adverts to the ecclesiastical situation in the former Soviet Union, denouncing the falsehoods disseminated by the Moscow Patriarchate and calling attention to the Genuine Orthodox Christians of the Catacomb Church. We have not referred to this issue in the body of our presentation, since it is not directly relevant to our main theme. It should be noted that we may regard another confessional text by Metropolitan Philaret as a corollary to the one in question: “Ἀπάντησις τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Φιλαρέτου εἰς τὸ Πασχάλιον Μήνυμα τοῦ Ἀθηναγόρου” (A reply by Metropolitan Philaret to the paschal message of Athenagoras), <http://hsir.org/p/sw>.

Saint dauntlessly proclaimed that no union with the Roman Catholics is possible until they renounce their new doctrines—for since the eleventh century they have added a multitude of errors and heresies to the Faith—and fully accept Orthodox teaching. But it is evident from their own documents that the Papists understood dialogue<sup>30</sup> as a plan for our incorporation into the Roman Church or as the restoration of communion in some fashion, which would leave unaltered their teaching about the position of the Pope in the Church. For this reason, St. Philaret exclaims that it is not possible for such a betrayal of Orthodoxy to enter into our midst! He appealed to Athenagoras to put an end to the scandal arising from his chosen path of an ecumenical compromise union with the herodox without their full unanimity in the truth.

This marvellous epistle went unanswered, since the Patriarch and those with him had already chosen their irreversible and reprehensible course.

- There followed, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy in 1969, an epistle to Archbishop Iakovos of America<sup>31</sup> decrying his ecumenist actions and ideas, consonant with those of Athenagoras, which were plainly un-Orthodox and contrary to the Sacred Canons. St. Philaret stresses with limpid clarity that public joint prayer is the culmination of the conversion to the Church of those outside her, as a manifestation of an already existing unity in the Faith, and not as a means to the discovery or attainment thereof. It is obvious, as the Holy Metropolitan writes, that the statements of Patriarch Athenagoras, which constitute the precondition for Iakovos' ecumenical actions, aim at a putative recovery of the “undivided Church,” something which demonstrates their belief in the heretical “branch theory,” with a concomitant acceptance of the alleged “division

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<sup>30</sup> The dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches did not formally commence until 1980. Thus, at the time this epistle was written, it was still a matter of probability, as Bishop Klemes indicates in the Greek text of his presentation—TRANS.

<sup>31</sup> “Open Letter to His Eminence, Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America,” in *The Orthodox Word*, No. 25 (March-April 1969), pp. 73-76; see also <http://hsir.org/p/pp>.

of the Church,” and their view of sacred dogmas as being of secondary importance and as irrelevant to one’s belonging to the True Church. The organization of ecumenical joint prayers on this corrupt and heretical basis represents a distortion of the doctrine of the Church. For this reason, St. Philaret concluded: “You are uniting [pay heed: not “you will be united,” but “you are uniting”] with the heterodox, not in truth, but in disregard for it”!

- In July of the same year, 1969, the Holy Metropolitan Philaret addressed his famous “First Sorrowful Epistle”<sup>32</sup> to the Primates and all the Hierarchs of the official Orthodox Churches, following the convocation of the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, Sweden in 1968. St. Philaret writes out of a sense of responsibility, lest he incur the charge of betraying the Truth through silence and lest he hear from the Lord on the Day of Judgment that he saw the peril of ecumenism threatening the Church, and yet failed to warn her Bishops of it. It was shocking to contemplate what transpired at Uppsala, given that the error of ecumenism received official endorsement from the local Orthodox Churches. The inclusion of the Orthodox as “organic members” of the World Council of Churches does not justify their participation therein, supposedly for reasons of witnessing to the Truth or of engaging in mission among the other confessions; rather, it unites them with these confessions, such that all of the decisions of this ecumenical organization are made in the name of all, both Orthodox and heterodox. The Orthodox are now merged into one mass with the Protestants. The use of the singular number in documents, whenever the Church is mentioned (“The Church teaches...,” etc.), references at times to a “Universal Church,” and the general idea, in terminology and in documents, of an internal unity that supposedly exists between the so-called Churches, in spite of their external divisions, exposes the primary task of ecumenism, which is that internal unity be expressed and experienced also externally. However, the Holy Fathers and the Sacred Canons did not enter into or-

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<sup>32</sup> “Sorrowful Epistle to Their Holinesses and Their Beatitudes, the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, the Most Reverend Metropolitan, Archbishops, and Bishops,” <http://hsir.org/p/jny>.

ganic unions with heretics, but anathematized them. The heretics are not sanctified by the contemporary mixture of things unmixable, while those who are Orthodox only in name are estranged from the unity of Catholic Orthodoxy. The Protestants and Roman Catholics of our day are not any nearer to the Church than were the Arians or the Semi-Arians of the fourth century, even though today social relations of a different kind exist among people. Ecumenical relations are antithetical to the nature of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and function as a form of spiritual poison; for this reason the Divine sword<sup>33</sup> is raised to separate those who remain loyal to the traditional Faith from those who have embarked on the new course of ecumenical unity. Finally, St. Philaret addressed an appeal and plea to the Bishops of world Orthodoxy to rise to a defense of the purity of the Orthodox Faith.

- On the Sunday of Orthodoxy in 1972, in his wonderful “Second Sorrowful Epistle”<sup>34</sup> Metropolitan Philaret addressed himself again to the same recipients. In it, he observes with unspeakable distress that the official Churches have been unrepentantly traversing the same path of falling away from the Truth. Nonetheless, he writes what he writes in order to reveal to what an abyss of ecclesiological heresy those who participate in the ecumenical movement are succumbing, since ecumenism is unquestionably a dangerous heresy, which aims at the disappearance of the True Church in the ocean of heretical communities. He deems the responsibility of the official Orthodox to be prodigious, since they renounce the True Church—“old,” in their view—of the Holy Apostles and Fathers as they enter into communion with heresy. The first-fruits of all these are found in the tendency, since the beginning of the twentieth century, towards innovation and modernism, for the sake of adjusting Church life according to the principles of social life and of human weaknesses and passions. It was on this basis that the so-called Pan-Orthodox Congress of Constantinople convened in 1923 and adopted the

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. St. Matthew 10:34.

<sup>34</sup> “Second Sorrowful Epistle To Their Holinesses and Their Beatitudes, the Primate of the Orthodox Churches, the Most Reverend Metropolitan, Archbishops, and Bishops,” <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/sorrow2.aspx>.

Western calendar, as well as the Western *Paschalion*. That uncanonical and hasty reform brought about a rupture in the unity of the liturgical life of Orthodox Christians in different countries and introduced chaos and anomalies. It was this reform that paved the way and laid the foundations for a revision of the entire order and life of the Orthodox Church, which had been blessed by Holy Tradition and sealed by the decisions of the Œcumenical and local Synods. Thus, the modernists and revisionists reached the point of talking about almost “perfect communion” with the heterodox. In spite of the alleged lifting of the Anathemas, the Papists were, and are, heretics, even though the manner of their reception into the Church has varied from place to place and from era to era. The ecumenists are now pressing ahead also with interfaith dialogue, with thousands of ideas for a putative new world order and prosperity, while the church that they are constructing is the “lukewarm” Church of Laodicæa, concerning which the Lord expresses His abhorrence in the Book of Revelation.<sup>35</sup>

- In 1975, Metropolitan Philaret was compelled to write another text, regarding the so-called “Thyateira Confession,”<sup>36</sup> which had just then been published by Archbishop Athenagoras (Kokkinakes) of Thyateira and Great Britain, with the approval of the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople under Patriarch Demetrios, in order to show that this ecumenist and official Confession is completely heretical in spirit, since it exhorts to joint prayer and sacramental intercommunion with heretics of every stripe, whom it recognizes fully and incorporates into the Body of the Church, without defining any boundaries for her!

From these documents the position of the Holy Metropolitan Philaret is clear: the True or Genuine Church is not outmoded, as the ecumenists maintain. Rather, it is precisely they who depart from her, constituting, with their heretical confrères, a “new” church, which possesses only an external and formal similarity to the truly Orthodox Church.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Revelation 3:14-19.

<sup>36</sup> “The Thyateira Confession: An Appeal by Metropolitan Philaret to the Primates of the Holy Churches of God, and Their Eminences, the Orthodox Hierarchs,” in *The Orthodox Word*, No. 66 (January-February 1976), pp. 1-14; see also <http://hsir.org/pi/dc>.

However, these appeals and pleas from St. Philaret were truly voices crying in the wilderness of indifference or ecumenist minimalism (or, perhaps, excess!).

None of the Primates who received these brilliant documents responded to them, with the exception of a few isolated Hierarchs, who urged their Synods to undertake a serious examination of the issue of ecumenism, though without any follow-up.

The Holy Metropolitan's endeavor to confess the Faith had one final chapter: in August of 1983, in Montréal, Metropolitan Philaret and his Synod yet again denounced the apostasy of ecumenism, which precisely during that time, at the Sixth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, was openly passing from inter-Christian to interfaith ecumenism, regarding this apostasy as a harbinger of the Antichrist. In the end, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under Metropolitan Philaret, issued its well-known anathema against ecumenism in the form of the Branch theory, of the invisible Church, and of a failure to distinguish the Mysteries of the Church from those of heretics, and also against those who knowingly communed with ecumenists under the pretext of brotherly love.<sup>37</sup>

It should be clearly understood that this last step did not come as a bolt from the blue: for twenty whole years Metropolitan Philaret had expended every effort to demonstrate, in a profound, sober, and spiritual way, and with due substantiation, the perniciousness of the heresy of ecumenism. After all of these efforts, and in view of the still greater and even obstinate persistence of the leaderships of the official Orthodox Churches therein and of their unrepentant falling away from Orthodoxy, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad took the ultimate step of anathematization, in order to protect the flock of that Church and to set before all Orthodox throughout the world their enormous responsibility, on which their spiritual future would hinge, and also, we

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<sup>37</sup> "Encyclical Letter of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia," in *Orthodox Life*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 6 (November-December 1983), pp. 11-18, and Archbishop Vitaly of Montreal and Canada. "The Council of Bishops of 1983," in *Orthodox Life*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 (July-August 1984), pp. 32-34.

would submit, their eternal inclusion with those inside or those outside the Church of the Firstborn, near to or far away from the Saints, with Christ or with the adversary.

We think that, in the wake of all these considerations, it should be evident that it is literally a matter of life and death to remove ourselves at all costs from communion with the Latin-minded and syncretistic ecumenists, whoever they may be and whatever position they may hold, and likewise to join ourselves to the Body of Genuine Orthodoxy, which confesses the True Faith, for any hope of salvation and for the sake of avoiding eternal condemnation and perdition.

#### IV

### **The Proven Sanctity of Metropolitan Philaret and the Sacred Legacy of His Faith and Life**

Metropolitan Philaret lived a life equal to the Angels and reposed on the Feast of the Archangels—according to the Church Calendar—in 1985, at the age of eighty-two.

Thirteen years later, in 1998, his tomb was opened, so that he could be placed in a marble sepulcher, and his sacred Relics were found to be incorrupt, exuding the fragrance of Heaven, as an indisputable token of Divine mercy and good pleasure, primarily for his courageous Confession, and assuredly also for his God-pleasing life.

In spite of the falling away of his successors in 2007, when they entered into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, and thereby with fallen world Orthodoxy, his Russian brethren who were the continuators of his legacy, under Metropolitan Agafangel, formally proclaimed his sanctity in November of 2008, in New York, an event in which I had the great blessing of participating personally, together with His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone, as representatives of the Hierarchy under the blessed Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle (†2013).

Miracles were recorded while the Holy Metropolitan Philaret was alive and have been recorded since his repose, even to this day.

However, the greatest miracle—we believe—is his unwavering Confession, which he bequeathed to us and which it is up to us to preserve at all costs, notwithstanding our unworthiness and weakness.

The last thing that he wrote before his blessed repose is entitled “Hold That Fast Which Thou Hast,” a verse from the Book of Revelation,<sup>38</sup> which is the Lord’s exhortation to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia. Metropolitan Philaret was the embodiment of this spirit of preserving what has been handed down with fidelity and steadfastness and of confuting the spirit of the ecumenists, who embody lukewarmness and an unacceptable witches’ brew of syncretism, for which the Angel of the Church in Laodicæa is reproved,<sup>39</sup> with the threat that God will spew him out, since he ought to have been hot or cold, and not lukewarm. Ecumenism is a loathsome mixture of lukewarmness, the very spirit of the “Apostasy”<sup>40</sup> that aims to lead astray even the elect.<sup>41</sup> For all who are embroiled in this apostasy or who follow such an erroneous path out of imprudence or cowardice the possibility of repentance always remains open, according to the Lord’s salvific exhortation: “Be zealous therefore, and repent.”<sup>42</sup>

By the Grace of God we belong to the small flock which maintains our Holy Faith free from innovation, as it has received it from that contemporary Father of the Church, the Holy Hierarch Philaret the New Confessor, as a way of thinking and as a rule of Church order. This, moreover, is the true meaning of the Apostolic Succession that we possess, which is certified and confirmed by the Saint in question and by his Synod.

Experiencing the miracle of our Union in the Genuine Orthodox Church since last year, and being in communion with Genuine Ortho-

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<sup>38</sup> Revelation 3:11. This brief text is reproduced in the aforementioned “Biography of Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky),” <http://eadiocese.org/History/mp.en.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> See Revelation 3:16.

<sup>40</sup> See II Thessalonians 2:3.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. St. Matthew 24:24.

<sup>42</sup> Revelation 3:19.

dox of other nationalities, with the prospect of a yet broader proclamation of our Confession of the Orthodox Faith and of a joint condemnation of the cacodoxy of ecumenism<sup>43</sup> on the basis of the 1983 Anathema, we entrust ourselves to the protection of our Lady, the Theotokos, and to the prayers of all the Saints from ages past, and especially of the boast of contemporary Orthodoxy, the Holy Metropolitan Philaret, so that in unity and unto death we might maintain inviolate the precious treasure of the Faith, bearing witness thereto through a life consistent with our Confession and allowing the “Light of Christ” to become manifest and to shine “upon all,” to the glory of His Holy Church. Amen!

Thank you!



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<sup>43</sup> See the Common Ecclesiological Statement of March 2014: “The True Orthodox Church and the Heresy of Ecumenism: Dogmatic and Canonical Issues,” <http://hsir.org/p/be>.