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Anti-Ecumenist and Anti-Papist  
(1922-2004)



### 3. Ecclesiological Ostriches\*

by Professor Andreas Theodorou (†)

**I**n the 5 January (1988) issue of the Uniate newspaper *Καθολικὴ*, we read: “In the first part of the Liturgy—the Liturgy of the Word—the two Archpastors performed a true concelebration, proof of the partial, yet real, communion of the two Churches”!

This publication, which refers to the recent “concelebration” that took place in Rome, and in which Pope John Paul II of Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios took part, clearly echoes the views on union espoused by the Uniates in Greece and, by extension, by all of Latin theology and the entire Latin Church. Similar views have perhaps been adopted by certain ultra-ecumenist Orthodox—I shudder at the mere suspicion that something similar might happen also in the official centers of the Orthodox Church!

In any case, since this publication has the potential for multiplying the confusion surrounding the dialogue for union and the efforts of the two Churches (the Latin “Church,” always within quotation marks), I wish to express the following thoughts of mine with the sole purpose of providing information for the Orthodox people, since they are the innocent victims of the blows inflicted by the calamitous tempest of ecumenism.

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**T**he assessments offered by *Καθολικὴ* are groundless, false, and inconsistent. A true concelebration did not occur in Rome, as this newspaper asserts. What took place was simply a “concelebration” (within

quotation marks)—a theatrical presentation, without any substantial foundation, an unlawful and impermissible ecclesiological spectacle, a feckless and incongruous caper, an undertaking completely divorced from the truth.

I have had occasion in the past to set forth my views on the notion of a true concelebration, that is, the participation of Hierarchs who are of the same belief in the Divine Liturgy (the soul of which is the offering of the Divine Eucharist), at which the Church expresses her catholicity and unity: one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.

In the ancient Church, as is well known, from a certain point and thereafter Catechumens were excluded even from attending the Divine Liturgy. Although they believed, they had not yet been grafted through Baptism into the body of the Church and were, naturally, excluded from communion of the Immaculate Mysteries. All the more excluded were heretics and schismatics, who had absolutely no access to the public Divine worship of the Church.

We put this question to *Καθολικὴ*: Does it accept these truths? If yes, how does it presume to speak about a true concelebration between Churches which are separated from each other, obviously do not have the same faith, and disagree on fundamental dogmatic truths?

If, on the other hand, it does not accept them, then the idea of catholicity in which it believes and which constitutes its banner is placed in serious dispute.

Catholicity is a basic attribute of the Church, in which she believes, which is ascribed to her by the Symbol of Faith (“in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church”), and which, like the geographical conception of the term (*τὸ καθόλου*, i.e., that which exists or tends to predominate throughout the world), has also an inward meaning, which expresses the unity of the Church:

*The Church is Catholic because she is one, that is, wherever she exists and in whatever period of time she lives, holding and confessing the same Faith (as she has received it from the Apostles and the Lord), the same Mysteries, the same Divine worship, and the same way of life. From this standpoint of Catholicity it is understandable why a particular local Church can be called Catholic (“Polycarp...Bishop of the Catholic Church in Smyrna”).*

I do not believe that *Καθολικὴ* is unaware of these things.

Moreover, the Church which it represents boasts loudly about her “catholicity,” for she calls herself the “Catholic Church.”

We are, of course, talking in this case about an arrogation of the attribute of catholicity, which does not belong to her, since she lost it long ago by her falling away from the dogmatic wholeness of the Apostolic Tradition and by her adulteration—through Papal primacy—of the synodal polity of the Church handed down from antiquity.

The Orthodox Eastern Church, which has remained faithful to the Catholicity of the ancient united Church, maintaining unshakably “what has been believed at all times, everywhere, and by all” (St. Vincent of Lérins), is alone the Catholic Church.

Also familiar are the battles of the Latin Church against heretics of every stripe, whom she has persecuted ruthlessly and even for small and insignificant reasons (through the Holy Inquisition), the Scholastic elaboration and formulation of her dogmas, so as to preclude even the slightest chinks in her dogmatic system and the possibility of any independent theological thought, and the many oppressive controls (such as the notorious imprimatur) which have, until recently, licensed the publication of Latin theological writings.

On the other hand, we are aware of the inconsistent attitude and practice (in relation to the foregoing) of this Church, which, basing herself on a peculiar and flexible understanding of tradition, has found it easy to create new dogmas and to introduce—whenever she deems it expedient—many dogmatic innovations (e.g., the celebration of Baptism by aspersion, the deprivation by the laity of communion from the Blood of Christ, etc.).

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**W**hat is going on, then? Is *Καθολικὴ* forgetting its “catholicity”? How can it allow itself, on the one hand, to be called “Catholic,” but on the other hand to be involved in an unacceptable ecclesiological syncretism? Or is it perhaps serving—yoked, as it is, to the chariot of ecumenism—other clearly framed and calculated plans?

These questions are, of course, rather naïve. For, what is *Καθολικὴ*? An organ of the Unia. And what is the Unia? A bizarre mixture of Orthodoxy and Papism. A pitiful and grotesque specimen of ecclesio-

logical syncretism. The hands are those of Esau, but the face and the voice those of Jacob. It is a motley, incoherent hodgepodge of heterogeneous elements. It is enough merely for the head of the body to be the Pope. Nothing else has as much importance as submission to the primacy and authority of the Latin Pontiff. This, par excellence, constitutes the ecclesiological identity of the Unia: faith in and dedication to the Pope, and enlistment in the missionary work of the Holy See.

And this it endeavors to persuade us to do, following its own example, to recognize the Pope as the visible head of our Church; to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage; to accept the massive ecclesiological falsehoods of Papal Primacy and Infallibility, dogmas which today even Latin theologians reject; to stifle our ecclesiological conscience, to sell our Orthodoxy, to deviate from our dogmas, to become salt without savor, to be sprinkled nonchalantly on the table of Papism; to offer “earth and water” to him who has heaped so much suffering on the body of Orthodoxy; to collaborate in satisfying the inflated lust for power and the unrestrained autocracy and imperiousness of the Bishop of Rome, whose unceasing dream has always been the subjugation of the Eastern Church!

Could it be, indeed, that the Unia costs us so little?

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**F**inally, *Καθολικὴ* falls into another glaring inconsistency when it says that the concelebration that took place was a sign of partial but real communion between the Churches!

Admittedly, we do not understand the reasoning of *Καθολικὴ*. We do know that real communion entails catholicity. When you truly commune with something, you commune with it in its whole being. To commune with only one part and not with the rest of it means that you are not moving in the correct catholic domain of the thing. You are admitting that it is amiss in some way. There is a void, a gap, which renders true unity and communion impossible. In other words, you cannot agree on something and at the same time disagree on it. This can happen only with spurious things and situations.

The fact that the Archdeacon of the Patriarchate attended the celebration of the Roman Mass in his liturgical vestments and recited cer-

tain prayers, while the Primates of the Churches exchanged messages and good wishes and recited the Symbol of Faith without the Filioque (something that does not amount to much, as we underscored in our previous article), or, more broadly, the fact that the two Churches both have seven Mysteries, does not mean that they have—even partial—real communion with each other.

Let us repeat what we have stressed before: the problem is not the partial agreement of the Churches, but their partial disagreement.

I would emphasize again the example of the bodily organism. The eyes, the feet, the head, and the whole of the rest of the organism may be absolutely healthy; but when the lung is diseased, e.g., suffers from cancer, of what use is the health of the rest of the body?

The same applies in the realm of ecclesiology. The good health of the Churches is not as significant as their illness. The same goes for heresies, too. The otherwise correct faith of a heretic is of no importance; what matters is his wrong belief and his error.

Apollinarios, the Bishop of Laodicea in Syria, for instance, a Prelate of the early Church, though a distinguished theologian, was nonetheless condemned by the Church because he impugned the fullness of Christ's human nature.

*Καθολικὴ*, it would seem, follows the general principle of ecumenism: since there are many points that unite us, let us proceed on the basis of these to the unity and union of the Churches.

A great error! As long as the cancer of a diseased ecclesiology is not excised, as long as error is not purged, and there is not a return (on the part of Rome) to the dogmatic purity and truth of the original, united Church of the Lord, it is impossible for the evil to be cured.

The ongoing theological dialogue between the two Churches ought to work seriously to this end with understanding and love.

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**L**et *Καθολικὴ*, therefore, stop burying its head in the sand over matters of ecclesiology.

The fact that it entrenches itself behind certain spectacular displays of unity, and on the strength of this brags that there exists a real—albeit partial—unity between the divided Churches, is neither

of any avail to itself nor of any service to its wider struggle. For, it has yet to persuade us of the correctness of what it says.

For our part, naturally, we do not believe *Καθολική*, because we know what it is all about, what its goals and its aspirations are. It is no friend of Orthodoxy. It was founded for the sole purpose of realizing the missionary visions and designs of the Papacy. With deviousness and a variety of maneuvers it endeavors to undermine us step by step and to bind us to the chariot of Roman expansionism.

And it now gloats because ill-conceived ecumenism is offering it a helping hand.

But let it be well aware that *“the sentries know what is going on”!*

\* Source: *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 774 (29 January 1987).