

What Should Be Done “for the Union and Harmony of the Church”?*

“Presuppositions” and “Challenges”

In the ecclesiastical monthly, *Στῦλος Ὁρθοδοξίας*, there recently appeared an article by its pious and well-intentioned editor, Mr. Dionysios Makris, with the intriguing title, “Let Us Begin to Consider the Question of Apostolic Succession.”¹

Mr. Makris, who has repeatedly presented articles expressing a sincere disposition to put an end, once and for all, to the division between the Old Calendarist Orthodox and the innovationist Orthodox, puts forward, in his latest publication, an opinion which “was formulated for *Στῦλος Ὁρθοδοξίας* by Hierarchs belonging to the Church of Greece” and which runs as follows:

It is imperative that all of the communities which observe the Old Calendar begin considering the question of Apostolic Succession and that they all produce relevant texts or documents that would contribute in a substantial way to the inauguration of a constructive dialogue with the official Church. This would be an essential step towards unity.... If the leaders of the Old Calendarist communities were to do something like this, a *rapprochement* with some of these communities would be more feasible.²

• In response to these observations, the Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists would put forth, for the moment, the following two points of view:

1. “*Unworthy of the Episcopacy.*” At the Seventh Œcumenical Synod (Nicæa, 787), Savvas, “the most reverend monk and Abbot of Studios,” prayed to God that He would might protect “our good Masters [Bishops],” who had taken care to see that “this Holy Synod was assembled for the union and harmony of the Church.”³

At no time since 1924 (and more especially since 1935, when three Metropolitans [Chrysostomos of Florina, Germanos of Demetrius, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos—*Trans.*] “walled themselves off” [from the State Church—*Trans.*]), when they provoked “separation,” “division,” “discord,” and “contention,”⁴ have the innovating New Calendarist Hierarchs ever convened a “Holy Synod” “in order to unite what has been sundered.”⁵

Quite to the contrary. They have sponsored persecutions of the Old Calendarist anti-innovationists of such intensity, and of such a kind, that “the innovating Hierarchs became worse persecutors than the Greek State.”⁶

The Orthodox blood of the persecuted resisters, who rightly refused to accept the innovation in the Festal Calendar

stained the churches, streets, and squares of the Greek land. The images formed in these anti-Christian persecutions were wholly heart-rending. Christians with the Cross in their hands were beaten like utter knaves. Mothers and white-haired old women were stomped on by the police agents, Priests were tortured, blood flowed, and the death toll mounted.⁶

This means that, if a “Holy Synod” were ever to be convened “in order to unite what has been sundered,” the first prerequisite for an “essential step towards unity”¹ would certainly not be that of raising the “question of the Apostolic Succession” of the anti-innovationists, who have been persecuted (and are still being persecuted) in a crude, inhumane, un-Christian, and unjust fashion, but the deposition and removal of the persecuting Hierarchs of the innovationist Church.

The issue of Bishops who had been persecutors was posed at the unifying Seventh Œcumenical Synod:

The most holy Patriarch Tarasios said: ‘If a Bishop has inflicted any blows and torments whatever on men who fear the Lord and who were being persecuted at a given time, he is unworthy of the Episcopacy.’ The Holy Synod replied: ‘He is unworthy.’⁷

- If we were to give a more expansive interpretation of the phrase “any blows and torments whatever,” we would find that “persecutions” (of various kinds) continue undiminished (and even on the Holy Mountain, which is considered a “bastion of Orthodoxy” and a “garden of mental prayer”).

2. Unconditional dialogues with the heterodox. Today, the Orthodox ecumenists are conducting official, bilateral dialogues with the Anglicans (since 1973), with the Old Catholics (since 1975), with the Papists (since 1980), with the Lutherans (since 1981), with the Monophysites or Non-Chalcedonians (since 1985), as well as with the Reformed churches and, at a preliminary stage, with the Methodists and Baptists.⁸

Likewise, our Orthodox ecumenists, who are active members of the World Council of Churches, are taking part in very broad and multilateral dialogues, which means, in essence, that they are in dialogue with all of the heterodox communities belonging to this pan-confessional Geneva-based organization, that is, with its three hundred forty-two constituent communities.

It should also be noted that the Orthodox ecumenists participate in many other dialogues at the continental, regional, national, and local levels.

The Orthodox ecumenists, therefore, have inaugurated, and are carrying on, dialogues with the entire spectrum of the heterodox (indeed, with the most “unlikely” of groups, such as the Salvation Army temperance league), without a single precondition or dogmatic minimum (the Trinitarian “basis” of the WCC)—and even with those of other religions, on the precondition of “monotheism.”

For a century, the Orthodox ecumenists, contrary to Synodal and Patristic Tradition, have been engaged in dialogue of an astonishing kind, hobnobbing in various ways with heretics who are definitely deprived of “Apostolic Succession”; at the same time, they relentlessly and murderously persecuted the Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists.

And when, at last, the innovationists feel the need to “inaugurate a constructive dialogue,” they propose as a prerequisite “the question of Apostolic Succession,” something which they have certainly never considered necessary before sitting down with pastors, women pastors, and women bishops at the round table of ecumenical dialogue! [An inanity made all the more objectionable and questionable by the fact that the Greek Old Calendarists derive their Apostolic Succession from the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, with which, until Metropolitan Philaret began, in the 1960s, to criticize their excessive ecumenical activities, both the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate had liturgical communion—*Trans.*]

• Now, can it be that this “challenge” will bring the Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists to the end of their rope, since, in the end, it involves effrontery that is worse than any persecution?

Notes

1. *Στῦλος Ὁρθοδοξίας*, No. 14 (June 2001), p. 22.
2. See, for example, *Στῦλος Ὁρθοδοξίας*, No. 1 (May 2000), pp. 14-15 (“An Interview with Metropolitan Peter of Aksum”); No. 8 (December 2000), p. 24 («Ἡ ἀναγκαιότητα τοῦ διορθοδόξου διαλόγου» [“The Necessity of Inter-Orthodox Dialogue”]); No. 13 (May 2001), p. 31 (“A Letter from Great Protopresbyter George Tsetsis and a Response by Dionysios Makris”).
3. Mansi, Vol. XII, col. 1118E; *Πρακτικά τῶν Ἁγίων καὶ Οἰκουμενικῶν Συνόδων* [*Proceedings of the Holy Ecumenical Synods*], ed. Spyridon Melias (Holy Mountain: Kalyve of the Venerable Forerunner Publications, 1981), Vol. II, p. 758b.
4. Mansi, Vol. XII, cols. 1003D, 1130B, and 1154C; *Πρακτικά*, Vol. II, pp. 728b, 762a, and 768b.
5. Mansi, Vol. XII, col. 1126D; *Πρακτικά*, Vol. II, p. 761a.
6. A.D. Delembasis, *Πάσχα Κυρίου* [*The Lord’s Pascha*] (Athens: 1985), p. 755.
7. Mansi, Vol. XII, col. 1115C; *Πρακτικά*, Vol. II, p. 758a.
8. Great Protopresbyter George Tsetsis, «Οἱ Διμερεῖς Θεολογικοὶ Διάλογοι μεταξύ Ἐτεροδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν σὲ συνάφεια πρὸς τοὺς Διμερεῖς Διαλόγους τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας» [“The Bilateral Theological Dialogues Between Heterodox Churches in Relation to the Bilateral Theological Dialogues of the Orthodox Church”], *Ὁρθοδοξία* (Constantinople) (April-August 1995), pp. 243ff.

* Source: *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (2002), pp. 37-39.