

its jurisdiction over the regions at issue and to justify the requirement that it approve the list of eligible candidates for the Episcopacy.

Without the approval and blessing of the Œcumenical Patriarchate, the election of Hierarchs for the regions at issue constitutes an “intrusion” into the jurisdiction of another Church, which is severely penalized by the Sacred Canons.

It is on the basis of these Sacred Canons that the plenary Synod which convened in the Phanar reconfirmed the Patriarchal and Synodal Act of 1928 and penalized Archbishop Christodoulos by breaking communion with him.

The argumentation and the canonical grounds of the decision are irrefutable, and for this reason the Archbishop was obliged to retreat in disarray. For some months, he appears to have forgotten that Church affairs are administered and governed by the Sacred Canons, for he has been invoking the laws of the State, legality, and Cæsar himself, against whom he has in the past even preached disobedience, with his well-known slogan: “Let us allow the laws to sleep.”²

2. In Vain and With Losses

HOWEVER, we are not, here, going to concern ourselves with, or comment on, the course and the happy ending of the crisis, though from the way in which it ended it is quite evident that the problem was created in vain and without good reason—notwithstanding allegations to the contrary in Greek ecclesiastical circles—, since the party that provoked this crisis within Greek Orthodoxy not only did not gain anything from it, but, on the contrary, lost everything that had become established ecclesiastical custom during the period when the Patriarchal Act of 1928 was in effect.

But what sense is there in creating and perpetuating a problem, when in the end one not only does not gain anything from its resolution, but even loses out? This is reminiscent of the popular adage about cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face.

3. They Are Supported by the Acclamations of Worldly People

IN THE PRESENT article, we wish to express our sorrow and deepest distress about what occurred during the visit of Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Rome on the occasion of the Patronal Feast of the Roman Catholic Church and of the fortieth anniversary of the meeting between Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem (January 1964).

We do not have our head in the clouds. We know that ecumenism, globalization, and secularization have fostered a syncretistic mentality, have altered and corrupted traditional standards, and have inculcated in almost everyone the notion that one should not lay claim to the truth in an exclusive way, that the truth is to be found everywhere, here and there, in Buddhism, in Judaism, in Islam, and in Christianity, that there is such a thing as multiculturalism, and that the “culture of cultures” is to recognize pluralism itself, and even the twelve deities of pagan Greek idolatry, the raging fury of which is epitomized by the “sacred” flame of the Olympic Games, while Bishops, Archbishops, and Patriarchs are not only asleep, but even endorse and collaborate with the things being perpetrated and with their perpetrators.

All who believe, as do all of the Saints and Fathers in unbroken succession, and with one mind and one accord, that Christ is the only Way, Truth, and Life, that He is the Truth and the Light, that the Orthodox Church is the only true Church, and that all other Christian confessions, in the West and the East, are heresies and schism—those who believe “with all the Saints”—constitute a tiny minority, despised, slandered, and persecuted.

The majority acclaim and laud ecumenist ventures, interfaith gatherings, joint prayers, false reconciliations, false unions, and false peace, because they have not been taught about or heard about true prayer and worship, true unity and love, or true peace.

We do not have our head in the clouds, therefore, nor are we deceiving ourselves. We know that the world runs after worldly and secularized clergy, applauds and welcomes them, gives them high ratings in opinion polls, and promotes their actions, words, and gather-

ings everywhere under the sun as being of a piece with globalization and the New Age.

The teaching of the Gospel and the Saints is kept hidden, because it drives out the darkness of error which multiculturalism, ecumenism, and relativization of the truth entail by their very nature.

4. The Sacred Canons Should Be Adhered to Unwaveringly, Not Selectively

THE TEACHING of the Gospel and the Fathers is kept hidden, “but is not bound” (II St. Timothy 2:9).

On the basis, therefore, of the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Catholic Church, and in keeping with the stand that we maintained during the recent ecclesiastical crisis, upholding the canonicity of the claims of the Œcumenical Patriarchate and supporting not persons, but principles, we will emphasize again and again that adherence to the Sacred Canons should not be selective, but unwavering and absolute.

Canonicity gains additional force, not when it is applied to claims concerning rank and jurisdiction, sees, prerogatives, and commemorations, in which it is possible for ignoble motivations such as egotism and primacy to intrude, but when it is applied above all to matters of faith, because these have to do with unselfish, disinterested, and dispassionate love for God and His Holy Church, the truth of which must remain genuine and unadulterated unto the ages.

Therefore, just as we insisted upon the canonicity of the claims put forward by the Œcumenical Patriarchate and championed this age-old and unique institution of the Orthodox Catholic Church, we now proclaim that the joint participation of the Patriarch and the Pope in the Mass celebrated on the afternoon of 29 June in St. Peter’s Square constitutes a flagrant violation of the Sacred Canons, which the Patriarchate used to observe with a literally religious reverence, because they safeguard the purity and authenticity of the Orthodox Faith.

Are we, therefore, to shore up an institution, which, in the course of the Church’s history, and if God so judges, could even disappear,

solely because this institution is bound by racial ties to the Greek people? We certainly hope that such a thing will not happen, but, on the basis of its apostasy from the Faith during the last century, we cannot exclude this possibility.

Are we, too, going to succumb to the odious heresy of phyletism?

Are we going to put our lineage and our fatherland before our Faith, before our Heavenly homeland, before the truth of the Gospel, which transcends racial differences, and the Tradition of the Holy Fathers? Are we going to bury our heads in the sand like ostriches, so as to avoid seeing and admitting that what was done and said in Rome debases the Canons of the Church and infringes her canonicity—in this case, indeed, not regarding matters of primacy and jurisdiction, but regarding matters of Faith?

5. Not Boasting, but Repentance and Forgiveness

HERESY IS, by definition, an offense against dogma and the Faith.

Joint prayer with heretics signifies an acceptance of heresy in practice, for which reason it is condemned by the Sacred Canons.

Papism has not one, but dozens of heresies and errors. Let those who govern the Church make an effort to discern and plumb the conscience of the Church as this has been expressed in synodal and Patristic texts throughout the centuries in a continuous and unbroken succession, and let them unshackle themselves from the twentieth century, the century of apostasy and captivity to ecumenism. Not only should we not glory in ecumenism or organize celebrations in honor of it, such as the fortieth anniversary of the meeting between the Patriarch and the Pope in Jerusalem or the centennial of the much-trumpeted Patriarchal Encyclicals of 1902 and 1904 (not to mention that of 1920), which were followed by the chastening blow of the tragedy in Asia Minor; we should, rather, humble ourselves and ask forgiveness for having torn the robe of Christ through these ecumenical ventures and for having provoked schisms and divisions—

and not only among Greeks—, schisms which continue to wound the body of the Church to this day,

Who is going to ask forgiveness for these schisms, and who is going to take responsibility for healing them?

Is this the nature of our pastoral knowledge and our pastoral therapy, that we injure the body of the Church again and again, and that we compound her wounds, unrestrained by those fundamental precepts of spiritual medicine that check the spread of the diseases of heresy and schism, namely, the Sacred Canons, which unequivocally and categorically prohibit joint prayer with heretics?

In the words of the Forty-fifth Canon of the Holy Apostles, which was subsequently corroborated by numerous Canons issued by Œcumenical and local Synods, and also by Church Fathers: “Let a Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon, who has merely prayed with heretics be excommunicated; but if he has permitted them to perform any clerical function, let him be deposed.”

6. Excommunication and Deposition

WHAT SYNOD, therefore, plenary or non-plenary, will be convened, and by which Bishops, to impose not only the penalty of excommunication on all who, in recent decades, have shamelessly prayed with heretics, but also the punishment of deposition on all who permit the Pope, Cardinals, and non-Orthodox clergy to bless Orthodox believers?

We will return to these issues in a second article and show that these Canons are still completely applicable, that they have been rigidly upheld—at the Council of Florence-Ferrara, for example—, that even the Œcumenical Patriarchate, before it became habituated to the spiritual derangement engendered by ecumenism, recommended their enforcement, and that what was done and said in Rome—a repetition of previous visits and meetings—is not simply a matter of joint prayer, but rather of concelebration, since the Divine Liturgy is indivisible.

* **Source:** *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 1559 (16 July 2004), pp. 3-4.

Notes

1. The “New Territories” are those regions in northern Greece that were liberated from Ottoman control after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, namely, Epiros, Ellasson (in Thessaly), Macedonia, Western Thrace, and islands of the Eastern Ægean. According to the provisions of the 1928 Patriarchal Act, the Œcumenical Patriarchate retains canonical and spiritual rights over thirty-six dioceses in the “New Territories” and the right to approve the list of candidates to fill a vacant metropolitan see, while the administration of these dioceses is the responsibility of the Church of Greece. The Metropolitans of these dioceses, though members of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, are also required to commemorate the Œcumenical Patriarch rather than the Archbishop of Athens.

2. Cf. Plutarch, *Life of Agesilaos*, ch. 30.