



The Participation by Patriarch Bartholomew in the Patronal Feast of Papist Rome is Anti-Patristic

The Decree (Όρος) of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ Concerning Latin Pseudo-Baptism, Issued in 1755

*“Those converting from the Latins
must incontrovertibly, indispensably,
and necessarily be baptized.”¹*

(St. Athanasios of Paros)

ACCORDING to St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “the Latins are inveterate heretics.”² The heretical Roman Catholics, as is well known, do not have Baptism, but sprinkling (ράντισμα), which is certainly contrary to the Orthodox Faith and to the sanctified practice of our Church.

The sprinkling of the Latins, “[s]ince it is administered in heresy, i.e. outside the Church, ...is in itself without substance.... It cannot be

¹ Cited in Monk Theodoretos, *Μοναχισμός και Αἵρεσις* [Monasticism and Heresy] (Athens: 1977), pp. 263ff.

² *Ἴερὸν Πηδάλιον* [Sacred Rudder], 8th ed. (Athens: Ekdotikos Oikos “Aster,” 1976), p. 55, n.

accepted by *economia* when Latins convert, for it is imperfect.”³

After a period of fluctuation between exactitude (ἀκρίβεια) and œconomy (οἰκονομία), the Synod in Constantinople in 1755 under Œcumenical Patriarch Cyril v decided upon and ultimately mandated Baptism [for the reception] of Roman Catholics.

The Decree of the Holy Synod was signed by Patriarchs Cyril of Constantinople, Matthew of Alexandria, and Parthenios of Jerusalem. Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch would also have signed it “had he not been on an alms-seeking visit to Russia and had his throne not been snatched in his absence by a usurper.”⁴

The Decree “continues to be the Orthodox Church’s last official decision on the issue.”⁵ It was first published in the work *Παντισμοῦ Σηλίτευσις* (probably composed by Christopher of Aitolia) (pp. 173-176). It was reprinted in Vol. xxxviii of the continuation of *Mansi’s Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* edited by Jean-Baptiste Martin and Louis Petit (cols. 617c-621a).

The translation that follows is based on the rendition by Priestmonk Seraphim appended (pp. 133-136) to his translation of the extremely illuminating and valuable work by Protopresbyter George D. Metallinos, *I Confess One Baptism...* (Holy Mountain: St. Paul’s Monastery, 1994). It has, however, been emended in a number of places, and all of the Scriptural and Patristic references have been added in footnotes. It has also been checked against the older translation by William Palmer, which is found on pp. 199-202 of his *Dissertations on Subjects Relating to the “Orthodox” or “Eastern-Catholic” Communion* (London: Joseph Masters, 1853).



³ Protopresbyter George D. Metallinos, *I Confess One Baptism...*, trans. Priestmonk Seraphim (Holy Mountain: St. Paul’s Monastery, 1994), p. 77.

⁴ Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 358.

⁵ Metallinos, *I Confess One Baptism...*, p. 94.

The Text of the Decree (Όρος)

THERE being many means through which we are vouchsafed our salvation, and these, so to speak, being interlinked and interconnected in a ladderlike manner, in that they all look to the same end, the first of such means is Baptism, which was entrusted by God to the Sacred Apostles, inasmuch as without it the rest are inefficacious. For Scripture says: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”⁶ For it was altogether fitting that, whereas the first birth brings man into this mortal life, another, more mystical mode of generation should be found, one neither beginning from corruption not terminating therein, through which it would be possible for us to imitate the Author of our salvation,⁷ Jesus Christ. For the water of Baptism in the font is understood as a womb and becomes the birth for him who is born, as Chrysostomos says;⁸ while the Spirit that descends into the water is understood as God, Who forms the embryo. And just as He, after being placed in the sepulchre, returned to life on the third day, so those who believe, going under the water instead of the earth, in three immersions depict in themselves the Grace of the three-day Resurrection,⁹ the water being sanctified by the descent of the All-Holy Spirit, so that the body might be illumined by visible water and that the soul might receive sanctification by the invisible Spirit. For just as the water in a cauldron partakes of the heat of the fire, so the water in the font is likewise transformed by the energy of the Spirit into Divine power,¹⁰ cleansing those who are thus baptized and making them worthy of adoption as sons. But as for those who are initiated in any other way,

⁶ St. John 3:5.

⁷ Hebrews 2:10.

⁸ “Homily xxvi on St. John,” §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIX, col. 153.

⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, “Homily ‘On the Baptism of Christ,’” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLVI, col. 585b.

¹⁰ Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on St. John*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXIII, col. 245a.

instead of granting them cleansing and adoption, it renders them impure and sons of darkness.

Since, therefore, the question arose three years ago now as to whether the baptisms of heretics, which are administered contrary to the tradition of the Holy Apostles and Divine Fathers and contrary to the custom and ordinance of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, are to be accepted when they come over to us: we, as having by Divine mercy been raised in the Orthodox Church, following the Canons of the Sacred Apostles and the Divine Fathers, acknowledging only one—our own—Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and accepting her Mysteries and, consequently, her Divine Baptism, abhor by common verdict all of those rites—the inventions of corrupt men— administered by heretics not as the Holy Spirit commanded the Sacred Apostles and as the Church of Christ performs them to this day, knowing them to be strange and alien to the entire Apostolic Tradition. And such as come over to us from them we receive as unordained and unbaptized, following our Lord Jesus Christ, Who enjoined His Disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”;¹¹ [following] the Sacred and Divine Apostles, who command us to baptize proselytes with three immersions and emersions, and at each of the immersions to pronounce one Name of the Holy Trinity;¹² following the Sacred Dionysios, equal to the Apostles, who tells us “to baptize the proselyte, stripped of every garment, thrice in a font containing sanctified water and oil, invoking the threefold Hypostasis of the Divine Blessedness, and, as soon as he has been baptized, to seal him with the most divinizing Chrism and to render him thenceforth a participant in the most sanctifying Eucharist”;¹³ and following the Second¹⁴ and Quinisext¹⁵ Œcumenical Synods, which decree that we receive as unbaptized those coming to Orthodoxy who were not baptized with three immersions and

¹¹ St. Matthew 28:19.

¹² Fiftieth Canon of the Holy Apostles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν Κανόνων* [Collection of the Divine and Sacred Canons], ed. G. Ralles and M. Potles (Athens: G. Chartophylax, 1852–1859), Vol. II, p. 66.

¹³ *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, ch. II, §7, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. III, col. 396cd.

¹⁴ Seventh Canon, *Σύνταγμα*, ed. Ralles and Potles, Vol. II, pp. 187–188.

¹⁵ Ninety-fifth Canon, *ibid.*, pp. 529–530.

emersions and who did not invoke one of the Divine Hypostases at each immersion, but were baptized in some other fashion.

Therefore, we also, following these Divine and sacred decrees, deem the baptisms of heretics worthy of rejection and abhorrence as being disconsonant with and alien to the Divine Apostolic edict and as ineffectual waters, as the Divine Ambrose¹⁶ and St. Athanasios the Great¹⁷ say, since they provide no sanctification to those who receive them, nor are they of any avail to the cleansing of sins. We receive as unbaptized those who come over to the Orthodox Faith, who were baptized without being baptized, and without any hazard¹⁸ we baptize them in accordance with the Apostolic and Synodal Canons, upon which Christ's Holy, Apostolic, and Catholic Church, the common Mother of us all, firmly rests. On the occasion of this our joint determination and declaration we seal this our Decree, which is consonant with the Apostolic and Synodal ordinances, confirming it by our signatures.

In the year of salvation 1755,

† Cyril, by the mercy of God Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Œcumenical Patriarch

† Matthew, by the mercy of God Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria, and Judge of the Œcumene

† Parthenios, by the mercy of God Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine

Source: *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνστάσις καὶ Μαρτυρία*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April-June 1986), pp. 81-83.



¹⁶ Cf. “The baptism of the ungodly [perfidorum] does not heal or cleanse, but pollutes” (*On the Mysteries*, ch. 4, §23, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. xvi, col. 395b).

¹⁷ Cf. “And these, too, [the Arians] are in danger of losing the fullness of the Mystery, I mean Baptism; for if the initiation is given to us into the Name of Father and Son, and they do not affirm a true Father, because they deny what is from Him and similar to His Essence, and deny also the true Son, and name another of their own fashioning as created out of nothing, is not the rite administered by them altogether empty and unprofitable, having an outward appearance, but in reality being of no help towards true religion? For the Arians do not baptize into Father and Son, but into Creator and creature, and into Maker and work” (*Second Oration Against the Arians*, ch. 42, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxvi, cols. 236c-237a).

¹⁸ That is, of sinning through unjustifiably performing a second Baptism—TRANS.