



† Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle

**The Eternal Boundaries of Orthodoxy
and the “New Ecclesiology”
of the Ecumenists**

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Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece
Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle



**Homily on the Occasion of the Restoration of the Holy Icons (843)
Sunday of Orthodoxy, 2015**

**The Eternal Boundaries of Orthodoxy
and the “New Ecclesiology”
of the Ecumenists***

*† Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Phyle*

In holy memory of our Elder
and Father, Metropolitan Cyprian,
of blessed memory
(†May 17, 2013 [Old Style])

Your Beatitude, our Archbishop and Father;
Right Reverend Bishop Photios of Marathon;
Reverend Fathers and Brothers;
Venerable Monks and Nuns;



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I. The “Nameday” of Our Holy Church

Glory to God for all things!

Invoking the Grace of the Precious and Life-giving Cross and the protection of the Mother of God, let us pray, I beseech you, at this sacred moment, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, that we may be granted a good word, and also good ears and hearts, for our edification, consolation, and fortification in the Orthodox Confession.

On this radiant day, our Holy Church celebrates her Nameday: the names and adjectives “Orthodoxy” and “Orthodox” have been assigned to the One and only Church of the Apostles and the Fathers.

And the reason for this is evident: it behooves the Orthodox Church to distinguish herself clearly and fully from all of those heterodox Christian communities which think otherwise, that is, differently from and antithetically to our right-believing Most Holy Church.

The adjective “Orthodox” is derived from “ὀρθῶς δοκέω” (to think or believe correctly). This appellation emphasizes the correct belief, the correct attitude (φρόνημα), and the correct view concerning the Truth of the Faith that our Holy Church has handed down to us, safeguarded, lived, and proclaimed, for the salvation of the world.

Heresy, cacodoxy, and error have constantly threatened, throughout the centuries, to destroy our Divinely established Church, that is, her unity in right belief and right practice.

It is precisely for this reason that this day has been designated the Feast of Orthodoxy:

it is the festal expression of the Triumph of the right Faith; it is the manifestation of the indestructible power of the Orthodoxy of the Church; it is the Feast of the self-understanding of the Orthodox East.¹

Today, on this Sunday, the Orthodox Church declares with profound and unshakable conviction that

(she) is not one of many Churches, one that stands on a parallel and equal footing with the many Christian churches that exist today; she is not a partial or fragmentary church; she is not *a* Church, but *the* Church.²

Orthodoxy is Catholic—complete and entire; she is, and is identical with, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of the Symbol of Faith: the Church which our Savior, the God-Man, founded.

Today, then, the First Sunday of the Fast, our Most Holy Church renews her Confession with the greatest solemnity; she honors her Nameday; she gives thanks to our Lord, Who has kept her garment all-pure and has preserved her as His spotless Bride, as “the Bride of God, an unsullied Virgin Church, snow-white of body, chaste, blameless, and beloved.”³

Every heterodox Christian community, through heresy and schism, in essence does not have a name, having lost its true and proper name, since it has rejected the Catholicity and fullness of the right Faith, of Orthodoxy.

Heterodoxy is nameless, bearing false names, and dead in the sight of God, since it has squandered the wealth of Divine Truth and living Orthodoxy:

Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. . . . Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.⁴

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

II. The Eternal Boundaries of Orthodoxy

The One and only Church, of which we have been granted the mercy of being members, therefore has a name; and this name, “Orthodoxy,” defines the boundaries of our Most Holy Church.

These boundaries, these limits, are, and remain, eternal and immovable: “Move not the eternal boundaries which thy Fathers have set.”⁵

It is her uncompromising attitude and her adherence to these eternal boundaries that have given the name “Orthodoxy” to our Holy Church.

These boundaries were set and marked out by the Holy Prophets, Apostles, Fathers, and Teachers of our Church, who taught and wrote “even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word.”⁶

The perennial mission of Orthodoxy has always been single:

To remain the steadfast yardstick of the boundaries of the Orthodox Faith, which were set once and for all by Holy Scripture and by the Apostolic Tradition preserved by the unanimous witness of the Œcumenical Synods and the Holy Fathers of the Church.⁷

In our era, in which syncretistic ecumenism not only confuses but also shifts and demolishes the eternal boundaries between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy, we ought to advert without ceasing to the immovable boundaries of the Church.

We ought to trumpet that wondrous Confession in the “Synodikon” of the Seventh Œcumenical Synod which delineates the eternal boundaries of Genuine Orthodoxy:

As the Prophets have seen, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church hath received, as Her Teachers have expressed in dogmas, as the inhabited earth hath agreed, as Grace hath shone forth, as the Truth hath been demonstrated, as falsehood hath been driven out, as wisdom hath boldly asserted, as Christ decreed, so do we think, so do we speak, so do we preach. . . . This is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith that sustaineth the inhabited earth.⁸

Syncretistic ecumenism, as an expression of a “fearfully divisive and misleading heresy,”⁹ cannot possibly maintain that the “new ecclesiology”¹⁰ which it preaches, on an individual and also on a collective basis, is this Faith of the Apostles, this Faith of the Fathers, and this Faith of the Orthodox.

The Patristic and Synodal Tradition has established with absolute clarity the eternal boundaries of Orthodoxy, so that it might never be confused with heterodoxy.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

III. Orthodox Criteria

The Orthodox criteria for recognizing Genuine Orthodoxy are made abundantly clear, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by Holy Tradition. They are, in brief, the following, in opposition and contradistinction to the “new ecclesiology”¹¹ of the “divisive and misleading heresy”¹² of ecumenism.

a. Orthodoxy believes that the One Church of Pentecost has never been divided in time into putative individual churches, segments of the One Church, whereas the Church supposedly remains One, though outside time and history.

b. Orthodoxy does not believe that the Church is

divided into two different entities: on the one hand, the Church in Heaven, outside time, the

only True and Catholic Church; on the other hand, the Church, or rather, the ‘churches,’ on earth, in time, defective and relative.¹³

c. Orthodoxy believes that “just as we could never assert that Christ is divided, so neither could we [accept] that the Church could ever be divided.”¹⁴

d. Orthodoxy does not accept the theory of the Baptismal unity or of the baptismal boundaries of the Church; nor does it accept that baptism—from whatsoever source it may derive—constitutes the “basis of a new ecumenical brotherhood,” the alleged unifying factor, the mystical bond, between Christians, even though they differ with regard to doctrinal beliefs.

e. Orthodoxy believes that the bond and unity between Apostolic teaching, Apostolic Succession, and the Holy Mysteries is indissoluble, and that the Mysteriological basis of communion in Christ exists in all of the Mysteries, which are united in a common Faith, in a common life, in a common Cup, and in a common Priesthood.

f. It is impossible for Orthodoxy to make a distinction between the “Christ of the Church” and the “Christ of other churches,” such churches differing doctrinally from one another, or to believe in any such distinction. It is also impossible for Orthodoxy to believe in a “Christ of the Mysteries,” in which mysteries divided churches can participate.

g. Orthodoxy does not believe that there exist two kinds of ecclesiastical unity: a partial or imperfect kind and a full kind, the former supposedly uniting with Christ through baptism, but not with the One True Church, and the latter supposedly offering fullness of Truth and communion.

h. Orthodoxy believes that the Grace of the Holy Spirit does act outside her charismatic, visible, and canonical boundaries, which assuredly coincide and are, in fact, identical, though not by sanctifying, illumining, and effecting salvation, but rather “by prompting those outside the Church to repent and return to the Truth and Catholicity of the One Church.”¹⁵

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

IV. In Anticipation of the Synod of 2016

The announcement of a date for the convocation by the innovating ecumenists of the so-called “Holy and Great Synod” on Pentecost of 2016 has already given rise to considerable discussions, anxieties, and soul-searching.¹⁶

What this amounts to is a Synod with a patently ecumenist outlook, the assignment of dogmatic status to a “new ecclesiology,” the ecclesiological heresy of ecumenism, and the normalization of all of its manifestations and deviations at a theoretical and at a practical level. It will unquestionably be a false synod.

It is incumbent upon us, in view of this tragedy, to be alacritous:

with thanksgiving to our Lord for granting us the mercy of being Orthodox and of belonging to the Genuine Orthodox Church;

with self-reproach and repentance, since we, too, are at risk of forsaking the Faith and falling away therefrom;

with reverence and confidence in our Shepherds, for “those charged with guarding the Faith know what needs to be done”;

with prayer for our erring brothers and sisters, since there exist among them many who are well-intentioned and disquieted;

with love and Orthopraxy, for in this way they will give serious thought to the matter and be at-

tracted to Genuine Orthodoxy.

* * *

I will conclude with a reminder that “Orthodoxy” signifies correct, innovation-free, and genuine belief, right Faith; however, it also means right glorification, that is, genuine, true, and fitting hymnody, praise, and worship of God.

This is the essence of Orthodoxy: a reciprocal relationship between right Faith and right practice. The Truth of our Faith produces right practice, and the rightness of our practice leads us to, and confirms us in, the Truth of the Faith:

Right Faith and right practice: behold the two precious pillars upon which the entire edifice of Orthodoxy is unshakably supported.¹⁷

• To the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the One and Indivisible Trinity, the only True God, unto Whom are due worship and thanksgiving. Amen!

I thank you!



Notes

*A homily delivered at the concelebrated Hierarchical Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, February 16, 2015 (Old Style), at the Church of St. Paraskeve, in Monasteraki, Athens.

1. Andreas Theodorou, *Ἡ Οὐσία τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας* (The essence of Orthodoxy), 2nd ed. (Athens: “Parousia,” 1998), pp. 18ff.

2. *Ibid.*

3. St. Methodios of Olympos, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins, or Concerning Purity*, Discourse 11 (Psalm), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XVIII, col. 212CD.

4. Revelation 3:1, 17 (to the “Angels” of Sardis and Laodicæa).

5. Proverbs 22:28.

6. Cf. St. Luke 1:2.

7. Archimandrite Spyridon S. Bilales, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμός* (Orthodoxy and Papism) (Athens: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxou Typou,” 1969), Vol. I, p. 17.

8. “*Synodikon* of the Holy and Œcumenical Seventh Synod in Defense of Orthodoxy,” in *Τριώδιον Κατανυκτικόν* (Athens: Ekdoseis “Phos,” 1987), p. 157a.

9. Metropolitan Hierotheos, “Β’ Βατικανή Σύνοδος - Ἡ νέα θεολογία καὶ ἡ νέα ἐκκλησιολογία της” (The Second Vatican Council: its new theology and new ecclesiology), *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση*, No. 220 (November 2014), p. 10.

• The basic ideas of our homily are drawn from this article, which is a rather lengthy presentation of the dissertation of Protopresbyter Peter Heers, “Ἡ ἐκκλησιολογικὴ ἀναθεώρηση τῆς Β’ Βατικανῆς Συνόδου-Μία ὀρθόδοξη διερεύνηση τοῦ Βαπτίσματος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τὸ Διάταγμα περὶ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ” (The ecclesiological reassessment of the Second Vatican Council: an Orthodox examination of the Baptism of the Church according to the “Decree on Ecumenism”).

• The most important and truly revealing point in this presentation is the author’s acknowledgement that “there are Orthodox theologians who are inspired by the decisions of Vatican II” and that “we are aware of certain Orthodox ecumenists—Hierarchs and theologians—who are animated by the same ideas of ecclesiology and baptismal theology—that is, they express themselves in almost identical terms—as those found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and of contemporary Roman Catholic theology” (*ibid.*, pp. 1-2, 10).

• See also the important article, “Ἡ Β’ Βατικανὴ Σύνοδος ἐν ὄψει τῆς μελλούσης Πανορθόδοξου Συνόδου” (The Second Vatican Council in view of the forthcoming Pan-Orthodox Synod), *Ὁ Ὅσιος Γρηγόριος*, No. 39 (2014), pp.154-166, and “Ἡ Β’ Βατικανὴ Σύνοδος καὶ ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία” (The Second Vatican Council and the Orthodox Church), *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 755 (October 31, 2013), pp. 18-22 (a communiqué from the international congress at Chambésy, October 17-18, 2013).

10. See the declaration, “Ἡ νέα ἐκκλησιολογία τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου κ. Βαρθολομαίου” (The new ecclesiology of Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomew), *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 2047 (November 28, 2014), p. 4; see also <http://www.theodromia.gr/A9455A79.el.aspx>.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Metropolitan Hierotheos, “Β’ Βατικανὴ Σύνοδος,” p. 10.

13. An Orthodox Priest, “Τὰ προσφάτως διαδραματισθέντα στὴν Ἁγία Πόλι καὶ τὸ ἐκκλησιολογικὸ τους ὑπόβαθρο” (The recent events in the Holy City [of Jerusalem] and their ecclesiological basis), *Θεοδορομία* (April-June) 2014, pp. 270ff.; see also <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/B15881B3.el.aspx>.

• This “new ecclesiology,” which has correctly and very aptly been characterized as “ecclesiological Nestorianism,” is set forth in broad terms at an academic level as follows:

“The Church is one, unique, and united before the Triune God, in Whose Name all of her members are baptized, thus attaining their justification, regardless of which Confession they belong to, united with Christ and with one another in a single body, which cannot be divided into a plurality of bodies.

“The ecclesiastical division that now exists derives from external and earthly factors and not from internal and heavenly ones; it derives from human beings, from their imperfections and sins.

It diminishes as we ascend higher and practically disappears in the sight of God, from Whom, conversely, derives the internal mystical unity of the Church

“All of us Christians are sacramentally and ineffably united with Christ and with each other through the sacramental Grace of Holy Baptism...and subsequently through the communion of the Divine Eucharist” (Ioannes N. Karmires, *Δογματικῆς Τμήμα Ε΄, Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησιολογία* [Dogmatic theology, Part V, “Orthodox ecclesiology”] [Athens: 1973], pp. 241, 242, 243).

14. An Orthodox Priest, “Τὰ προσφάτως διαδραματισθέντα” (see note 12).

15. Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, “Ecumenism and ‘Baptismal Theology’: The Protestant ‘Branch Theory’ of the Church in a New Form,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (2000), pp. 2-11; see also <http://hsir.org/p/fts>.

16. See Presbyter Father Jiří Ján (Dr. Theol., Charles University, Prague), *Πορεία πρὸς τὴν “Ἁγίαν καὶ Μεγάλην Σύνοδον”*: Μία συνεχῆς ἀπομάκρυνσις ἀπὸ τὴν Γνησίᾳ Ἀγιοπατερικῆ Ὁρθοδοξία (Journey to the “Holy and Great Synod”: An unceasing estrangement from genuine Patristic Orthodoxy), published by the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle, February 2015; see also <http://hsir.org/p/6i>.

• See also Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, “Genuine Orthodoxy in View of the Challenge of 2016,” <http://hsir.org/p/vz>.

17. Theodorou, *Ἡ Οὐσία τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας*, p. 23.