

Editorial: The "Final Solution?" – Reflections on Recent Orthodox Statements Concerning Eastern Catholics

From Freising to Balamand

From its formal beginning in 1980 the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church seemed to be going nicely, despite the occasional hiccup, until 1988.¹ Then it was diverted. By 6–15 June 1990 the Freising Plenary session of the dialogue almost dissolved acrimoniously, and only at the last hour was it possible to produce a joint communiqué.² The apparent reason for this near-collapse was the problem of "uniatism."

Orthodox authorities have yet to produce an adequate *definition* of the term "uniatism." Some Orthodox object to the very existence of Catholic Churches using the Byzantine liturgical tradition (presumably they also object to these same Churches practicing Byzantine spirituality, theology, and discipline), but when one seeks the basis of this objection, one encounters a reluctance to state plainly what, in fact, renders the Greco-Catholic Churches so radically intolerable. Rather, it appears to be a postulate, or even an axiom, of some Orthodox authorities that the Greco-Catholic Churches are "illegal organizations," and that this is itself a first principle, not subject to discussion or debate. One could go further, and surmise that if official Orthodox rhetoric is to be taken seriously, the "Uniates," by the mere fact of their existence, are cri-

¹ *The Quest for Unity*, John Borelli and John H. Erickson, eds. (Crestwood, NY/Washington: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press and United States Catholic Conference, 1996) gives extensive documentation.

² The Freising text appears in *One in Christ* 26 (1990): 362–65.

minals and that otherwise unacceptable methods might be justified to seek their suppression.³

We regret the necessity of stating this view so negatively, but there is no point in engaging in the ecumenism of wishful thinking. It is useful to analyze the position of Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities in this matter, to determine what light it may shed on the larger question of the theological relationship between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, and the Orthodox commitment to the stated goal of the dialogue.

The question of "uniatism" arose suddenly and heatedly in the context of the dialogue in the late 1980s owing to the re-appearance of the Greco-Catholic Churches in what was then the USSR and Romania. Examining the Orthodox reaction to the re-appearance of these Greco-Catholic Churches, it becomes obvious that in the official Orthodox view, the Greco-Catholic Churches *have no right to live*. The bulk of the Orthodox anger and emotional reaction is directed not at the Roman See, but at the Greco-Catholics themselves.

To give a few examples:

The representatives of the Orthodox Churches directly afflicted by Uniatism ... described at length the situation and dramatic events taking place to the detriment of the Orthodox, which surpass every imagination and which have filled all the participants with bitterness and disappointment. All the participants agreed that the revitalization of Uniatism today is accompanied by the bold violation of human rights and religious freedom.⁴

³ Thus the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Pittsburgh, Kyr Maximos (Aghiorgoussis), writes: "No wonder the Orthodox did not oppose the Communist state-orchestrated 'reunion synods' in L'viv (1946) and elsewhere, which liquidated the 'Union of Brest' and similar unions." "Toward Healing of Wounds: The Balamand Statement," study presented at the annual Eastern Church Traditions and Celebrations Seminar, Notre Dame College, Cleveland, Ohio, 11 October 1996, published in *Eastern Churches Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1997): 6-23; cited passage on page 8.

⁴ Statement of the Inter-Orthodox Commission for the Theological Dialogue Between the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church, Phanar, 12 December 1990.

Uniatism is being revived and reorganized in a way which obviously runs clean counter to the findings of the dialogue.⁵

In particular we make mention and condemn the activity of the *Uniates* under the Church of Rome in the Ukraine, Romania, East Slovakia, the Middle East and elsewhere against our Church. This has created a situation incompatible with the spirit of the dialogue of love and truth, which was initiated and promoted by the Christian leaders, the late Pope John XXIII and the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I. This has inflicted a most severe wound on this dialogue making it difficult to heal. In fact this dialogue has already been restricted to the discussion of the problem of Uniatism until agreement is reached on this matter.⁶

These are by no means isolated examples, nor are they at all the worst of this genre. The communiqué produced at Freising was adopted under serious duress and in great haste, but it contained a commitment to further study by the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue. The Commission members tried to pursue this study, with a sub-committee meeting at Ariccia in 1991 and a plan for another Plenary in June 1992. No statement of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue has any intrinsic authority; these statements are proposed to the Churches.

This did not prevent the Orthodox authorities from presenting a tendentious view of the Freising statement coupled with repeated complaints that the Catholic Church was not implementing that statement:

⁵ Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland (Ecumenical Patriarchate), 15 February 1992.

⁶ Message of the Primates of the Most Holy Orthodox Churches, Constantinople, 15 March 1992.

These reasons for the current strong tension between the ... Orthodox Churches and the local Roman Catholic communities can be summarized as follows: Such tension is attributed to: – the renaissance of the Eastern rite Catholic Church, often referred to as 'Uniate,' usually accompanied by outbursts of violence, particularly in terms of the occupation of places of worship and parish rectories. This has happened, for example, in western Ukraine, where the Orthodox Church practically no longer exists; or in Romania, where relations between the Orthodox and the Uniates deteriorate day by day.⁷

... as we know, the golden rule [which] was formulated in common and with much effort by the Joint Commission of the Dialogue in Freising near Munich, as a basis for solving the problem in question. Historical truth does not allow us to stray away from the golden rule mentioned above, which with God's help could lead us, like another thread of Ariadne,⁸ out of this really dædalian labyrinth...⁹

The Balamand Statement

In June 1993 the Joint International Commission held a Plenary at Balamand, Lebanon, and produced the now-famous Balamand

⁷ Address of Metropolitan Spyridon (Papageorgiou), 2 December 1991, to the Special Assembly for Europe of the (Catholic) Synod of Bishops. Later in the same address Metropolitan Spyridon repeatedly implied that the Catholic Church was failing to implement the Freising communiqué. In 1991 Metropolitan Spyridon was in charge of the Greek Orthodox communities in Italy; in 1996 he became Archbishop of North and South America.

⁸ In pre-Christian Greek mythology, Ariadne was a daughter of Minos. She gave Theseus a thread which enabled him to escape from the labyrinth of Minos. Dædalus built the labyrinth on the island of Crete; Dædalus and his son Icarus eventually escaped from Crete by flying to Thessaly (but in the flight Icarus came too near the Sun, so that his wings – made of feathers set in wax – melted, and he drowned in the sea).

⁹ Letter of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople to Pope John Paul II, 23 June 1992.

Statement. There was serious hope that the Balamand Statement would mark a turning-point, and that the movement for reconciliation between Orthodoxy and Catholicism would recover from the shock of the revival of the Greco-Catholic Churches in Eastern Europe. That hope was strengthened when the largest of the Greco-Catholic Churches gave a strong endorsement to the Balamand Statement (the Letter of Cardinal Lubachivsky to Cardinal Cassidy, 3 August 1993, and the Pastoral Letter "On Christian Unity" of Cardinal Lubachivsky, 25 March/7 April 1994). To some degree, this surprised the Roman Catholic members of the Joint International Commission; in conversation with Greco-Catholic ecumenists these delegates have mentioned that they feared that the Greco-Catholics would reject the Balamand Statement.

Instead, Orthodox authorities began to reject the Balamand Statement. The Church of Greece refused it outright. Others said that while they were pleased with the "practical rules" Balamand proposed, they could not accept the "ecclesiological principles" upon which these practical rules are founded. This reveals a fundamental difficulty: without agreement on the ecclesiological principles, the practical rules have no firm basis. That difficulty has been inherent in the discussion ever since the Freising communiqué of June 1990.

The Freising communiqué asserts in paragraph 5 that:

The problem of the origin and existence of the Catholic Churches of Byzantine Rite has accompanied the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches since well before the commencement of their dialogue and has been constantly present from the beginning of this dialogue. The way in which they will be able to search out a solution of it together will be *a test of the solidity of the theological foundation which has already been laid and which it will be necessary to develop* [our italics].

This is the conundrum posed to the Joint International Commission: to solve, immediately, without delay, the specific "problem of the origin and existence of the Catholic Churches of Byzantine Rite" on the basis of a theological foundation which is

still to be developed. This is neither a golden rule nor a thread of Ariadne; it resembles Catch-22, for the task proposed by the Freising Communiqué contains within itself a condition which makes the accomplishment of that task impossible.

Still, as described above, the Joint International Commission made the attempt. The ecclesiological principles which make up the first half of the Balamand Statement are based upon the ecclesiology of Sister Churches, and the eucharistic ecclesiology which has been so ably developed by Eastern Orthodox theologians. One might reasonably have expected that these crucial ideas, which are important tenets of Orthodox ecclesiology, would have proved acceptable to Orthodox authorities.

In the period of modern ecumenism, the Orthodox have presented the concept of Sister Churches as a paradigm for the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. The Catholics accepted this Orthodox suggestion. Nevertheless some Orthodox authorities and theologians are now responding as though the concept of Sister Churches was a Catholic ruse.

Pope John Paul II has set reconciliation between the Catholics and the Orthodox as one of the highest priorities of his pontificate. On 2 May 1995, the Pope published the Apostolic Letter *Oriente Lumen*, to encourage all Catholics to become familiar with the tradition of the Eastern Churches, to safeguard and appreciate its significance, and to encourage the process of unity. Through the prism of the Christian East, the Pope stresses certain values of universal importance, particularly in the areas of liturgy and monasticism, and he courteously reminds the Eastern Churches of their specific responsibility to the Universal Church. No document is perfect, and *Oriente Lumen* can be criticized. Any criticism, however, should be written with a full awareness that taken as a whole *Oriente Lumen* is a very valuable, qualitative step forward, so much so that our greatest complaint about the document is not its content, but rather that Roman Catholics have paid so little attention to it.

Statement of the Ecumenical Patriarch, 27 June 1995

On 27 June 1995 the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople arrived in Rome for a fraternal visit to Pope John Paul II. In his very first address to the Pope, the Ecumenical Patriarch stated that:

... the climate of reciprocal confidence ... has deteriorated – on the Orthodox side amongst all the Orthodox Churches – because of the resurgent uniatism in most of the countries of central and Eastern Europe and which has caused political conflicts for which, according to well-informed observers, the Vatican State is not entirely innocent.

... we have recently been constrained to direct all our attention to the problem of uniatism and the problem of proselytism which is bound up with it. On these problems, the document of Balamand, edited by the mixed Commission for the dialogue, tries to propose solutions of good sense, clearly condemning both the method and the mentality of uniatism while at the same time showing gentleness and tolerance to these 'ecclesial' communities which come from the distant past, so that these communities might be able to find for themselves the natural path toward the Orthodox mother [Churches] from whom they were separated long ago.

Unfortunately, this gentleness and tolerance – which provoked grave censures against the Orthodox members of the Commission from several Orthodox Churches – seems not to have been appreciated at its proper value by the Church of Rome. I noted with surprise that not only have the local situations not been improved in accordance with the decisions of Balamand, but also, most holy Brother, in your own Encyclical [*sic*] '*Lumen Orientale*' – which is otherwise noteworthy – there is an effort to put on a basis of equality the Uniate communities of the East and the ancient Orthodox Churches, those who perpetuate the

authentic tradition of the first Christian millennium without interruption. It appears that the provisional toleration of the irregular régime of uniatism, tolerated only by ecclesiastical economy, has been considered by the Church of Rome as a total amnesty granted to uniatism, in other words, that uniatism has become a definitely regularized situation and thus a legitimate model. Obviously we shall never accept this, despite our constantly peaceful disposition and our wish for reconciliation in the spirit of the Gospel.¹⁰

These words of the Ecumenical Patriarch present several problems:

1. The assertion that "resurgent uniatism in most of the countries of central and Eastern Europe ... has caused political conflicts for which, according to well-informed observers, the Vatican State is not entirely innocent" is doubly slanderous and inflammatory. The Patriarch gives no examples to substantiate this claim. For our part, we are well acquainted with Eastern Europe; we flatly deny this accusation and, in the absence of specifics, we have no obligation to "disprove" it.
2. The Balamand Statement refers to the "Eastern Catholic Churches" no less than seven times. The Patriarch, however, while he claims to base his words on that document, never refers to Eastern Catholics as "Churches," but instead terms them "ecclesial"¹¹ communities," "communities," "Uniate communities of the East." This is not merely a semantic difference. Eastern Catholics

¹⁰ The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has repeatedly tried to deny the existence of this address by the Ecumenical Patriarch to Pope John Paul II, on the specious ground that it never appeared in the *Osservatore Romano*. Since the text was published in *Episkepsis*, no. 520 (31/7/1995) and elsewhere, it is safe to ignore the PCPCU's denial. Father Bernard Dubasque of the PCPCU was actually present when the Patriarch made this address to the Pope, and heard it with his own ears.

¹¹ One might ask why "ecclesial" is in inverted commas?

have had a long struggle to obtain Roman recognition of their ecclesial reality, *and* of the ecclesial reality of all the Eastern Churches. If the Ecumenical Patriarch considers that they are not Churches, but something less, we respectfully suggest that His All Holiness should offer them ecclesiological reasons to substantiate that opinion. The Eastern Catholic Churches have patriarchs, synods, hierarchs, presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, lectors, monastics and faithful; they celebrate the Holy Mysteries and teach Orthodox doctrine. They are in full communion with the First among the bishops, and in full communion with one another. Their situation is certainly not perfect; as Pope John Paul II teaches in *Orientalis Lumen*,

[The Eastern Catholic] Churches carry a tragic wound, for they are still kept from full communion with the Eastern Orthodox Churches despite sharing in the heritage of their fathers. *A constant, shared conversion is indispensable* for them to advance resolutely and energetically towards mutual understanding.¹²

With intense desire and longing the Greco-Catholic Churches seek the restoration of full communion between themselves and the rest of Eastern Orthodoxy. We have no intention of breaking communion with Rome and no interest in discussing any proposal that we should do so.

We are capable of criticizing Rome when occasions arise; we have done so and we shall continue to do so. In offering such timely criticism, we strive to be faithful to the reminder which Pope John Paul II gives us in *Orientalis Lumen* that it is our responsibility in every generation to bear witness to the whole Catholic Church concerning the traditions and values of the Christian East, which are of universal importance. Sometimes, even frequently, it requires courage for us to offer this criticism, and sometimes in the heat of the moment our criticism may seem to fall on deaf ears. But

¹² *Orientalis Lumen* §21b; italics in original.

considering the history of the Church in the twentieth century, we are strongly encouraged by the accomplishments of the Eastern witness. A great deal remains to be done, but the awareness of what has been done already gladdens our hearts and makes us determined to continue confidently.

3. Nothing in the Balamand text supports the Ecumenical Patriarch's interpretation of that document as giving "provisional toleration of the irregular régime of uniatism, tolerated only by ecclesiastical economy." No representative of the Catholic Church could possibly endorse such a position. The Eastern Catholic Churches are certainly not "tolerated only by ecclesiastical economy." The Catholic Church teaches that

The individual Churches, whether of the East or the West are ... of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others as regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations also in respect of preaching the Gospel to the whole world.¹³

The Eastern Catholic Churches have a firm canonical and constitutional standing, and not even in the name of ecumenism may this standing be challenged or denied.

The Balamand Statement provides that "Concerning the Eastern Catholic Churches, it is clear that they, as part of the Catholic Communion, have the right to exist and to act in response to the spiritual needs of their faithful." In another paragraph the Balamand Statement further provides that "The Eastern Catholic Churches, who have desired to re-establish full communion with the See of Rome and have remained faithful to it, have the rights and obligations which are connected with this communion."

This is plain language; the Eastern Catholic Churches exist and serve on the basis of *right*, not on the basis of "provisional

¹³ Vatican II, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, §3.

toleration of the irregular régime of uniatism, tolerated only by ecclesiastical economy."

4. Nor is there anything in the Balamand Statement which we recognize as "a total amnesty granted to uniatism." Had we discerned such an "amnesty," we would never have recommended to our ecclesiastical authorities that our Churches accept the Balamand Statement. Our Churches are not illegal or uncanonical organizations, we are not criminals, and ecclesiastical communion with "the Church which presides in love" is not a sin. The Eastern Catholic Churches have no need of a total amnesty, save insofar as we are all in need of the infinite pardon and inexhaustible mercy of Almighty God.

The Balamand Statement remarks that nothing will resolve our differences "unless each of the parties has a will to pardon, based on the Gospel and, within the context of a constant effort for renewal, accompanied by the unceasing desire to seek the full communion which existed for more than a thousand years between our Churches."

The Byzantine tradition teaches us that we must forgive one another, very frequently. There are painful matters of the recent past, and even painful matters of the present, which require forgiveness between Eastern Orthodox and Greco-Catholics. We strive to cultivate the will to seek forgiveness, and to forgive in our turn. But in this address of the Ecumenical Patriarch to Pope John Paul II, we are unable to discern even a willingness to forgive, let alone a will to seek forgiveness.

5. The complaint that in *Oriente Lumen* "there is an effort to put on a basis of equality the Uniate communities of the East and the ancient Orthodox Churches, those who perpetuate the authentic tradition of the first Christian millennium without interruption" is odd; one scarcely knows how to understand this, let alone respond to it. Canonically, the Local Churches of the East are equal among themselves, though there is an established order of precedence. We revere and venerate the Apostolic Sees, including, of course, the Great Church of Christ, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the New Rome. The relationship between the Local Churches, the Sister Churches, is properly based upon the Apostolic

injunction to "love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour,"¹⁴ so that each Church strives to outdo the others in *giving* honour, not in demanding honour.

The implied claim that only those who do not maintain communion with the First among the bishops, with "the Church which presides in love," are exclusively entitled to be called "those who perpetuate the authentic tradition of the first Christian millennium without interruption" does not bear critical examination. Who does not know that during the first millennium communion with Rome was considered, at the very least, an important desideratum? There is a wealth of conciliar and patristic texts, and liturgical texts of the Byzantine tradition, to demonstrate the high value which our common Fathers gave to communion with Rome. We do not reproduce these quotations here, but if anyone wants them, we are not empty-handed. To our common shame and sorrow, our sins interrupt our tradition every day of our lives, but that failing is not unique to ourselves.

We do not assert – nor does Pope John Paul II assert – that the Roman Primacy has always manifested itself as it should have done. A careful, fair-minded reading of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* reveals that the Pope acknowledges the existence of real problems in the lived expression of the Roman Primacy, and invites the Orthodox to join the Catholics in a reconsideration of the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned. In that consideration, the model of the first millennium is and must be normative.

6. His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomaios I "noted with surprise that ... the local situations [have] not been improved in accordance with the decisions of Balamand." Greco-Catholics also note this lack of improvement. Since the Balamand Statement was adopted in 1993 our brothers and sisters in Romania have spent another several winters serving Divine Liturgy out-of-doors in many mountain villages, because the Romanian Orthodox Church

¹⁴ Romans 12:10.

refuses to return the Greco-Catholic church edifices taken from them by state force and violence in 1948. This is bad enough in villages where the Orthodox are using the church, and are unwilling to share it. There are no words to express our grief and pain at the situation in Romanian villages where there are actually two church edifices, one Orthodox and one Greco-Catholic, but the Orthodox hold the keys to both buildings and while using only their own church keep the Greco-Catholic church locked rather than allow the latter to use it! This cannot be reconciled with the Balamand Statement, which the Romanian Orthodox Holy Synod has formally accepted.

The Russian Orthodox Church continues to blame the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church for the "loss" of most of the historic churches in central L'viv, although the majority of these church edifices are not in Greco-Catholic hands, but are used by one or another of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Churches.

Certain Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities continue to demand that the Holy See should "dissolve" the Byzantine Catholic Exarchate in Greece, even though this Church, which has been repeatedly attacked in various ways, nevertheless attacks no one and leads a peaceable Christian life with her Bishop, presbyters, deacons, monastics and faithful.

Instead of encouraging the good relations between Orthodox and Greco-Catholics that have been carefully cultivated in the diaspora to assist in resolving problems in the newly-freed Churches of the traditional homelands in Eastern Europe, certain Orthodox authorities have hastened to import the hatred and bitterness to the diaspora. Friendships of long standing have come under a severe strain as a result; each one of us has suffered personally from this.

7. His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomaios I interprets the Balamand Statement as providing a breathing space, to permit the Greco-Catholics "to find for themselves the natural path toward the Orthodox mother [Churches] from whom they were separated long ago." Reading this in context, His All Holiness seems to be saying that the Greco-Catholics should repudiate communion with Rome and "return" to Eastern Orthodoxy. Not only does nothing in the

Balamand Statement support that suggestion; there are other problems as well.

a) As stated above, we do in fact wish to restore our communion with the other Eastern Orthodox Churches; the lack of that communion wounds us. Also as stated above, we are not willing to restore that communion at the price of breaking our communion with Rome; creating a new schism would be an incongruous method of Christian unity.

b) "The purpose of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is the re-establishment of full communion between these two Churches."¹⁵ Were this goal to be achieved, most of the Greco-Catholic Churches would certainly consider, very seriously, how each such Local Church should seek to be integrated fully into the life of the corresponding Orthodox Local Church. In the fullness of time, it is highly probable that this full integration would be achieved almost everywhere; there would certainly be no theological reason to maintain two parallel Local Churches of the same tradition in the same place.

But – and this is a big "but" – recent experiences in the life of the Christian East demonstrate that such integration cannot be accomplished by any coercion. Schisms often occur for non-theological reasons, and reconciling schisms, healing ecclesiastical estrangement, often requires a willingness to live with anomalies. Among Greco-Catholics, we may note the phenomenon of two parallel metropolias of what was once a single Church of the Ruthenian tradition in the USA.¹⁶ Among Eastern Orthodox, we may note the continued presence of a group of parishes in the USA and Canada depending upon the Moscow Patriarchate even though that Patriarchate granted autocephaly to the OCA more than twenty-five years ago. There must be patience, both patience in action and

¹⁵ "Plan to set Underway the Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church," Joint International Commission, 1980, opening sentence.

¹⁶ The Ukrainian-Byzantine Catholic Metropolitanate of Philadelphia with suffragan eparchies at Stamford, Parma, and Chicago; the Byzantine Catholic Metropolitanate of Pittsburgh with suffragan eparchies at Passaic, Parma, and Van Nuys.

patience in verbal expression. Any slight hint of compulsion, of an attempt to force, say, the Byzantine Catholic Exarchate in Greece to join the state Church of Greece, would produce a very strong reaction. Any hint of an attempt to force the Ukrainian Greco-Catholics to join the Moscow Patriarchate would be even more disastrous.

But in all honesty, we are not currently convinced that the Orthodox authorities seriously anticipate a restoration of eucharistic communion with the Catholic Church at any time in the reasonably foreseeable future. We shall return to this topic below.

c) We are also not convinced that Orthodox authorities really want the "return" of the Greco-Catholics at all. What at least some Orthodox genuinely want is that the Greco-Catholics should abandon the Byzantine tradition and become Latins.¹⁷ The object of the exercise would simply be to get rid of the Greco-Catholics. Perhaps the experience of the period from 1945 to 1989 has demonstrated that forced conversions to Orthodoxy do not succeed, and have a negative effect on the Orthodox Local Churches which receive such involuntary "converts." This theme requires more exploration, but at least tentatively there is something to discuss. Meanwhile, the "uniates" have become a convenient excuse for some Orthodox authorities to stall the dialogue with the Catholics.

The Orthodox Co-Chairman of the Joint International Commission Comments on Orientale Lumen

His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch expressed himself to Pope John Paul II on 27 June 1995 with reasonably courteous language. The same cannot be said for the "Comment on the Papal Encyclical [*sic*] *Orientale Lumen*" by Archbishop Stylianos of Australia.¹⁸ We would have preferred to ignore this piece of writing, but since the author is also the Orthodox Co-President of

¹⁷ George Metallinos, of the Church of Greece, has candidly expressed this point of view in a recent book on the subject.

¹⁸ *Phronema* 10 (1995): 51–60. *Phronema* is the annual review of Saint Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College, Sydney, Australia.

the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, and himself was the chairman of the 1993 Plenary which produced the Balamand Statement, his words must be taken seriously.

Kyr Stylianos suggests that both Leo XIII (in *Orientalium Dignitas* of 1894) and John Paul II in *Oriente Lumen* manifest the same feelings towards the Christian East, which he characterizes as follows:

- i) Strong inclination towards proselytism through expressions of friendship which are not verified in practice.
- ii) Intentional or unintentional underestimation of the intelligence of the Orthodox and their special sensitivity towards ecclesiology.
- iii) Unbearable paternalistic spirit according to which any positive judgement concerning the Christian East is formulated by Rome.

In an effort to support his claim that *Oriente Lumen* shows (and/or conceals)¹⁹ a strong inclination towards proselytism, Kyr Stylianos complains of "the unacceptable lack of stability and clarity as well as internal contradiction in the ecclesiological terms."

As if that were not enough, the Archbishop of Australia continues "These weaknesses do not of course derive from the pen of an inexperienced student of theology, in order to be leniently judged. Rather, they come from experienced and distinguished advisers of the Pope, who are wilfully and purposely trying to create this confusion so that they can fish 'in shallow waters', as the saying goes, which is unfortunately an old custom of theirs." These words of Kyr Stylianos do not convince us that *Oriente Lumen* either reveals or masks a proselytizing intent.

But that pales to insignificance by comparison to Archbishop Stylianos's attempt to support his assertion that *Oriente Lumen* reveals that the Pope underestimates Orthodox intelligence – His

¹⁹ More or less simultaneously, Kyr Stylianos claims that *Oriente Lumen* both manifests and conceals the Catholic intention of proselytism.

Eminence of Australia asserts that the term “Eastern Catholic” is a hitherto unknown expression, which now appears for the first time. Even with the article in front of us, it is difficult to believe that anyone with experience in these matters could have uttered such a statement. Here are Archbishop Stylianos’s words:

The disappointment stemming from the misleading inconsistencies of the ecclesiological terms turns to indignation when one proceeds to the second page of [*Orientalis Lumen*], where two things are immediately made apparent: on the one hand, the addition of a new term for the situation in the Christian East – which only complicates matters – and, on the other hand, the unashamed and jubilant levelling through this new term with the Oriental Orthodox who have a distinct identity but who, on account of very clear dogmatic reasons and terms are distinguishable – indeed separate – from all other Christians of East and West.

We refer to the very misleading and hitherto unknown (which means that it is new) term “Eastern Catholics”.

The term “Eastern Catholics” has been in common use for a great many years. We do not propose to embark immediately on a research project to determine just when this term was coined, but it is found, for example, in *Allatae Sunt*, issued in 1755 by Pope Benedict XIV, and in any number of other documents, as well as in the works of scholars who have written about the Christian East. It figures prominently in the documents of Vatican II. Those to whom it is applied (including ourselves) have never indicated any objection to its use. This term appears in the Balamand Statement itself. We are at a complete loss to understand how the Archbishop of Australia could believe that the expression “Eastern Catholics” appears for the first time in a papal document of 1995.

But Archbishop Stylianos continues, asserting that the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue, of which His Eminence is the Orthodox Co-President, took its decisions in the Balamand Statement “for no other reason than to allow [the

Uniates] to decide freely, without anguish or insult, whether they wish to be received into the local Orthodox Churches from which they were forcefully or skilfully separated, or whether they should be obligated to join the West fully."

Kyr Stylianos is demanding that Greco-Catholics must be required to chose between our communion with Rome and our Byzantine tradition; in Archbishop Stylianos's view we may not have both, and His Eminence claims that this is the position which underlies the Freising and Balamand documents. Since this proposal is not to be found anywhere in the text of those documents, we would normally ignore the suggestion, but coming as it does from the Orthodox Co-Chairman of the Joint International Commission, we cannot overlook it.

Greco-Catholics accept the Balamand Statement in the plain meaning of what the document actually says, not in the exegesis of Archbishop Stylianos. Regardless of his position, he is not entitled to read into the document anything that happens to please him. Nevertheless, we do not find his position entirely unintelligible. His Eminence appears to think that since his position is the only possible and sensible view, it is what the documents ought to say and therefore what they must say, regardless of the actual wording.

The Balamand Statement *does* in fact say, in paragraph 16, that "The Eastern Catholic Churches ... should be inserted, on both local and universal levels, into the dialogue of love, in mutual respect and reciprocal trust found once again, and enter into the theological dialogue, with all its practical implications." A definite practical implication of that paragraph is the moral imperative that representatives of the Greco-Catholic Churches, accountable to our ecclesiastical authorities, must be full participants in all the forums of the dialogue, including the Joint International Commission itself.²⁰ Among other reasons, that will enable us to be certain that there are

²⁰ This was clearly proposed to Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy during a meeting with the Kievan Church Study Group in June, 1995. However, this may be a moot point; the Plenary session which should have met in 1995 has been postponed three times, and it is impossible to predict when the Theological Dialogue will resume.

no occult or hidden provisions, such as those which Archbishop Stylianos asserts are present in the Balamand Statement.

Archbishop Stylianos also appears to think that the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue is a higher authority than the Pope. His Eminence writes: "From where did the Pope obtain the right to place himself above the work of the Joint Theological Commission, officially and openly expressing himself in diametrical opposition to the verdict of the Commission?"

Pope John Paul II has done nothing of the kind. But in reality the Pope is certainly "above the work of the Joint Theological Commission." The Joint Theological Commission is empowered to offer recommendations *to* the Church, not to take binding decisions *for* the Church. Neither the Joint Theological Commission nor any other Theological Dialogue is a super-ecumenical Council. When the Joint Theological Commission produces an Agreed Statement, it is then up to each Church to review that Agreed Statement and respond to it. The Church of Greece was within its rights in declining to accept the Balamand Statement. If the Church of Rome should decide to refuse this or that Agreed Statement of the dialogue, the Church of Rome has the same right.

The Agreed Statements are sent to each Eastern Catholic Synod and to each national Conference of Catholic Bishops, to be reviewed by the hierarchs and theologians. The process by which these Agreed Statements are to be received – or not received – is thorough and deliberate, to ensure that the ultimate result is truly an act of *sobornost*, of the Catholic consciousness of the Church.

Archbishop Stylianos's accusation that *Orientalis Lumen* is written with a paternalistic spirit has some substance; the paternalistic tone of one or two paragraphs in the document is a bit grating. This is not surprising in a papal letter to Catholics. Catholics commonly style the Pope "the Holy Father"; it is natural for the Pope to address Catholics in a paternal manner.²¹ Kyr

²¹ In recent years, this paternalist style of papal writing has been significantly reduced. For example, Pope John Paul II refers to himself in the first person singular, instead of using the pontifical "We," as his predecessors were accustomed

Stylianos repeatedly accuses the Pope of proselytism and ulterior motives, of provocation, and so forth. However, in this section, the Archbishop does present a serious argument, which deserves careful consideration:

... it is precisely in [the] separation of theology and worship, in the final analysis, that the whole problem of *Unia* is to be found. We therefore see another difference between Orthodox and Roman Catholics unfortunately, one which is purely theological and not merely concerned with moral behaviour. Clearly, if the Pope and the Uniates considered worship and all related external aspects as a direct and faithful reflection of what is taught, as do the Orthodox, then of course they could not so unhesitatingly combine eastern styles with Roman Catholic doctrine. By its very nature, the doxological character of dogma only finds full expression in the apophaticism which is innate in the word of God. This is why one can state that worship is the incarnation of dogma which, in turn, enlivens worship which is "reasonable" and "pleasing" to God.

The Archbishop is saying, in essence, that the Byzantine liturgical tradition presupposes Orthodox theology and expresses that theology, and that attempting to use the Byzantine liturgy to express another theology leads to a divorce of worship from dogma, of liturgy from faith. The Archbishop assumes that this is what Greco-Catholics do, that our worship is deceitful because in his opinion we do not believe the theology which underlies that worship, which that worship must express. Deceitful, false worship cannot please God, Who must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth.

No one can deny that from time to time sinful people engage in nominalist worship, and the Greco-Catholic Churches are not immune to this misconduct. We do not seek to defend it or excuse it. On the contrary, many of us have devoted our time and effort to

combatting such tendencies. But dishonesty in public worship, even among those who use the Byzantine liturgy, is by no means confined to the Greco-Catholics. We shall not give examples, because an exchange of insults is not a suitable ecumenical exercise. Ecumenism should definitely include fraternal criticism of one another, but if in the present context Greco-Catholics began publishing explicit criticisms of specific examples of liturgical imperfections among the Orthodox, the response would not be edifying; that discussion can wait for more auspicious circumstances.

However, we do wish to call to the attention of Archbishop Stylianos, and indeed of all those interested in Christian worship, the admirable *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* published on Holy Theophany, 1996, by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. Stressing the importance of our authentic *theology* and spirituality, this document states firmly that "The practice of the Eastern liturgy without its entire heritage flowing into it, as into its highest expression, would risk reducing it to pure superficiality."²² *Oriente Lumen* itself, and the "Instruction," make it clear that the Eastern Catholics have no vocation to divorce the Byzantine Liturgy from Orthodox theology.

What possible reason would there be for Greco-Catholics to use the Byzantine Liturgy and deny Orthodox theology? The Saints who compiled the marvellous, divinely inspired Byzantine liturgical tradition are recognized and venerated by the Catholic Church. The Holy Fathers of the Byzantine tradition are recognized and venerated by the Catholic Church, and studied by Catholic theologians. Even as we write, the Church of Greece is reprinting by facsimile reproduction the *Patrologia Graeca* edited and published by Jean-Paul Migne, a French Catholic priest, in the nineteenth century. Even as we write, the Catholic Church in France is publishing *Sources Chrétiennes*, a wonderful series of the works of the Holy

²² *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Congregation for the Eastern Churches, 1996, §13b.

Fathers; so far there are more than three hundred volumes and the series is still not finished. Certainly we consider our worship "a direct and faithful reflection of what is taught," our divine services are not theatrical performances devoid of content. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"²³ we do our best and we ask forgiveness of all who are offended by our shortcomings. Shortcomings in this area, as in other areas, are not peculiar to the Greco-Catholics. The Institute which publishes this journal and the journal itself offer ample proof of the sincere effort of some Eastern Catholics, working side-by-side with Orthodox to recover and revive the fullness of the patristic theological, spiritual, liturgical and canonical patrimony.

We could continue at some length discussing the article of Archbishop Stylianos, but we have said enough to indicate the nature of the article, and of His Eminence's views on Catholicism in general and Eastern Catholics in particular. So we conclude our consideration of this article with one further quotation. Archbishop Stylianos, the Orthodox Co-Chairman of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue, considers that *Oriente Lumen* is so offensive that the Orthodox members of the Joint International Commission should justifiably ask "whether there is any point in making such sacrifices – in theological labour, precious time and enormous expense for meetings over so many years."

The question is well taken. The Freising communiqué states that:

The problem of the origin and existence of the Catholic Churches of Byzantine Rite has accompanied the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches since well before the commencement of their dialogue and has been constantly present from the beginning of this dialogue. The way in which they will be able to search out a solution of it together will be *a test of the solidity of the theological*

²³ Romans 3:23.

foundation which has already been laid and which it will be necessary to develop [our italics].

In other words, the success or failure of the efforts to address the matter of "uniatism" will be a test of the value of the whole work of the Theological Dialogue. As we remarked above, this is not a fair test. The Greco-Catholics never proposed such a test. But since the Joint International Commission itself proposed that this should be a test case, it is appropriate and relevant to ask what the results of the test are.

The Ecumenical Patriarch, Saint Andrew's Day 1996

Every year the Church of Constantinople sends a fraternal delegation to Rome²⁴ to felicitate the Church of Rome on the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and every year the Church of Rome sends a fraternal delegation to Istanbul to felicitate the Church of Constantinople on the feast of Saint Andrew, First-Called of the Apostles. Formal speeches and letters are exchanged on these occasions, which sometimes become the announcements of important developments. On Saint Andrew's Day 1996, the Ecumenical Patriarch said to Cardinal Cassidy: "Should not the final solution, in metanoia and truth, of the problem of uniatism which sadly has been perpetuated be an additional persuasive action of unity, a crown worthy of the year 2000?"

Several people whom some of us know personally were in attendance when the Ecumenical Patriarch gave this address, and were startled to hear these words. No one who was present has expressed any doubt that the Patriarch meant what he said; His All Holiness has set a date for "the final solution." Patriarch Bartholomew is a most erudite, well-educated hierarch with particularly high linguistic ability; those who have been privileged to converse with the Patriarch know that His All Holiness is remarkably fluent in several modern European languages (including

²⁴ For unspecified reasons, the Church of Constantinople sent no delegation to Rome for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul in 1997.

English). His All Holiness cannot be unaware of the connotations attached to the term "the final solution" ever since World War II.²⁵

It is impossible to reconcile such a demand for "the final solution, in metanoia and truth, of the problem of uniatism" with the Balamand Statement. Nothing could grieve us more, but genuine ecumenism requires us to recognize the truth: in his address to Pope John Paul II on 27 June 1995, and in his address to Cardinal Cassidy on Saint Andrew's Day 1996, the Ecumenical Patriarch has repudiated the substance of the Balamand Statement; His All Holiness denies that "the Eastern Catholic Churches ... as part of the Catholic Communion have the right to exist and to act in response to the spiritual needs of their faithful."²⁶ On both occasions the Ecumenical Patriarch expressed himself in courteous language, but the substance is clear.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Let us also be clear: we do not repudiate ecumenism, we shall not cease to seek reconciliation with our brothers and sisters who share our tradition but who do not maintain communion with the First among the bishops. We do not reject the Balamand Statement. We remain committed to the program set forth in Cardinal Lubachivsky's 1994 Pastoral Letter *On Christian Unity*. We are strongly of the view that any ecumenical relationship will be much more successful when it is based on a clear-sighted understanding of the agenda which each side brings to that relationship. We believe in the power of prayer; we believe that God continues to work miracles through the prayers of His Saints.²⁷ God is more likely to work miracles even in response to our poor prayers when we at least try to free ourselves from illusions.

²⁵ More specifically, since the Nazi conference at Wannsee in March, 1941, which took the decision to exterminate the Jews of Europe and called this the "Final Solution."

²⁶ Balamand Statement, §3.

²⁷ The resurrection of our Churches in Eastern Europe is just such a miracle.

The Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities are unable to reach an agreement on restoring Eucharistic communion with anyone except other Eastern Orthodox communities. The dialogue with the Old Catholics went on in various forms for over a hundred years. The Old Catholics explicitly declared that they accepted the fullness of the Orthodox Faith as taught by Eastern Orthodoxy, and they did everything the Orthodox asked them to do.²⁸ But the Orthodox could not bring themselves to welcome the Old Catholics into Eucharistic communion. Perhaps as a result, the largest Old Catholic Church (the Polish National Catholic Church) is actively pursuing reconciliation with Rome, and the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht seems to be dissolving. We do not welcome that dissolution; the Old Catholics, despite their small numbers, have often made valuable contributions to ecumenism. We do, of course, anticipate with joy the complete reconciliation of the Polish National Catholic Church with the First among the bishops.

The dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches (those who did not accept the Council of Chalcedon) seemed, for a time, to be the most promising of all. The restoration of Eucharistic communion between these two families appeared to be imminent. But these hopes were premature; the Eastern Orthodox Churches are unable to bring themselves to take the decisive step. We hoped, and even believed, that this particular dialogue would succeed; more than any other single factor, this failure convinces us that without a real *metanoia*, any expectation that in the foreseeable future the Eastern Orthodox Churches will formally restore Eucharistic communion with another Christian body seems overly optimistic.

²⁸ Some Orthodox theologians object that Orthodoxy could not have received the Old Catholics into Eucharistic communion so long as the Old Catholics remained in communion with the Anglicans. However, the Polish National Catholic Church broke communion with the Anglicans in the nineteen-seventies, as soon as the Episcopal Church in the USA began ordaining women to the presbyterate; simultaneously the Polish National Catholic Church intensified the effort to achieve Eucharistic communion with the Orthodox. But nothing happened.

In the Patriarchate of Antioch, there has long been a policy of *de facto* Eucharistic sharing. Not long ago, the Greek Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox within the Patriarchate of Antioch announced that they had restored Eucharistic communion locally; the remaining Local Churches of the Eastern Orthodox communion have neither recognized this step nor broken communion with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. This may be the way forward: local initiatives which can eventually spread.

Whilst praying for a miracle, and awaiting that miracle with confident hope, what else should our ecumenical endeavours consist of? For the moment, some Orthodox authorities apparently want an ecumenical dialogue which is risk-free: assured against real success and absolutely not requiring any possibility of change. We consider this unrealistic, but we cannot dictate the terms and the pace of a genuine dialogue. We can, and must, recognize that the primary cause of this negative attitude is *fear*. Many Orthodox authorities are truly afraid of the ecumenical process. Patient, consistent love, submitted always to the Gospel and to a ceaseless *metanoia* on our own part can cooperate with the grace of God to overcome that fear. We pray that this fear will be overcome, and we shall continue working to overcome this fear. Let no one tell us that our prayer is in vain; we have already seen the miracle of the collapse of Communism and the renewal of our Churches in Eastern Europe; the same God who has done this will also act to reconcile the Catholics and the Orthodox.

We know from experience that the ecumenical encounter between Catholics and Orthodox, and specifically between Greco-Catholics and Orthodox, is not only worthwhile, valuable and fruitful, but absolutely indispensable. Far from plunging into despair over the failure of many Orthodox to receive the Balamand Statement, we are moved to redouble our efforts. *Oriente Lumen* would probably not have appeared without the ecumenical activity of the past few decades. We have far too many friends in the Orthodox Church, including hierarchs and theologians, for us to consider calling a halt to ecumenism.

Moreover, the fraternal relationship amongst the Sister Churches is an objective truth. Nothing at all can erase brotherhood. There can be estrangements, but brothers do not cease to be brothers.

