

“Sister Churches”: Ecumenical Terminology in Search of Content

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Підсумок

У своїй статті п.з. „Церкви-сестри: Екуменічна термінологія в пошукуванні змісту,” директор Інституту Східнохристиянських Наук ім. Митр. Андрея Шептицького при Університеті св. Павла в Оттаві та завідувачий Катедрою Східнохристиянської Теології та Духовности ім. Петра й Дорис Куль цього ж університету, аналізує часто сьогодні вживану термінологію „Церков-сестер”. Стаття складається з чотирьох головних частин. У першій частині автор представляє історичні дані: звідки ця термінологія взялася і як у минулому вона вживалася. Друга частина статті шукає доктринального значення цієї термінології: коли Католицька Церква вживає цей термін у відношенні до Православної—це має досить точний доктринальний зміст, який включає визнання благодатности святих Тайн, особливо священства, і апостольського переємства. Коли православні речники застосовують цей термін для католиків, нелегко очертити точно чи це означає щось більшого ніж чужостивий вислів. Є певні ознаки, що цей термін має для православних доктринальне значення подібне до розуміння серед католиків.

Третя частина статті розглядає два сучасні документи, щоб черпати з них розуміння практичних наслідків трактування другої Церкви як Церкви-Сестру. Перший документ—це заява єдності між Антіохійською Православною Церквою а Сирійською (не-Халкедонською) Православною Церквою в якій ці дві Церкви після 1500 років роз'єднання в 1992 році відновлюють між собою повну євхаристійну спільність. Другий документ—це декларація Католицької Церкви щодо душпастирської праці в країнах бувшого Радянського Союзу в якій узглядується практичні наслідки трактування Православної Церкви як Церкви-Сестри. В останній частині статті автор старається вивести з цієї студії певні заключення щодо

практичного змісту екуменічної термінології та переносить ці думки на ниву київської Церкви, яка сьогодні поділена на кілька православних та греко-католицьку. Він пропонує, щоб ці київські Церкви серйозно до себе взаємно застосовували зміст термінології Церков-сестер, доводячи до відновлення євхаристійної спільності.



In today's ecumenical discussions the term "Sister Churches" is used extensively. This concept is seen as fundamental for further developments between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. That is why it is important for the Kievan Church Study Group to discuss the following questions:

- 1) What is the provenance of the term "Sister Churches"?
- 2) What doctrinal content is assigned to it by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches?
- 3) What practical ramifications are implied in the acceptance of this term and the Ecclesiology it represents?
- 4) How can these facts be applied to the situation of the Kievan Church?

Without pretending to offer an exhaustive study of any of the preceding questions, I nevertheless believe some clarity can be gained by at least a cursory perusal of the facts. While historians will examine in depth what this term may have signified in earlier centuries, what concerns the ecumenist is more precisely the content, both theoretical and practical, that it has today.

Provenance of the Term

Yves Congar took pains to search out the use of the term "Sister Churches" throughout history.¹ References which he found included the following: Pope Innocent I referred to Antioch as "Sister of the Roman Church" in 415.² This was specifically tied to the fact that both Churches

¹ Yves Congar, OP, *Diversity and Communion*, trans. John Bowden. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1985), 86–87. See also the article by E. Lanne, "Eglises-sœurs: implications ecclésiologiques du *Tomos Agapês*," *Istina* 48 (1975) 47–74, especially pp.52–62 where the author seeks out the biblical and early patristic roots of the term.

² PL 20: 546.

looked to St. Peter as their founder. This is not, then, strictly the same usage as we find in modern ecumenical parlance.

In 1136 we see Nicetas of Nicomedia saying to Anselm of Havelberg that the Roman Church is not refused its "primacy among its sisters" and "the place of honour as president over the general council."³ This is said in response to rather extensive claims by the papacy at the time.

Patriarch John X Camateros (1198–1206) also responded to the vehement papal claims of Innocent III with an equally vehement retort: "It is not, then, for these reasons that Rome is the mother of the other churches, but, as there are five great churches adorned with patriarchal dignity, that of Rome is the first among equal sisters.... So the church of the Romans has the first rank, it is the first of the other churches which, as sisters (*adelphon*) equal in honour (*timê*) are born of the same heavenly Father from whom, according to scripture, all fatherhood in heaven and earth derives."⁴

In more recent times we find Msgr. Papp–Szillegyi, an opponent of the decree on papal infallibility at Vatican I recalling that "the Church of the East has been our sister."⁵

During roughly the same period two Orthodox voices can be heard calling the Western Church the sister of the Eastern Church: N. A. Muraviev (1853)⁶ and Metropolitan Platon of Kiev (1884).⁷

In the late 1920's the Greek Catholic Bishop of Athens, Georges Calavassy wrote to the Orthodox Archbishop of Athens, Chrysostom Papadopoulos, according him the title "head of a Sister Church."⁸

³ Anselm of Havelberg, *Dialogi* III, 8 (PL 188: 1219AB).

⁴ Cited in M. Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica Christiana Orientalia ab Ecclesia Catholica dissidentium*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1931), 386ff., and cf. 456.

⁵ Mansi 52: 601.

⁶ N. A. Muraviev, *Parôle de l'orthodoxie catholique au catholicisme romain*, trans. M. Popovitski (Paris, 1853), cf. M. Jugie, *op. cit.*, 307ff.

⁷ Quoted by V. Soloviev, cf. J. Rupp, *Message ecclésial de Soloviev* (Paris, 1975), 417, 477. It is interesting to note that the Greco-Catholic Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky was said to have used the term "Sister Churches" in correspondence with Orthodox Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky (later of Kiev) in 1903. Unfortunately, I do not have the archival reference.

⁸ Pierre Dumont, ed., "L'Union de l'Orient avec Rome," *Orientalia Christiana* 18 (1930): 53.

Patriarch Alexis I of Moscow referred to Rome as a "Sister Church" in 1948.⁹

The first documented use of the term in the context of the current ecumenical rapprochement between Constantinople and Rome was by Patriarch Athenagoras I in a letter to Augustin Cardinal Bea dated April 12, 1962, where the author states: "What you have to say in general terms about your desire for the rapprochement of the Sister Churches and the restoration of unity in the Church moved us deeply, as it was bound to do, given the fact that we have repeatedly manifested our own readiness to do all in our power to contribute to this restoration."¹⁰

Thomas Stransky is thus mistaken when he claims that the first modern use of the phrase "Sister Churches" appeared in the official bulletin of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, *Apostolos Andreas*, dated 6 November, 1963, as the headline for the September 20 letter of Pope Paul VI to Patriarch Athenagoras.¹¹ As Stransky correctly points out, however, this language would soon begin to be used in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council.¹² At first, its use by Catholics would be restricted to the relationship among the various Orthodox Churches.¹³ In time Pope Paul VI would use it of the relationship between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.¹⁴ Not long

⁹ Quoted in R. Rouse and S. Neill, *History of the Ecumenical Movement* (London, 1958), 672.

¹⁰ E. J. Stormon, ed. and trans., *Towards the Healing of Schism: The Sees of Rome and Constantinople—Public statements and correspondence between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate 1958–1984*, Ecumenical Documents, vol. 3. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 35.

¹¹ This was also reprinted in *Proche-Orient chrétien* 13 (1963): 336–37.

¹² T. Stransky, "Introduction," in E. J. Stormon, *Towards the Healing of Schism*, 11.

¹³ That is how it is used in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 14, in Austin Flannery, OP, ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1975), 464. See also E. Lanne, "Eglises—soeurs: implications," *op. cit.*, 62–71 for an in-depth study of the usage of the term in the Decree on Ecumenism. Lanne states: "Déjà nous savions par ce que l'on avait relevé dans les paragraphes 3 et 7 du Décret que la fraternité entre les chrétiens se fonde sur la foi baptismale et la vie évangélique. Avec les Eglises d'Orient un pas de plus est franchi puisque cette fraternité dépassant les personnes est appliquée aux Eglises." *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴ In the brief, *Anno Ineunte*, handed by Pope Paul to Patriarch Athenagoras on July 25, 1967, we read:

In each local Church this mystery of divine love is enacted, and surely this is the ground of the traditional and very beautiful expression 'Sister Churches,' which local

afterward, he and Patriarch Athenagoras I would be using it in a joint statement to designate each other's Church.¹⁵

There is a related phrase which was used half a century earlier when the Ecumenical Patriarchate addressed a Letter to all "the Churches of Christ, wheresoever they be," with the implication that others, beyond the Orthodox fold might also be considered "Churches" even though there exist doctrinal differences between them and the Orthodox.¹⁶ The participation of at least some of the Orthodox Churches in the World Council of Churches since its inception (1948) as well as the Life and Work (1925) and Faith and Order (1927) conferences also has certain implications, but qualitatively different from the kind of relations which have developed between Constantinople and Rome. To my knowledge, Protestant bodies are not referred to as "Sister

churches are fond of applying to one another (Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 14).

For centuries we lived this life of "Sister Churches," and together held the Ecumenical Councils which guarded the deposit of the faith against all corruption. And now, after a long period of division and mutual misunderstanding, the Lord is enabling us to discover ourselves as 'Sister Churches' once more, in spite of the obstacles which were once raised between us. In the light of Christ we see how urgent is the need of surmounting these obstacles in order to succeed in bringing to its fullness and perfection the already very rich communion which exists between us. (Stormon, *Towards the Healing*, 162-63.)

¹⁵ In their common declaration at the end of Patriarch Athenagoras's visit to Rome, October 28, 1967, we read:

While recognizing that in the journey towards the unity of all Christians there is still a long way to go, and that between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches there still exist points to be clarified and obstacles to overcome before arriving at the unity in the profession of the faith which is necessary for re-establishment of full communion, they [Pope and Patriarch] rejoice at the fact that their meeting has played a part in helping the Churches to make a further discovery of themselves as Sister Churches. (Stormon, *Toward the Healing*, 181).

¹⁶ See Constantine G. Patelos, ed. *The Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements, 1902-1975* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 40-43. This volume contains many significant contributions by Orthodox hierarchs and theologians which shed light on the Orthodox approach to the union of Churches as well as specific doctrinal issues. It includes numerous expositions of the relationship the Orthodox Church has with the World Council of Churches.

Churches" by Orthodox or Catholics in any official statements. Clearly, the familial modifier in the phrase "Sister Churches" bears significant weight.¹⁷

Doctrinal Content of the Term

It is important to seek out as clearly as possible the delineations of meaning assigned to this important ecumenical term by the Orthodox and Catholic Churches today.¹⁸ With the Catholic side this is usually a much simpler task, for the simple reason that its relatively more monolithic structure makes it easier to determine what the official Catholic stance is on a given issue. When the Pope speaks out on a certain question this position can be assumed to be the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Things are not so clear on the Orthodox side. Statements by the Ecumenical Patriarch are quite weighty in the Orthodox communion, but the very nature of that communion is such that each autocephalous Church has a voice of its own and Constantinople's stance is not to be automatically imputed to the other Orthodox Churches. Nevertheless, in the realm of dialogue with other Christians, the principle of common action was adopted early on by the various autocephalous Churches at the first Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes (1961). Thus, the Orthodox reaction to Rome's invitations to send observers to Vatican II was to be based on a joint decision. This principle of

¹⁷ Paul VI once referred to the Anglican Church as "Sister" and much was made of this by Archbishop Ramsey, but see what E. Lanne has to say about this in "Eglises-sœurs: implications," 74, note 56. The recent address of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and the Council of the Anglican Church (10 November, 1993) continues to employ the term "Sister Churches" for the Anglicans, even while noting that "the major problem of ordination of women [...] became a great obstacle, shall we say, to the differences which traditionally existed between our two Churches." This raises the question: Are the Anglicans viewed by the Orthodox as being in the same situation as the Catholics?

¹⁸ Some of this has already been attempted. See E. Lanne, "Eglises-sœurs: implications," 47-74. Lanne's painstaking analysis of the papal brief *Anno Inuente* and several other related documents also delves deeply into the notion of "fraternal" relations among the particular Churches of the early centuries. His main argument revolves around the tremendous change from the earlier centralist positions of the papacy to the current ecclesiology of fraternity. This involves special recognition of the particular Churches of the East, both Orthodox and Catholic, and of the special relationship which they should have with the See of Rome: one that is based on first millennium models and recognizes that the Eastern Churches never had the kind of relations with Rome which characterised Western Christianity. The article is written from the viewpoint of a Catholic ecumenist, anxious to emphasize Rome's new self-understanding.

ecumenical action in common gives us a basis on which we can try to distill a common Orthodox understanding of the notion of "Sister Churches." Subsequent Pan-Orthodox Conferences (e.g., 1964), however, freed the individual Orthodox Churches to pursue relations at their own pace. Thus we are faced with a paradoxical situation and it is not entirely clear whether there currently exists a common Orthodox understanding of the ecumenical term "Sister Churches" or other related issues.

The historical isolation of the autocephalous Churches did not make it any easier for the Orthodox to clarify their common understanding of what it meant to be the Church. Orthodox ecclesiology proceeds naturally from the local Church. Historical realities had carved up the Orthodox communion into more or less "national Churches." It was the series of Pan-Orthodox Conferences since 1961 which helped to solidify a common Orthodox consciousness and opened up concrete possibilities for "exploring their relationship as Church with other Christian groups," as Robert Barringer aptly puts it.¹⁹

For the Catholic Church, Vatican II was an equally important watershed. With the promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism in November, 1964, it became clear that the official position of Rome on the ecclesial character of the Orthodox Churches was unequivocally positive: "These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments, above all—by apostolic succession—the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in closest intimacy."²⁰

This is revolutionary. For Roman Catholics there could be no question of other Churches as such, outside the institution of the Roman communion in the period between Trent and Vatican II.²¹ The notion that the Church of Christ "subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter

¹⁹ Robert Barringer, "Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue: the Present Position," in R. Barringer, ed., *Rome and Constantinople: Essays in the Dialogue of Love* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross, 1984), 57.

²⁰ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 15, in Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council II*, 465.

²¹ This was such a commonplace of official Roman pronouncements and theological tracts that citation seems superfluous. This exclusivist approach was operative among the Orthodox as well. Some traditionalist Orthodox circles still hold to a strictly exclusivist approach. See Hierodeacon Andrew, "For What Kind of 'Union of All' Do We Pray?" *Orthodox Life* 42 (July-August, 1992), 26-29.

and by the bishops in communion with him"²² rather than being strictly and exclusively identified with the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, allows for the treatment of other Churches as real Churches, with real sacraments and priesthood, though not yet in perfect communion. This, surely, is the doctrinal content of the term "Sister Churches" from a Catholic perspective.²³

E. Lanne goes even further in his interpretation. He holds this new approach to mean that from the Catholic point of view, full canonical communion could be reestablished immediately between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, if only the Orthodox were agreeable. Definitions of papal primacy and jurisdiction emanating from conciliar and papal pronouncements after East-West separation would be binding only upon the West. Thus a double (perhaps it is better to say asymmetrical) ecclesiology would be allowed in one communion. This re-establishment of communion would be based on a recognition of common faith, common sacraments and common sanctity.²⁴

²² *Lumen Gentium*, no 8., in Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, 357.

²³ Speaking at Bialystok, Poland in June 1991, Pope John Paul II took pains to re-emphasize that the term "Sister Churches" is not just a courtesy phrase: "Today we see more clearly and understand the fact better that our Churches are Sister Churches. To say 'Sister Churches' is not only a convenient phrase, but it is a fundamental ecumenical category of ecclesiology. Upon it should be based the mutual relations among the Churches and also between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church here in Poland." *Osservatore Romano* English edition, no. 24 [1195] June 17, 1991, pp.8-9. Already in 1975 E. Lanne had drawn such conclusions from the actions of a previous pope: "S'il ne s'agit pas des mots aimables mais vides de signification, si les actes du pape Paul VI sont autre chose que des gestes de courtoisie humaine, [...] il n'y a pas d'obstacle insurmontable à la reprise de la pleine communion canonique et sacramentelle avec l'Eglise-soeur d'Orient." "Eglises-soeurs: implications," 74.

²⁴ See Lanne, "Eglises-soeurs," 73. This same author, however, has also written strongly elsewhere about the ambiguity of the teaching of Vatican II, where he finds basically irreconcilable differences between the ecclesiological perspectives of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* with regard to the Orthodox Churches. The latter views the Orthodox as a full ecclesial reality, whereas the former, in Lanne's view, still retains the view of the united Eastern Churches as offering a model for future relations with the Orthodox. In this same article Lanne complains that the appointment of a Greek-Catholic Exarch of Athens in July, 1975 amounted to the Vatican's negation of the recognition of the Orthodox Church of Greece as a Sister Church. In response to Lanne, one might say that this is not the only possible interpretation of the event, but it certainly helps to emphasize that Catholics, too, need to clarify what they mean by the term Sister Churches, and what kind of practical ramifications this term should have. See E. Lanne, "United Churches or Sister Churches: A Choice to be Faced," *One in Christ* 12 (1976): 106-23.

Robert Barringer has studied the first document of the Joint International Commission for Orthodox–Catholic Dialogue (July 1982), and concludes that Catholic interpretations of the document (the first joint doctrinal statement since the Council of Florence in 1439) will see it as asserting “that the *koinonia*/communion effected by the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist is the same communion for both Roman Catholics and for Orthodox: an identical reality proceeding from a single source.”²⁵ He sums up the difficulty on the Orthodox side of this question, however, by recognizing that the Orthodox Church has never made it plain that it accepts the ecclesial reality of the Catholic Church.²⁶

This would seem to establish that the term “Sister Churches” when it is used by Catholics has a more precise meaning: an official acceptance of the full ecclesial reality of the Orthodox, even in the condition of imperfect communion.²⁷ When it is used by Orthodox, even the Ecumenical Patriarch,

²⁵ Barringer, “Catholic–Orthodox Dialogue,” 64–65.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Barringer explains that there exist “[...] many different approaches both in theory and in fact, when dealing with those whom (like Roman Catholics) the Orthodox tradition considers heretical. No authoritative statement exists in the Orthodox world which recognizes that Roman Catholics are members of the Church of Christ in the strict theological sense and that their sacraments (including the Eucharist) are therefore sacraments of the Church. Many individual Orthodox certainly believe that this is the case, and many gestures by Orthodox leaders and hierarchs seem to imply this belief, but this view can always be regarded as a personal opinion only and, moreover, as an opinion which does not necessarily reflect the true position of Orthodoxy. Such is clearly the approach of the monks of Mount Athos.”

²⁷ Avery Dulles seems to be expressing adequately the prevailing Catholic approach when he writes about imperfect communion thus:

On the sacramental view, it may be acknowledged that Christian groups not in union with Rome belong visibly to the Church; for the Church of Christ is today historically realized in many Churches, some of them not in communion with Rome. These many Churches, by reason of their mutual division, fail to show up the unity of the one Church, and in this respect they are deficient as a sign of Christ. For the unity of the Church to be achieved in a sacramentally appropriate way, there must be reconciliation among the Churches; they must re-establish visible communion with one another. Christian reunion is therefore conceived not as the return of straying sheep to the true fold (as in the first [exclusivist institutional] model), nor as the manifestation of something that already exists in a hidden way (as in the second [mystical communion.]), but as a restoration of visible communion among groups of Christians that need each other in order that any one of them may become less inadequately the sacrament of Jesus Christ. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 157.

it seems to denote something more than just a gesture of good will but less than an official position of the Orthodox Church.²⁸ Even the 1993 Balamand Statement has failed to eliminate doubt as to the official position of the Orthodox Churches in this regard.²⁹

However, one may not fail to notice what many Orthodox have viewed as a significant reversal of Catholic thought in the "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion" issued 28 May, 1992 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Signed by the Congregation's prefect, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, and its secretary, Archbishop Alberto Bovone, the letter refers to the Orthodox Churches as being "wounded in their condition as particular Churches" by their lack of full communion with the See of Peter. In ecumenical discussions Orthodox theologians have asked me: Unless the Catholic Church also sees itself as somehow "wounded" by lack of full communion with the Orthodox Churches, is it possible to continue a dialogue of equal partners, or is the only avenue left open by Cardinal Ratzinger's statement a return to the model of *reductio in obedientiam*. The further progress of the International Orthodox-Catholic dialogue and the hopeful Balamand Statement seem to contradict Cardinal Ratzinger's ideas, but it would be safe to assume that we have not yet heard the last from the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. See the English text of the letter in *Origins* 22 (June 25, 1992): 108-112.

²⁸ On a related note, Ernst C. Suttner has ably summarized the ambivalence of Orthodox authorities toward the validity of Catholic baptism. Originally, it was Moscow that took the hard line, insisting on re-baptism of converts from Catholicism at its 1620 Synod. The Greeks succeeded in getting the Muscovites to reverse their position at the Synods of 1655-56 and 1666-67. This was based on the 1484 decision of the four Orthodox Patriarchates not to rebaptise Latins. In the next century the situation changed as the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem declared in 1755 that Catholics were to be considered unbaptised. In 1757, however, the Russian Church announced that confirmed Catholics were to be received into the Orthodox Church without a new Chrismation. Thus, Orthodox ambivalence toward the efficacy of Catholic sacraments and the reality of their Church life is nothing new. See Ernst Suttner, *Church Unity: Union or Uniatism?* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1991), 18-23.

²⁹ Some nine months after this paper was originally delivered at the first Stamford Consultation of the Kievan Church Study Group, the Balamand meeting of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church issued (in June, 1993) a document of immense importance. It speaks of the two Churches "discovering each other once again as Sister Churches (no. 12)." It goes on to say that

[O]n each side it is recognized that what Christ has entrusted to his Church—profession of apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, above all the one priesthood celebrating the one sacrifice of Christ, the apostolic succession of bishops—cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our Churches. It is in this perspective that the Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Churches recognize each other as Sister Churches, responsible together for maintaining the Church of God in fidelity to the divine purpose, most especially in what concerns unity. According to the words of Pope John Paul II, the ecumenical endeavour of the Sister Churches of East and West, grounded in dialogue and prayer, is the search for perfect

Michael Fahey sees something positive in the multivalent approach of the Orthodox to such questions as the recognition of the ecclesial reality of the Catholic Church. He finds that the strong emphasis on the local Church "helps Orthodoxy absorb tensions with greater facility than is often possible for instance in Roman Catholicism,"³⁰ stressing that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Orthodox Church of America were able to remain in communion despite their difficulties while the Catholics could not solve their difficulties with the Lefebvrists. The question of the appropriateness of this analogy aside, one cannot fail to notice the wide divergence of opinion in the Orthodox Church on East-West reconciliation. While the Ecumenical Patriarchate and others use and insist on the ecclesiology of Sister Churches, the monks of Mount Athos have taken a decidedly different approach.³¹

and total communion which is neither absorption nor fusion but a meeting in truth and love {cf. *Slavorum Apostoli*, 27} (nos. 13–14)."

This would seem to imply mutual recognition of priesthood, sacraments and full ecclesial reality. That would be quite a step for the Orthodox to take. However, it is not entirely clear what kind of binding force this declaration has, since no Orthodox representatives were present from the Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Bulgaria or Serbia, or the Churches of Georgia or Greece. The Orthodox present did include representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Moscow, and Romania, as well as the Churches of Cyprus, Poland, Albania and Finland. Tarek Mitri, a staff member of the World Council of Churches who coordinated the Balamand consultation for his Church, the Patriarchate of Antioch, explained that the representatives of some Orthodox Churches may have been absent only because of practical obstacles. But the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Church of Greece clearly were not there because of distrust of the progress of the dialogue. See "Catholic-Orthodox Commission Rejects 'Uniatism'" in the Antiochian Orthodox publication, *The Word* 38 (April, 1994), 34. For an English text of the Balamand Statement see "Uniatism and the Present Search for Full Communion," *Catholic International* (September, 1993): 441–43.

³⁰ Michael Fahey, "Rome and Byzantium: Sister Churches Prepare for the Third Millennium," in Barringer, *Rome and Constantinople*, 21. Significantly, this same author had earlier asked for clarification from the Orthodox on the ecclesial status of the Catholic Church and specifically its sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Orders. See M. Fahey, "Reconciliation Between Orthodoxy and Catholicism: A Roman Catholic View," *Diakonia* 10 (1975) 17. Apparently, further close contact with the Orthodox through ecumenical dialogue has alleviated some of his concerns in light of Orthodoxy's more apophatic approach to the matter.

³¹ The profound suspicion of the Athonite monks toward the Catholics can be found in this excerpt from a 1981 declaration:

From the Orthodox point of view there is no justification for optimism in regard to the dialogue, and for this reason no haste should be exhibited concerning it. The Roman Catholics are pressing the dialogue, hoping to

To be absolutely fair, one must recognize that there are occasional voices raised among Catholics, particularly some Greco-Catholics in Eastern Europe, that are critical of the current Catholic-Orthodox rapprochement as well. The difference is that these individuals are considered to be completely out of line with official Catholic teaching due to their long isolation from the rest of the Church during decades of persecution. On the Orthodox side, one is hard pressed to define just exactly what the official position is.³²

The crucial question, of course, is how the local Church relates to what Barringer calls "the reality of the whole Church as the Body of Christ."³³ It is here that the Eucharistic Ecclesiology which is very much at the forefront of Orthodox thought may force the Orthodox to confront the issue of ecclesial

strengthen themselves by annexing Orthodoxy to themselves, for they are confronted by very powerful internal disturbances and crises, as is well known. The number of former Roman Catholics who have converted to orthodoxy also disturbs them. But Orthodoxy has no reason to hasten towards dialogue since the papists remain so obdurate and immovable as regards infallibility, uniatism and the rest of their pernicious teachings.

Hastening the dialogue under such conditions is equivalent to spiritual suicide for the Orthodox. Many facts give the impression that the Roman Catholics are preparing for a union on the pattern of a *unia*. Can it be that the Orthodox who are hastening to the dialogue are conscious of this? "Documentation: The Announcement of the Extraordinary Joint Conference of the Sacred Community of the Holy Mount Athos Concerning Dialogue Between the Orthodox and Roman Catholics," *Diakonia* 16 (1981): 82. There are similar documents emanating from Mount Athos today. One need only read, for example, the publication *Foi Transmise et Sainte Tradition* 66 (1992) to find even more vehement attacks on the Catholic Church and those Orthodox leaders who would dare to engage in dialogue with the Catholics.

³² Theodore Stylianopoulos has written: "The Orthodox need to find a way to accept the principle that officially recognizing ecclesial reality in other Christian bodies neither is an affront to the Orthodox Church as the one, holy catholic and apostolic Church, nor necessitates sacramental communion with them. Acceptance of this principle could then release the Orthodox position from the heavy burden of virtually denying that other people in the world are Christians." in "Orthodoxy and Catholicism: A New Attempt at Dialogue", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 26 (1981): 164. On the other hand, Yves Congar seems to be satisfied with the sometimes vague approach of the Orthodox to such thorny issues. When discussing the Orthodox notion of economy (a concept not unrelated to the discussion at hand) he states: "The indeterminacy of the concept of economy corresponds with the genius of a theology which cannot and will not make definitions." Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, 63.

³³ Barringer, "Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue," 68.

reality beyond the Orthodox communion more squarely. The joint text of the 1981 Munich Document states:

The identity of one Eucharistic assembly with another comes from the fact that all with the same faith celebrate the same memorial, that all by eating the same bread and sharing in the same cup become the same unique body of Christ into which they have been integrated by the same baptism. If there are many celebrations, there is nevertheless only one mystery celebrated in which we all participate.

In the same way, the local church which celebrates the Eucharist gathered around its bishop is not a section of the Body of Christ. The multiplicity of local synaxes does not divide the Church, but rather shows sacramentally its unity.³⁴

That is fine and easily understood if one does not cross confessional lines. The reference to "the same faith" in the preceding quotation could be construed along such confessional lines, thus rendering the communion described ineffective. There has been an important voice in Orthodox Ecclesiology which challenges the readiness to conform to confessional demarcations. Metropolitan John Zizioulas poses the question:

Can a local Church be regarded as truly local and truly Church if it is in a state of confessional division? This is an extremely difficult question. If the notion of the local Church with all the implications we have mentioned here is to be taken into account—if in other words the church is a true Church only if it is a local event incarnating Christ and manifesting the Kingdom in a particular place—we must be prepared to question the ecclesial status of confessional churches as such, and to begin to work on the basis of the nature of the local Church. This cannot be done overnight, for confessionalism is rooted deeply in our history. But we must be ready to admit that as long as confessionalism prevails no real progress towards ecclesial unity can be made. Taking the reality of the local Church and its theology more

³⁴ Cited in Barringer, *ibid.*

seriously than we have done so far may prove to be of extreme importance to the ecumenical movement.³⁵

Indeed, if this notion is taken to its logical limits, a radical re-orientation of the meaning of "Sister Churches" would be needed. Just as it had moved from an earlier signification of more-or-less national autocephalous Churches within the Orthodox communion to the current quasi-confessional interpretation as used in the ecumenical context between Rome and Constantinople, so the term would need to be refocused squarely on the local Church. This approach certainly requires much more elucidation, as it might lend itself to significant misinterpretation.

Is it surprising that the Orthodox and Catholic Churches have not succeeded in eliminating all ambiguity from the concept of Sister Churches? Not if one recognizes that the last three decades have truly been a time of enormous change and concomitant experimentation. After all, the practice of reception of individual heterodox believers, with which the Orthodox had centuries of experience was far from uniform, as historical studies demonstrate.³⁶ How could one hope for immediate clarity on the subject of corporate recognition of ecclesial status of Churches out of communion for nearly a millennium? Perhaps there is another aspect to this ambiguity of the concept of Sister Churches. Perhaps it is a mystery of the faith, never fully to be comprehended by the human mind. At the very least, it seems to be a mystery that is understood only gradually even by those who dwell on it intently.³⁷

³⁵ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1985), 260.

³⁶ See Michael Fahey, SJ, "Ecclesiastical 'Economy' and Mutual Recognition of Faith: A Roman Catholic Perspective," *Diakonia* 11 (1976): 212-3, where at least four different approaches to the reception of the heterodox are described.

³⁷ One of the most significant questions emanating from the re-establishment of full communion between Orthodox and Catholics would have to do with the role of the Pope of Rome in such a re-united Church. Pope John Paul II, although a firm believer in the fact that the Bishop of Rome has a mission for all the churches of the World, admitted publicly to Patriarch Dimitrios of Constantinople that he was not yet sure what was the right manner of carrying out this mission. He asked for the Holy Spirit to grant light to the bishops and theologians of both Churches, so that they might seek together the forms in which this ministry might be exercised. See *Osservatore Romano*, December 7-8, 1987, p.5. Perhaps the same can be said for the precise meaning of the term "Sister Churches".

Practical Ramifications of the Application of the Ecclesiology of "Sister Churches"

While an entirely clear definition of the notion of "Sister Churches" from a purely doctrinal point of view still eludes us, it is already possible to distill some practical ramifications of this approach. Two sets of documents, in particular, will be helpful in this regard, one Catholic, the other Orthodox. On the Orthodox side a series of documents detailing the arrangement on the relations between the Antiochian Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox Churches will be studied.³⁸ From the Catholic perspective, a document entitled "General Principles and Practical Norms for Coordinating the Evangelizing Activity and Ecumenical Commitment of the Catholic Church in Russia and in the Other Countries of the Community of Independent States" will be examined.³⁹

a) The Agreement between the Antiochian Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox Churches

Perhaps the most striking example of successful ecumenical rapprochement can be seen between the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Syriac Orthodox Church, one of the so-called Oriental Orthodox or pre-Chalcedonian Churches. A letter from the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch to the clergy and laity of this See explains both the historical background of dialogue with the Syriac Orthodox and the present decisions of the Synod with regard to further relations with that Sister Church. It is significant that the term "Sister Church" is used equally to designate the previous relationship: "You must have heard of the continuous efforts for decades by our Apostolic See with the Sister Orthodox Syriac Church to foster a better knowledge and understanding of both Churches whether on the dogmatical or pastoral level. Those attempts are nothing but a natural expression that the Orthodox Churches, and especially those within the Holy See of Antioch, are called to articulate the will of the Lord that all may be one..."⁴⁰ It is noteworthy also that the two Churches are seen to exist within the one Holy See of Antioch. Thus the two Patriarchs seem to recognize each other as legitimate Patriarchs of Antioch. At least no intimation is made that

³⁸ See the series of documents published under the collective title "On the Unity of the Eastern and Syriac Orthodox Churches" in *The Word* (April 1992): 5-9.

³⁹ *Ecumenism* (September 1992): 40-43.

⁴⁰ "On the Unity", 5.

one or the other is illegitimate. Furthermore, the "traditions, literature and holy rituals" of the two Churches, which had been developing independently, though side-by-side, for centuries, are not seen as being in need of harmonization or uniformity, but rather the situation is put forward whereby a unity is achieved "that preserves for each Church its original Eastern heritage whereby the one Antiochian Church benefits from its Sister Church and profits from its rich traditions, literature and holy rituals."⁴¹

This coming together of the two Sister Churches of Antioch is built on the discovery of fundamental theological agreement. The letter of the Antiochian Holy Synod explains: "All the meetings, the fellowship, the oral and written declarations meant that we belong to One Faith even though history had brought forward the phase of our division more than the aspects of our unity."⁴² The Synod thus decided to translate this doctrinal agreement into the practical realm of concrete life together.

What is important is that the separate structures of the two Churches remain whole and complete. There is no question of subordination of one synod to the other. Instead the solution lies in "Organizing meetings of both Synods whenever need and necessity may arise."⁴³ Equally inviolate is "the complete and mutual respect between the two churches for their rituals, spirituality, heritage and holy fathers; and the full protection of both the Antiochian and Syriac liturgical practices."⁴⁴ No issue is made of the total Byzantinization of the Antiochian Orthodox Church or any need for a return to liturgical or other traditions of the pre-Chalcedonian era. Apparently, both Churches can live with the way the other developed throughout history. The transfer of membership between Churches is not permitted "whatever the reasons may be", so as to eliminate competition. With full intercommunion, such transfers of membership would seem unnecessary, but the matter is not that simple. Membership implies the right to some voice in the direction of the Church. If a person is active in one Church but a member of the other, this person may not be able to exercise such a voice. Like other aspects of parallel church governance, this is not a simple issue, but it is necessary at least until

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

enough trust is established between the two communities, where fears of possible "sheep-stealing" are allayed.

A reference to the incorporation of the "fathers of both Churches" into theological education and general catechesis means the thorny issue of saints of one Church who were earlier treated as heresiarchs by the other seems to have been resolved by simply trusting the judgment of the other Church and giving dubious cases the benefit of the doubt. This will no doubt be a source of some difficulty in years to come, but the matter is treated courageously.

Concrete directives are given for concelebration: the question of who presides when the clergy or Bishops of the two Churches come together. The principle of presidency over liturgy by the clergyman with highest rank or order of ordination is held concomitantly with the principle of majority rule. How these two principles are to work together is not clear, because there may be more faithful of one tradition, but the clergy present from the other tradition may outrank the clergy of the majority. The very idea of following the liturgical tradition of the majority of the people present can sometimes become problematic in itself. Headcounts before liturgy and close percentages could engender hard feelings, but this is not insurmountable if there is genuine good will.

In general, this is not a question of absorption of one Church by the other, or of commingling of their structures. It is rather a "union without confusion." The two churches remain fully intact, but have removed barriers to intercommunion and concelebration, while also enjoining upon their members full cooperation of all their institutions "in all matters, whether educational, cultural or social, for the enrichment of the brotherly spirit."⁴⁵

This new relationship was made possible by the mutual recognition of faith that was achieved through the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. This commission, on September 28, 1990, issued its Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches, which clarified the exact reinterpretation of doctrinal positions thought previously (for over 1500 years) to be mutually exclusive. This was done in such a way as to allow both sides to remain confidently within their own dogmatic tradition while recognizing the validity of the other. This same document outlines practical steps to be taken in order to prepare for eventual unity. These preparations include lifting

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

of anathemas and condemnations against the other Church in a manner to be decided by each Church individually. A second document of the same date and provenance list recommendations on Pastoral issues. Great pains are taken to present a determined by no means speedy path toward better relations through exchanges, visits and publications. Bilateral negotiations are recommended for the resolution of such issues as the use of each other's churches in cases of need, and conflicts in marriage and baptism cases. Cooperation is recommended in general terms in the fields of ecumenism, service to the world and evangelization. It is striking that the Antiochian Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox raced ahead toward full intercommunion, bypassing many of the cautious recommendations of the Joint Commission.⁴⁶ The consciousness of belonging together to the heritage of the See of Antioch is what helped them in this endeavour.

Clearly, all of the problems of relation between these two Churches of Antioch are not yet resolved. That will be an ongoing concern, as relations between Churches in the Orthodox and Catholic Communions have shown over the ages. Communion, once established, must be maintained, Whether this communion is more difficult to establish or to maintain is difficult to tell. Surely, all of this depends on the degree of openness to the Holy Spirit which the Churches can preserve in their daily struggles.

b) *General Principles and Practical Norms for Catholic Activity in the Countries of the C.I.S.*

Our second case study of the practical ramifications of the notion of Sister Churches will concern a document issued June 1, 1992 by the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for Russia. This is a conscious effort on the part of Rome to respond to the concerns and objections of the Orthodox who had been complaining of the Catholic Church's apparent abandonment of Sister Church Ecclesiology and return to earlier models of uniatism and proselytism. These "General Principles and Practical Norms for Coordinating the Evangelizing Activity and Ecumenical Commitment of the Catholic Church in Russia and in Other Countries of the Community [*sic*] of Independent States"⁴⁷ attempt to clarify how the Catholic Church can maintain its commitment to the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁷ English translation in *Ecumenism* 27 (September, 1992): 40–43.

ecclesiology of Sister Churches while taking care of its members in "traditionally Orthodox lands" and pursuing an active course of evangelization.⁴⁸

The document explains in a preamble that "it is not in competition but in a shared esteem for the unity willed by Christ that the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are called upon to carry out their mission, both in each one's own activities and in joint undertakings."⁴⁹ There follow eight general principles and eight practical directives.

The first three general principles refer to the need of Catholics in these lands for normal ecclesiastical structures, and assure the reader that the Catholic Church rejects proselytism, defined as "the exercise of any sort of pressure on people's consciences."⁵⁰

Principle 4 sets up the responsibility of Catholics for mission simultaneous with "a true concern for their Orthodox brothers and sisters, with respect for the latter's faith, so that they can join with them in preparing for the ecclesial unity willed by Christ."⁵¹ This preparation should consist in developing trust between Bishops, clergy and laity of the Churches.

Unlike point 3 of the Antiochian statement, where the Churches are to refrain from accepting members of the other Church "whatever the reasons may be," point 5 of the Vatican document is careful to observe the individual person's right to religious freedom, while balancing this with respect for the other Church. The text reads thus: "In full respect for religious freedom, which is an inalienable right of every person, Bishops and priests will take care to consider attentively the motives of those who ask to enter the Catholic church. Such people must also be made aware of their obligations towards their own community of origin."⁵² This is perhaps the strongest statement of the kind ever made by the Catholic Church with regard to protecting the Sister Church. It may not be seen as such due to the strong concern expressed for the individual's conscience. The truly ecumenical nature of the statement only

⁴⁸ It is not difficult to perceive certain clear similarities between this document, the Arriccia Draft and the later Balamand Statement of the International Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue.

⁴⁹ "General Principles and Practical Norms," 40.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

comes out when placed in the larger context of rejection of proselytism. Point 6 returns to the notion of missionary activity being joined to ecumenical concern and emphasizes that dialogue among Christians "must constitute for the institutions of the Catholic Church a pastoral priority."⁵³ This ecumenical dimension is to be interpreted in light of Vatican II and post-conciliar documents. At this point specific mention is made of "re-establishing that full communion between the Byzantine Church and the church of Rome which existed in the first millennium."⁵⁴ The mention of the first millennium should probably be taken to emphasize that Rome is not demanding of the Orthodox the acceptance of later developments of the teaching on Roman primacy, jurisdiction, or infallibility, but the reference is vague enough to be interpreted in many ways. This ambiguity at a point where a significant point could be made in reference to the Orthodox is further enhanced by a reference to cooperation among "Christians of different denominations." Such terminology only serves to undermine the whole ecclesiological thrust of the document and its approach to Sister Churches. A further weakening of the Sister Church ecclesiology is offered in the following paragraph where the document speaks of "acknowledging each other as members of Churches which preserve a great part of the common heritage—sacramental, liturgical, spiritual and theological."⁵⁵ The words "a great part of the common heritage" are significantly weaker than one would expect and seem to point to a resumption of very cautious language, perhaps in reaction to the very negative reactions which the Catholics have recently received from most Orthodox.

Principle 7 reminds both Latin and Eastern Catholics of the respect due to the Orthodox, in line with the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism. The specific mention of the Eastern Catholics and their responsibility to follow the Decree on Ecumenism is probably meant to allay fears that any return to past models of reunion is underway.

The eighth and final general principle offers a realistic assessment of the reorganization of Catholic structures in Ukraine and elsewhere in the countries of the C.I.S. Difficulties and tensions with the Orthodox are acknowledged as real, but unlike some previous statements by Vatican officials, this document is much clearer in presenting the legitimate case of the Greco-Catholic

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Church. Rather than attempt in a condescending manner to offer solutions secretly negotiated between power centres, the authors present dialogue as the best vehicle for reconciliation and resolution of disputes.

The second half of the document consists of eight practical directives introduced by an acknowledgment that this is really an effort at damage control after recently voiced Orthodox fears, with a view to "re-establishing the mutual trust essential for authentic ecumenical dialogue between the two Churches on the local and international levels."⁵⁶

Directive 1 emphasizes the need for "sound ecumenical training for all pastoral agents"⁵⁷ and creates procedures to follow in establishing good local ecumenical relations as well as those to be employed in cases of difficulties in understanding with the other Church.

Directive 2 is clearly to Orthodox concerns about parallel missionary structures being set up in Orthodox lands. It expressly prohibits any activity that "can be easily misconstrued as 'a parallel structure of evangelization'" and furthermore refers to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches whose canon 905 prescribes the avoidance of false ecumenism and immoderate zeal. Religious orders are reminded to work closely with diocesan structure in order to ensure continuity on this ecumenical front. This may have been inserted to set aside widespread fears of the Jesuits in particular, whose memory is received with terror by many Orthodox, but it can also be interpreted as keeping a close watch on several Polish religious orders whose expansionist rhetoric has made not only Orthodox but Ukrainian Catholics extremely nervous.

Directive 3 goes pretty far in recognizing the necessity of consultation or at least the informing of the Orthodox authorities about Catholic initiatives, especially the creation of new parishes, "for the sake of promoting a harmonious co-existence with the Orthodox Church and in order to give proof of openness."⁵⁸ But here the document exacts a price for such a cooperative approach. The Orthodox bishops are expected "to promote the spiritual assistance of the Catholic communities existing in the territories of their dioceses, also by restoring churches to the Oriental or Catholic communities

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

where the latter are still deprived of them.”⁵⁹ Clearly, ecumenism is a two-way street.

Proof of ecumenical seriousness is offered in directive 4, where Pastors of the Catholic Church are asked, where possible, “to cooperate with the Orthodox bishops in developing pastoral initiatives of the Orthodox Church”⁶⁰ in its outreach to millions of non-believers. What is being offered here is Catholic assistance in the training of future members of the Orthodox Church. This has tremendous ecclesiological import. It recognizes most clearly the full and unhesitating acceptance of Orthodox baptism and membership in the Orthodox Church as genuinely salvific. Being much larger than the Orthodox Church, it is easier for the Catholics to offer such assistance. Whether Orthodox would trust Catholics enough to accept such assistance and whether Orthodox would publicly offer to reciprocate is not all that clear.

Directive 5 reminds of the need to inform Orthodox authorities about educational and charitable initiatives by Catholic institutions from the West.

The final directive sets up a policy proposal for the just distribution of places of worship. “Priority for distribution of already existing places of worship depends on the proportion—numerical as well as social and historical—of the faithful dwelling in a particular place.”⁶¹ This seems to be an incredibly complex formula which will hardly be possible to apply in any peaceful way. Perhaps it is meant as a recognition of the complexity of property issues. In some cases sharing of worship space is advised “between the Catholic and Orthodox communities or other Christian denominations.”⁶²

The document ends with the expected ecumenical flourish: “[...] In this way there will be banished ‘all feeling of rivalry or strife (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 18)’ and once the wall dividing the Western from the Eastern Church is removed there will finally be a single dwelling place, solidly established upon the corner-stone, Christ Jesus, who will make them both one.”⁶³

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Conclusions to be Drawn from These Two Documents

The two documents studied represent two different stages of ecumenical progress. In the Antiochian situation, the two Sister Churches are establishing full intercommunion. In the Roman document intercommunion is not even obliquely mentioned. And yet the documents have some striking similarities. They both consider the structure and membership of the Sister Church as inviolate (although, as stated, the Roman principles take a more nuanced view of individual conscience and personal freedom of choice). Both focus on cooperative educational and social programs. Both call for frequent consultation between hierarchs of the two Churches.

There are some significant differences, as well. The Roman document is characterized by very tight language and was obviously penned by authors with considerable diplomatic skill. The Antiochian agreement is written in a much more naive and innocent style. The controversial context of the Roman text is apparent, while a more positive mood permeates the Antiochian document.

While the two situations are very different, and the two documents reflect that difference, it is also clear that both offer some rather clear content for the notion of Sister Church. They will therefore offer considerable assistance to ecumenists searching for the meaning of this sometimes elusive formula.

Perhaps it would be naive on the part of this author to attempt to formulate a definition of such an elusive term as "Sister-Churches" considering its rather ambiguous use over the years. In my opinion, however, the term should be reserved exclusively to those Churches which mutually recognize each other's sacraments, priesthood, and apostolic succession. And, in my humble opinion, that should be enough for inter-communion unless there is very clear evidence that one of the Churches is in heresy on a matter essential for salvation.

Application of These Facts to the Kievan Church

There are today four major Churches which identify themselves with the See of Kiev: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (aligned with the Moscow Patriarchate); the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church (aligned with Rome); the Ukrainian Orthodox Church—Kievan Patriarchate (autocephalous, but as of yet not recognized by other Orthodox Churches); and the smaller Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. The first two of these are just in the process of coming to terms with their own ecclesial self-identity, having considered

themselves in the past to one degree or another simply part of a larger Church rather than a self-governing Church in its own right. The third and fourth, for the most part, have a clear picture of their own identity as a Church, but have precious little experience of structuring this reality. These four Churches all need to make explicit their recognition of each other as Sister Churches, and to recognize the sacraments and full ecclesial reality of each other. This would considerably reduce the motivation for unbecoming behaviour among their adherents toward members of the other Churches.

The Ukrainian Greco-Catholics will be expected to adhere to the "General Principles and Practical Norms" analysed above and the very similar practical instructions of the Balamand Statement. It would be better still if this Church would produce its own statement of this kind. The two remaining Kievan churches may also want to draw up something similar. It would be best if a four-way declaration could be made, but that seems to be impeded by clear canonical difficulties between the UOC, the UOC-KP and the UAOC. If these four Churches have difficulty with negotiating a quadrilateral ecumenical agreement, perhaps they should turn to their Mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople for assistance. This would only be possible if Constantinople recognized the Kievan churches as Sister Churches rather than as portions of another Church.⁶⁴ In the long term, it is important to heal the painful rift between the three major Orthodox Churches in Ukraine while concomitantly pursuing the ideal of a local ecumenical solution not unlike that

⁶⁴ The Arricia Draft, produced by Catholics and Orthodox together at least makes mention of the "Eastern Catholic Churches" rather than "Uniates" or "Eastern Catholic communities", as some recent documents have done. See "Uniatism as a Method of Union in the Past and the Present Search for Full Communion," *Ecumenism* 27 (September 1992): 37. The same is true for the final version of this document, the Balamand Statement of June, 1993. It is only since Vatican II that Rome has consistently referred to Eastern Catholic Churches as "Churches". It is now time for the Orthodox to begin to use this terminology consistently, thereby assisting the Eastern Catholics to come to a fuller awareness of their own ecclesial identity. This is the only way to replace uniatism with a more healthy ecclesiology. The Balamand Statement does just that, even going so far as to invite the Eastern Catholic Churches to participate in the international Orthodox-Catholic dialogue at all levels (no.16) See "Uniatism and the Present Search for Full Communion," *Catholic International* (September 1993): 442. But see J. Erickson, "A New Crisis in Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue," *Ecumenism* 27 (September 1992): 22, where the author sees no reason to acknowledge these Churches precisely as Churches or to allow for their continued existence "apart from purely pastoral concern for Christians who otherwise might feel alienated and possibly betrayed." One might ask the author of these words: Apart from pastoral reasons why does any Church exist?

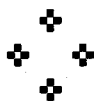
among the Eastern Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox within the See of Antioch.⁶⁵ In fact, one could argue that the communality of faith, spirituality and worship is much greater between the Kievan Churches than that which was found by the two Antiochian Churches to be sufficient for full intercommunion. What is missing in the Kievan Church is a truly ecumenical resolve. Much healing of memories is needed along with much quieting of emotions.

The ideal of Ukrainian Greco-Catholics reestablishing full communion with their Orthodox counterparts in the See of Kiev and with their Mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, without breaking communion with Rome,⁶⁶ and therefore offering a stimulus to the total reconciliation of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches will be one step closer to realization when

⁶⁵ In time, a fuller integration of structures could be achieved since there really is no question of different liturgical traditions as is the case in Antioch. Differences in local usages would harmonize rapidly after intercommunion with better communication, joint training, etc. For a while an anomalous situation would exist, whereby Ukrainian Orthodox would be in some mediate communion with Rome, through their communion with the Ukrainian Greco-Catholics. In this interim period the Ukrainian Greco-Catholics would initially follow the structural patterns of their current jurisdictional alignment with Rome, with the recognition that such arrangements would terminate at the moment of full reconciliation between East and West. This is made clear in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no.30, where we read: "All these legal arrangements are made in view of present conditions, until such time as the Catholic Church and the separated Eastern Churches unite together in full communion." Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 451. See also "Relations With The Eastern Churches" in *Information Service the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* 78 (no. 3-4, 1991): 144. Presumably after re-establishment of full communion between Rome and the Orthodox Churches, the structure of the Greco-Catholic Church of Kiev would cease to exist as a separate entity apart from the Orthodox Church of Kiev. Full integration of the Church of Kiev as one unit would then be attainable.

⁶⁶ Archbishop Rembert Weakland, chair of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs has stated quite clearly: "No union between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church is thinkable without first working out how it will be possible for Byzantine Catholics and Orthodox to exist in communion." Quoted in John Borelli, "A Critical Moment in Orthodox and Catholic Relations" *Ecumenism* 27 (September 1992): 26.

the terminology and ecclesiological content of Sister Church relationships begin to be applied seriously.⁶⁷



⁶⁷ There are several good articles that at least touch upon a practical approach to Sister Church relations: Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland "The Next Steps in Orthodox-Catholic Relations," *Ecumenical Trends* 21 (June 1992): 81, 91-94; Joseph A. Loya "Uniatism in Current Ecumenical Dialogue: Reflections of an Eastern Catholic," *Ecumenical Trends* 21 (June 1992): 83-86.