

7. The Father of Modern Ecumenism:  
Patriarch Joseph Cardinal Slipyi  
(1892 - 1984): A Biblio-Biographical Sketch



Originally published in *Bohoslovia* 48(1984), pp. 27-42.

Father PETRO B.T. BILANIUK

**THE FATHER OF MODERN ECUMENISM:  
PATRIARCH JOSEPH CARDINAL SLIPYJ (1892-1984):  
A BIBLIO-BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

There are many different types of ecumenists. Some have become ecumenists simply by an election or appointment, to fill a position in modern church life for the purpose of fostering good relations between existing Churches. Some have been moved by the love of Christian unity and by a strong desire to reunite the Mystical Body of Christ. And there are those who have been influenced by their scholarly efforts and intellectual endowments to seek the unity of the divinely revealed truth in the plurality of its interpretations. Still others have been moved to work towards unity by their aesthetic sense, or by the beauty of church art, worship, ritual, sacraments, spirituality, and mysticism — which still exists in divided Christendom. There are also those who have a very keen social consciousness, and work towards peace and social justice within the context of collaborating Churches or communities. Finally, there are those who have been forced by adverse political and historical circumstances to become prophets, martyrs, or confessors for Christian unity. These have been called to witness to the unity of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity by their humiliation, persecution, imprisonment, suffering and blood.

There have been only a very few eminent ecumenists — charismatics of Church unity — who, in their life work, effort and suffering, have exhibited all of the above mentioned characteristics of ecumenists. In a unique position among them stands the Confessor of the Faith, the late Patriarch Joseph Cardinal Slipyj (Kobernyckyj-Dyčkovskyy). A partial record of the life, work and achievements of this great man is to be found in the thirteen volumes of his collected works, the titles of which vary somewhat — the variation reflecting the turbulent church-political situation of the post-Vatican II era. They are as follows:

*Tvory Kard. Josyfa Verkhovnoho Arkhyiepyskopa. Opera Omnia Card. Josephi (Slipyj-Kobernyckyj-Dyčkovskyy) Archiepiscopi Maioris*, compiled by Johannes Choma *et al.* Vol. I (Romae: Universitas Catholica Ucrainorum a S. Clemente Papa, 1968), 423 pp.

*Opera omnia Kyr Josephi (Slipyj-Kobernyckyj-Dyčkovskij) Archiepiscopi Maioris et Cardinalis.* Vol. II (1969) 315 pp.; Vols. III-IV (1970) 900 pp.; Vol. V (1971) 416 pp.; Vol. VI (1975) 457 pp.

*Opera omnia S. Beatitud. Patr. Josephi (Slipyj - Kobernyckyj - Dyčkovskij) et Cardinalis.* Vols. VII-VIII (1976) 291 pp., 367 pp. & 19 plates.

*Opera omnia Josephi (Slipyj-Kobernyckyj-Dyčkovskij) Patriarchae et Cardinalis.* Vol. IX (1980) 355 p.; Vols. X-XI (1979) 304 pp.; Vol. XII (1981) 335 pp.; Vol. XIII (1983) 352 pp.

All the volumes were compiled and partially edited by the Right Reverend Archimandrite Ivan (Johannes) Choma. In the preparation of volumes I and II he was assisted by the Reverend Ivan (Johannes) Jackiv; of volumes III-IV by the Reverend Dr. Jurij (Georgius) Fedoriw; of volumes V to XIII by the Right Reverend Archimandrite Ivan (Johannes) Muzyczka. In this work we shall refer the reader to the *Opera omnia* by a Roman numeral to the volume and by the Arabic numerals to the pagination.

Josyf (Joseph) Slipyj was born on February 17, 1892 in Zazdrist', Western Ukraine, of a gentleman-farmer, Ivan Kobernyč'kyj (nicknamed "Slipyj": "the blind") and Anastasia, née Dychkovs'ka. Joseph received his primary education in Zazdrist' and the neighbouring Vyshnivchyk, and his secondary education in Ternopil, where he graduated with highest distinction in 1911. In the fall of the same year he entered the Priestly Seminary in Lviv. One year later, the Servant of God, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, sent him to Innsbruck, Austria, where he received his doctorate in theology in 1918 with a dissertation entitled: *Die Auffassung des Lebens nach dem Evangelium und I Briefe des Hl. Johannes*. It was first published in *Bohoslovia* XXIX (1966) and reprinted in the *Opera omnia* (I, 29-90). In this work, the young theologian exhibited an Eastern Christian sense of the mystery of the Sacred Scriptures, coupled with a serious and exact Western biblical exegesis. All of his later works exhibit the same ecumenical quality of bringing together the best elements from the Eastern and Western Christian traditions. Josyf Slipyj's dissertation was the first to be written on the subject in question by a Catholic theologian (some Protestant works had preceded it).

The author distinguished in the writings of St. John two key terms: "*bios*", the natural biological life of all living beings, including human beings; and "*zoē*", the supernatural life of heavenly origin, which is eternal, permanent, and divine, given gratuitously by God Himself. The