

THE HOLY ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON
His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

CONCERNING THE SPREAD OF SYNCRETISM
WITHIN "WORLD ORTHODOXY"

An Encyclical by
His Eminence Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

My beloved Orthodox Christians:

Recently, a remarkable statement was published describing the Church's missionary nature. In the clearest terms this statement emphasized that one of the main purposes of the Church is to bring all peoples into the Christian Faith. The Church, it said, is "a leaven in the world," and it made reference to Saint John the Baptist, who out of love and devotion to Christ "could not contain himself and cried out 'Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world.'" "Truly filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint John the Baptist was filled with divine love...a love which seeks ever to embrace every soul. He could not help but shout the awesome news of salvation in Christ."

Further on, the author mentions Saint Andrew the First-called, and says that this Apostle also, being "filled with the Holy Spirit" and unable to keep the news of the Messiah to himself, "first found his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah!'" The author emphasizes, "The missionary impulse, the desire to proclaim Christ with burning love for the salvation of others which we see in Saints John and Andrew, is at the core of the Christian life, and has been present from the beginning."

Elsewhere in this notable statement, our author speaks "of the missionary impulse of authentic faith, seeking to spread itself, and also of the work of the Church for the third millennium." "Evangelization," he said, "is the normal way in which the Church makes the light of Christ visible to the world. This light.... cannot be imposed by force, but must illumine the spirit and attract the heart." This proclamation of the Gospel "flows from the Eucharist, which is the center and the nourishment of the Church's missionary activity." Those who love Christ have "a supernatural desire to preach the Gospel and to lead others to meet Christ in the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist."

Furthermore, as this statement points out,

The Church teaches that the faithful cannot be silenced, that the impulse to spread the Gospel, to proclaim Christ as Messiah, is not an option, but rather an obligation. The Church is not "catholic," not universal, if the Church is not also missionary.

The Church, in obedience to the command of her Founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age" (*Matt. 28:19-20*).

Christ has commanded that the Church grow to embrace all peoples, languages and cultures. God's love is fulfilled only by reaching out to every single human being.

There are some Christians who have the odd idea that it is somehow an imposition upon others to speak of one's faith in public places, in schools, at work, in the marketplace. The truth is quite the opposite. From the beginning, authentic Christians did not hesitate to proclaim Christ as Lord in word and action. The host of martyrs who have illuminated the way for the Church for two millennia witness to this by their blood. You and I are not Christians in the authentic, wholehearted sense unless we receive from Christ the fire of His love which cannot be extinguished, and which seeks to spread itself and to consume other souls in a conflagration which will light the way to salvation for all the world.

Let the Church's celebration of the 2,000th anniversary of the Incarnation continue to be the opportunity to discover and practice a love which is an undeniable sign of and sharing in God's own love. Preach, teach, and live Christ. Do not keep the Messiah a secret. If you truly have His love, you will speak of Him. You will not be able to keep silent.

"Come and see; we have found the Messiah!"

The thoughts expressed above are direct quotes, as well as a paraphrase of a statement made by an author who is known to us. He is the Pope of Rome, John Paul II.

As Orthodox Christians, we know that the Papacy has overturned and tainted virtually every teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Apostles. We know, further, that on many occasions Pope John Paul II himself has made his own blatantly syncretistic statements.* Nonetheless, in this one instance, in speaking about the Church's purpose in the world, the text quoted above in a Roman Catholic periodical (*The Wanderer*, January

*See, for example, *Sister Churches – Five Hundred Years After Florence*, published by the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, 1994.

23, 2003) speaks eloquently, and accurately describes the Church's Apostolic and missionary mandate.

Alas, we are now obliged to quote some other statements, also made by churchmen. These statements essentially contradict what the holy Gospel teaches about the Church's need to proclaim the glad tidings of the world's salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be worth our while to examine these unchristian, unorthodox, and anti-missionary statements that have been made in recent decades. In truth, if these statements (which we shall quote in full below) had been made a generation ago, they would have provoked a storm of protest, and perhaps even a call for the suspension or defrockment of the perpetrators. Throughout the past few decades, however, the churchmen in question have progressively desensitized their faithful to the degree that even the most outrageous statements and acts perpetrated today by them elicit no response whatsoever from their people, despite the fact that these statements and acts overturn the Christian faith itself.

Indeed, we no longer hear the voice of the Gospel from these people, but rather the voice of strangers and false shepherds.

Especially notable in this progressive deterioration of Christian teaching are two events that took place under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. These events — the first in Addis Ababa in 1971, the second in Barr, Switzerland in 1990 — were, for the most part, unnoticed by the faithful, because — the truth be told — how many people read the publications of the World Council of Churches? At Addis Ababa, the "Orthodox" Archbishop George Khodr of Mt. Lebanon (the Patriarchate of Antioch) told the delegates:

"Every martyr for the truth, every man persecuted for what *he* believes to be right, dies in communion with Christ" (emphasis added).

and elsewhere in the same talk:

The [Holy] Spirit operates and applies His energies in accordance with His own economy and we would, from this angle, regard the non-Christian religions as points where His inspiration is at work.

*(The Ecumenical Review, April, 1971)**

At the time, this statement raised the eyebrows of many of the Protestant delegates, for one of the main axioms of Protestantism is the necessity of every believer's *personal* commitment to Jesus Christ; hence, the typical Protestant question: "Is Jesus your *personal* Saviour?" Now, here before them, stood an allegedly Christian bishop telling them something quite alien to this belief.

* Archbishop George Khodr's entire talk is remarkable for yet another reason: its extensive use of Gnostic and New Age terminology.

However, they themselves were not slow to espouse this novel and syncretistic concept, and within twenty years, at Barr, Switzerland, they produced an appalling statement of their own, together with their "Orthodox" and Roman Catholic colleagues.

The twenty-two official representatives of the "Orthodox," Protestant and Roman Catholic denominations at Barr cited the need for a "more adequate theology of religions," and, in the section on Christology, they affirmed:

"that in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, the entire human family has been united to God in an irrevocable bond and covenant. The saving presence of God's activity in all creation and human history comes to its focal point in the event of Christ." But, they continue, "because we have seen and experienced goodness, truth and holiness among followers of other paths and ways than that of Jesus Christ . . ., *we find ourselves recognizing a need to move beyond a theology which confines salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ*" (emphasis added).

(*Ecumenical Press Service*, 16-31 January, 1990)

By this *Statement* — which all, including the Orthodox, signed — these official representatives of their respective denominations directly denied the uniqueness and exclusiveness of our Saviour's role in the salvation of mankind. As the Holy Apostle Peter, being "filled with the Holy Spirit," said to the rulers and elders of Israel:

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the Stone which was set at naught by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

(Acts 4:10-12)

The renunciation of this basic Apostolic teaching continues even now in the statements issued by one other prominent "Orthodox" churchman, especially over the past decade. Here are some examples of his teaching:

Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, and Hindus are "united in the spirit of the One God" (*Sixth World Assembly of Religion and Peace, Riva del Garda, Italy, 11/4/92*).

It is a "fundamental ecclesiological truth" that Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism "constitute the two lungs of the Body of Christ" (*Address during a concelebration at the Phanar with Cardinal Cassidy, 4/30/92*).

"Our churches are recognized mutually as sister churches, responsible together for the preservation of the One Church of God. . . We exhort our faithful, Catholic and Orthodox, to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood, which derives from a single Baptism and participation in the sacramental life" (*Joint Communiqué*, 6/29/95).

"Those of our forefathers from whom we (Orthodox and Roman Catholics) inherited this separation were the unfortunate victims of the serpent who is the origin of all evils. . ." (*Address to the Papal delegation at the Phanar*, 11/20/98).

"The idea that membership in a visible Church organization is requisite for membership in Heaven is based on a false paradigm --- that we somehow parallel the Kingdom of God in this world" (*Christian History*, Spring, 1997, p. 42).

"We remind all that every form of proselytism...is absolutely condemned by the Orthodox. Proselytism, practiced in nations already Christian...poisons the relations among Christians and destroys the road to their unity" (*Summit Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches*, 1992).*

"...This is not the first time that our church is conducting a dialogue with our beloved Muslim brothers...We do not proselytize anyone, nor do we participate in dialogues between our brother Muslims in order to convince them to accept our own faith" (*Address on Relations Between Christians and Muslims*: 9/25/00).

"God is...well-pleased with...those who worship Him independent of the differences which exist in regard to faith between the three great monotheistic religions" (<http://greece.flash.gr/soon/2002/12/16/14339id/>).

"If the diverse people of a culture look to the memories of their faith traditions, whatever they may be, they will be sustained, they will be fed the food of God's spiritual knowledge...Orthodox Christian and modernist, Protestant and modernist, Jew and modernist, Catholic and modernist:

*It is necessary to point out here that there are two types of proselytism: the unacceptable type, which uses bribery or violence to convert people, and the Christian and biblical type to which, for example, the 145th Psalm makes reference: "The Lord maketh wise the blind; the Lord setteth aright the fallen; the Lord loveth the righteous; the Lord preserveth the proselytes."

however we worship, as long as we abide in our faith and unite it to our works in the world, we bring the living and always timely message of Divine Wisdom into the modern world" (*Address at Emory University, 10/3/97*).

"Roman Catholic and Orthodox, Protestants and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians: the time has come not only for rapprochement, but also for an alliance and joint effort...We have within our grasp the vision of the Psalmist: 'Behold, how good and how pleasing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'" (*Sixth World Assembly of Religion and Peace. Riva del Garda, Italy, 11/4/92*).

"The Orthodox Church does not seek to convince others of any one particular understanding of truth or revelation, nor does it seek to convert others to a particular mode of thinking (*Statement given at the Phanar, 3/17/01*).

These are statements made by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

After reading the above texts, one immediately sees the stark contrast between those made by an allegedly "Orthodox" bishop and those made by the Pope of Rome, who in this particular instance, is to be commended.

Sadly, what Pope John Paul II said should have been said by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. And what Patriarch Bartholomew said could just as easily have been said by any Freemason, or by a person who has lost his Christian faith altogether. Yet, here is the irony: despite Patriarch Bartholomew's public declarations that "God is well pleased with those who worship Him independent of the differences which exist in regard to faith" or "the Orthodox Church . . . does not seek to convert others to a particular mode of thinking," Patriarch Bartholomew — unlike the deity he worships — is extremely displeased and intolerant when anyone disagrees with him in these matters, and he will even go so far as to persecute and seek legal sanctions against those who persist in their disagreement with him (as in the recent case of the Monastery of Esphigmenon on Mt. Athos)!

In this instance, we thank God for Patriarch Bartholomew's fanaticism and intolerance, for it shows us clearly the true nature of his ecumenical "love" and "tolerance."

Our Saviour expressly enjoined His disciples, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). And again, on another occasion, He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born from above of water and of the Spirit [in Holy Baptism], he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This is not exclusivism. This is our Saviour, the God-man Himself, Who is speaking and giving the Great Commission to the Church. How can one claim to

be a member of the Church — let alone a bishop of the Church — and contradict our Saviour, the Prophets, the Apostles and the God-bearing Fathers? He that gainsays the teachings of our Saviour and the Church, His Body, cannot be a Christian.

My beloved Orthodox Christians, our Saviour teaches us, "I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of Mine" (John 10-14), and "the sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice, and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him for they know not the voice of strangers" (*cf.* John 10:3, 5).

This Encyclical has been written to remind you of why we are *not* in communion with these false shepherds who contradict the Church. We did not separate ourselves from them in order to gain influence or wealth, but rather in order to remain steadfast in the Christian faith. This Encyclical is addressed to you, the faithful, so that you may resist with your whole heart and soul any compromise to our holy Faith, and never join "the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm 1.1) who, by their syncretism and ecumenistic ideology, blaspheme against the holy Orthodox Catholic Faith of the Saints from all ages past.

Saint Philaret the New Confessor, Metropolitan of New York (✠1985), wrote his Sorrowful Epistles to the primates and bishops of all the local so-called "Orthodox Churches." In these extraordinary Epistles, he pointed out the many deviations in matters of the Faith that were perpetrated by various bishops among them, and he appealed to their consciences and pleaded with them to uphold the vows they had made publicly at their consecrations as bishops — vows to uphold the Orthodox Faith, unaltered and intact. Not *one* of these bishops separated themselves from "the counsel of the ungodly", that is, "World Orthodoxy." In that fearful day, certainly, they will be judged by Saint Philaret's sacred witness and holy confession. As a man of God, he has been honored by incorruption and miracles of healing.

Therefore, we appeal to you, the faithful, and to all people of good volition — whose conscience is distressed and disheartened in witnessing the repeated violations of the sacred Faith by false shepherds — that you separate yourselves from the voice of these strangers, and unite your voice to those of us who have come together to confess the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith of the Church of Christ; for "there is salvation in no other name, and in none other name under Heaven given among men are we saved" (*cf.* Acts 4:12). Amen.

Your fervent suppliant unto God,
✠Ephraim, Metropolitan of Boston

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