

NUMBER II IN THE SERIES

Contributions to a Theology of Anti–Ecumenism



## ORTHODOXY AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

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## Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement

A Critical Report on a Fundamentalistic Article  
by the Ecumenists of the Patriarchate of  
Constantinople in Geneva

The “Permanent Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the headquarters of the World Council of Churches,” in Geneva, recently undertook to dedicate a large part of the summer issue of its *Bulletin* to the anti-ecumenist Old Calendarists in Greece.

In a three-page leading article (“Commentary”), consisting of eight paragraphs of unequal length, signed by the Great Protopresbyter George Tsetsis, and entitled “Old Calendarism, the New Calendar, and the Ecumenical Movement,”<sup>1</sup> Father Tsetsis essays to disparage, denigrate, and vilify the pious anti-ecumenists in an unprecedentedly fiery way, with special “attention” to the Holy Synod in Resistance.

This article by Father George Tsetsis constitutes the most genuine kind of ecumenist fundamentalism; it is clear that the ecumenists now perceive “those who think differently” as a “threat,” and as a result of this they are becoming fanatical, at times mounting *ad hominem* attacks of a truly vulgar kind, foregoing, sadly enough, even the basic *dictum* of Christian sensibility that one approach matters in a pastoral, *ad rem* manner.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, regardless of the tone of the “Commentary” of Father George Tsetsis and of all those who hastened to propagate and disseminate<sup>3</sup> this article,

which is unacceptable both in form and substance, let us take this fundamentalist aberration from Geneva as a beginning—albeit a negative one—of dialogue between the ecumenists and anti-ecumenists.

The unificationist perspective of the Holy Synod in Resistance, moreover, would never allow us to set aside the sacred call for the unity of Orthodox Christians—though assuredly in Truth and in Holy Tradition—, or to disregard the corresponding method of the Holy Fathers, who, “according to the ancient institutes of love,” sought after the return of their erring brothers, putting forth “every exhortation with compassion,” as St. Basil the Great says.<sup>4</sup>

Our zealous adherence to the “Faith of the Fathers,” avoiding any “wavering” or the “*via media*,” will, along with our genuine love, demonstrate who the real “polemicists” (see note 4), sundering the unity of the Holy Orthodox Church, are.

Let us try, now, to follow the thinking of the Orthodox ecumenists<sup>5</sup> of Geneva and to draw pertinent conclusions therefrom.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See *Enemerosis*, 12–1996 /7–8, pp. 1–4 [in Greek].

<sup>2</sup> *Ad hominem*: a judgment which aims to undermine a man by belittling his character. *Ad rem*: a judgment which deals solely with the arguments at hand.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ekklesiastike Aletheia*, No. 417 (September 1, 1996), p. 6 [in Greek]; *Katholike*, No. 2824 (October 1, 1996), pp. 1, 7 [in Greek]; *Ekklesia*, No. 16 (November 1, 1996), p. 752b [in Greek] (citation of the final section of the “Commentary,” which is characterized, in general, as “a most eloquent article”).

- In the same period, there was a discussion of this subject, on the “Radio Station of the Church of Greece,” between Father George Tsetsis and Aristeides Panotis.

<sup>4</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. xxxii, col. 557A (*Epistle* 128: “To Evsebios, Bishop of Samosata,” § 3).

<sup>5</sup> The characterization “Orthodox ecumenists,” for the purpose of our critique, but also more broadly, is a technical term; by “Orthodox ecumenists” we specifically mean ecumenists coming from the Orthodox Church who, on the one hand, no longer have an Orthodox understanding of ecclesiology and who, on the other hand, are now united, in the framework of the WCC, with ecumenists coming from the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Monophysite, and Nestorian churches.

## The beginning of dialogue between ecumenists and anti-ecumenists?

The “Permanent Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the headquarters of the World Council of Churches,” in Geneva, has published an extended article against the anti-ecumenist Old Calendarists in Greece.

Although this article constitutes the most genuine kind of ecumenist fundamentalism, we regard this—through our unificationist perspective—as an occasion for the beginning of dialogue between the ecumenists and anti-ecumenists.

We humbly express our opinion that the Orthodox ecumenists, with their disdain for the common conscience of the Church (*consensus Ecclesiae*), are isolating themselves from the charismatic Body of Orthodoxy, in which the experience of the Apostolic Faith is embodied; that is to say, they are isolated from the Saints and all those who truly love them and would remind them of the truth.

Our aim is not polemical, because we constantly keep in mind the words of St. Gregory the Theologian: “For we are not striving to conquer, but to bring our brothers—separation from whom brings us great distress—to our side” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxvi, col. 440B [*Oration 41*: “On Pentecost”]).

*Front cover photo:* Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, during his official visit to Geneva, presents the General Secretary of the WCC, Dr. Konrad Raiser, with a silver chalice (December 11, 1995).