

THE QUESTION OF UNION

*A Forthright Discussion of the Possibility of
Union of the Eastern Orthodox Church
and Roman Catholicism*



Constantine Cavernos

**CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
ORTHODOX STUDIES**

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**A Fortright Discussion of the Possibility of
Union of the Eastern Orthodox Church
and Roman Catholicism**

**by
Constantine Cavernos**

Translated by
Hieromonk Patapios

*With a Foreword by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna
and a Preface by Photios Kontoglou*

Second Edition



**Etna, California
2006**

The Question of Union was originally published in 1964 in Greek by Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Typos” (Athens). A second Greek-language edition appeared in 1968.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER

92-73467

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Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BOOK NUMBER

0-911165-21-5

About the Author

Professor Constantine Cavarnos, a distinguished contemporary philosopher, Byzantinist, and Orthodox thinker, received his education at Harvard University, where he began his studies as a pre-medical student in the biological sciences. Twice a Fulbright Scholar and a former Sheldon Traveling Fellow in Philosophy at Harvard, Dr. Cavarnos has taught at a number of American colleges and universities and is now President of the Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. His countless books and articles on Orthodox spirituality form an indispensable body of materials for the sober student of the Orthodox Church, its history, and its ethos. He has been an advisor to the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, from which he holds the Licentiate in Orthodox Theological Studies *honoris causa*, since its inception.

About the Translator

Hieromonk Patapios is a monk at the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California, and Academic Director of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies. A graduate of Cambridge University and a native of Great Britain, Father Patapios received the Licentiate in Orthodox Theological Studies from the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies and the Doctor of Theology degree in Patristics at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, where he was a Newhall Research and Teaching Fellow. He is also a former Lecturer in Sacred Languages at the Saint Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological College and a former Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley.

Preface to the Second Greek Edition

The lively demand which followed the swift sellout of the brilliant monograph *The Question of Union* by Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, a most pious professor in the U.S.A., made its re-publication necessary.

“Orthodoxos Typos” Publications puts at the disposal of Orthodox Christians an enlarged edition of this much sought-after work, in the conviction that it constitutes a positive offering in the struggle to defend the Orthodox Faith from Papal scheming.

On the occasion of the publication of the second edition, it behooves us to make clear that the preface of the Blessed Photios Kontoglou was included at the initiative of “Orthodoxos Typos” Publications.

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Foreword

by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna

The desire for unity is foremost in the minds of true Christians. Christ Himself spoke of the oneness which He wished to see among God's people, a oneness so sacred that He likened it to His own oneness with the Father. The Psalmist David likewise tells us of the goodness and joy that fall upon brothers who dwell together in unity. In the Acts of the Apostles, indeed, we see the formation of the witness of the primitive Church on the very principle of unity. And the Fathers and Saints of the Orthodox Church have always exhorted the Faithful to avoid division and separation among themselves: "To avoid the snares of disunity," in the words of Saint Gregory Palamas, the great fourteenth-century Church Father. Christianity is a religion of oneness and of unity, since the ultimate goal of the life in Christ is oneness with Christ Himself. And to achieve this oneness, we must be united among ourselves. It is where two or three are gathered in Christ's Name, in that place where unity of confession and mind flow forth from the Body of Christ, His Holy Church, that Christ is. It is in that place that a man is transformed and becomes, in the words of one Church Father, "a small Jesus Christ within Jesus Christ." In unity with others we are lifted up.

It is because unity and oneness with Christ are the source and goal of Her witness that the Orthodox Church pines for Christian unity. It is natural to what She is. For this reason, Orthodox have never ceased praying for the unity of the Churches of God (that is, of all of the local Orthodox Churches) and lamenting sincerely the loss of those outside the Church's fold. Thus, the separation of the See of Rome, an ancient and honored center of Christian tradition, from the Faith—the loss of so many of Her Faithful in the West—has always weighed heavily on the Orthodox Church. If the Schism of Chalcedon in the fifth century, when the so-called Oriental "Orthodox" bodies separated from

the πλήρωμα of the Church, left a scar on the Christian heart, the Great Schism between the Orthodox Church and Rome in 1054 has left an unhealed wound. About this fact there can be no question. For, if the Orthodox Church has spoken out with uncompromising fidelity to the teachings of the Apostles against the heresy and error of Rome, the very source of that fidelity also evokes the feelings of pain and sadness that a Christian knows at the loss of a brother in Christ.

Only by understanding what I have written about the Orthodox spirit can one properly understand the theme of the present work, a book written by a man of Orthodox conscience and of remarkable erudition. Writing against contemporary efforts to join the Orthodox Church's Truth to the falsehood of the Roman Catholic Church, Dr. Cavnos is not among those rabid preachers of hate and sectarianism who, in possessing something which others do not, seek to exalt themselves by that unique fact—a self-elevation alien to true Christianity. Rather, he is a guardian of Orthodox Truth, wishing to keep it undefiled by any kind of compromise or vitiation, not simply for himself, but for the sake of those who might one day return from error to the “criterion of Truth” which is Orthodoxy. His truthful and honest opposition to contemporary reunion dialogues between Orthodoxy and the Papacy draws not on sectarian narrow-mindedness, but on the same purity of purpose with which a scientist resists the corruption of scientific fact by bogus theory, the amalgamation, for example, of chemistry with alchemy.

Dr. Cavnos, a pious Orthodox Christian and an acute scholar, convincingly demonstrates that Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism are not the same thing and that they cannot be one unless the Orthodox Church sacrifices its integrity or the Latin confession abandons its errors. The Truth of Orthodoxy, like the truth of science, cannot be reconciled to bogus theory and still remain what it is. Moreover, since the Orthodox Church has preserved unchanged the teachings and precepts of the Apostles, it would be wrong for Her to seek unity in falsehood. The

imperative of love demands that She call the See of Rome back to its roots, back to the “undivided” Church of the Seven Œcumenical Synods—back to that Church which has, in fact, never been and can never be divided.

Today religious relativism has become an absolute. The contemporary ecumenical movement demands that the Orthodox Church drop Her claims to ecclesiastical Truth. Thus I, an Old Calendarist zealot, am considered a sectarian even by some *Orthodox* ecumenists and to be in or close to schism, if not apostasy, while heterodox who reject and even revile the Orthodox Faith are accepted as brothers “in love.” The elect themselves are perilously beset by the demands of contemporary ecumenism, which has led them either to capitulation and weakness before the enemies of the Faith or, on the other hand, to a violation of the spirit of moderation that unremittingly resides in Christian love. I am thus much indebted to Dr. Cavarinos for his present study, since it speaks well of views which I personally espouse, yet avoids the polemics of those who look at ecumenism, whether positively or negatively, from a “political” standpoint. It speaks of the truth in a moderate tone and with insight that brings us back to Christian thinking and away from ideologies. In short, Professor Cavarinos tells the truth. And, again, where there is truth, there is love; and where there is love, unity will prevail—not the unity of compromise and betrayal, but the unity wrought by return and repentance.



The Blessed Photios Kontoglou (1895–1965)

Preface

by the Blessed Photios Kontoglou

Mr. Constantine Cavarinos is humble, unassuming, discerning, far removed from the slightest display, but fervent in spirit, a rock of faith, a fortress against the enemies of Orthodoxy. He was a distinguished professor of philosophy, who wrote important treatises, among which are *A Dialogue between Bergson, Aristotle, and Philologos*, *Plato's Theory of Fine Art*, and others. He was a Teaching Fellow at Harvard University and a Professor at the University of North Carolina.

His religious soul, however, finally turned to religion, and above all to Orthodoxy, in which he proved to be a profound expert, full of unshaken faith, living in holiness, and completely dedicated to the Tradition of our Church. He gave lectures in America and Greece about Byzantine music, about the state of the Greek Church in America, and so on. He is now struggling at the side of the defenders against the new machination of Papism and the Papophiles, having written an important and relevant study under the title *The Question of the Union of the Two Churches*, which is now being published by the Panhellenic Orthodox Union (P.O.U.). He has also written a book about Orthodox Iconography under the title *Byzantine Sacred Art*, as well as another splendid work about the Holy Mountain, *Anchored in God*.

This new Papadiamantis, a model of purity, sobriety, very deep piety, humility, and every Christian virtue, is a true adornment of Christian Greece. His presence in the camp of those who struggle for the preservation of our Orthodox Faith from the talons of Papism and its friends is a dazzling testimony concerning those warriors who are today making war under the banner of Greek Orthodoxy against the darkness of Papolatry and the materialistic spirit of "this world."



The historic meeting between Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople (1886–1972) and Pope Paul VI of Rome (1897–1978) in the Holy Land on January 5–6, 1964 (New Style)—the first such personal contact between the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church since 1439—inaugurated the current era of ever-increasing ecumenical fraternization between the Phanar and the Vatican

The Question of Union
Constantine Cavarinos

Comments on the original Greek text of this work:

“*The Question of the Union of the Two Churches* is an excellent brief summary of the key differences between Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. ...Dr. Cavarinos points out quietly that there are serious differences which make present Ecumenical discussions between Catholics and Orthodox more theoretical than real.”

The late Professor John E. Rexine
Colgate University
in *The Greek Orthodox Theological*
Review, Vol. XI, No. 2 (1965-1966)

“Athens, 13 April 1964

“Dear brother Constantine:

“I received and read the manuscript of your lecture on *The Question of the Union of the Two Churches*, and was very pleased. It approaches the subject in a way different from that of [Alexandros] Kalomiro's book *Κατὰ Ἐνωτικῶν [Against False Union]*. You fight in the same camp as he, but with different weapons. Beautiful is your idea of taking the arrows against [Patriarch] Athenagoras from the quivers of two Saints, Nicodemus and Nectarios, whom he proclaimed Saints.

“I congratulate you for struggling together with me.

“Your speech must certainly be read by many.”

The Blessed Photios Kontoglou