

Catholicism in Light of Orthodoxy



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CATHOLICISM IN LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

Archimandrite George
Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Grigoriou,
Mt. Athos

Translated by Vincent DeWeese



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Translator's Note

As with all works of translation, there are a number of places where the translator has felt the need to change the word order or make more substantial changes to the syntax of sentences in order to conform to good English style. He hopes that in doing so he has not in any way distorted the words of the holy Elder of most blessed memory. It must also be noted that every instance where Elder George has used a Greek source and an English edition was already readily available, the English edition has been substituted for the original Greek source. In cases where an English edition was unavailable, the translator has left the original Greek citation. All biblical citations are from the King James Version.



Αγιορειτική Φωτοθήκη

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the faith which was once delivered unto the saints
St. Jude, Brother of the Lord



INTRODUCTION

The Main Differences

After the ascension of the new Pope, Benedict XVI, to the throne of Rome, it was announced that theological dialogue between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism which had been interrupted because of the problem of Uniatism in July of 2000 would resume. There have been many assessments of the stance which the new Pontiff would take concerning the serious theological problems which exist and impede the restoration of ecclesiastical unity.

Independently from these assessments, we Orthodox see the restoration of ecclesiastical unity as the return of the Roman Catholics to the “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,”¹ which they departed from with the heretical dogmas of papal primacy of authority, papal infallibility, the Filioque, created Grace, and others.

In order to be aware of what we expect from the Dialogue, which it seems will begin again, we are publishing with some modifications a homily which we had given in 1998 with the theme: the basic differences between the Orthodox Churches and Roman Catholicism. The homily was delivered at the invitation of the local Metropolitan, in a provincial city where

1 Jude 3:3

they had been presented with outbreaks of proselytism against the Orthodox on the part of Roman Catholics.²

One of the characteristics of our pluralistic age is the attempt of rapprochement between different peoples and civilizations. Toward this end, empowered representatives of the different Christian confessions and religions come together at certain intervals to conduct official and unofficial dialogues. To make the realization of these dialogues possible in the beginning they seek the discovery of some points of commonality between the dialoguing parties. For this reason, the enumeration of the differences between our holy Orthodox faith and Roman Catholicism may be considered strange at the present historical juncture.

However, a superficial ecumenism which ignores the differences takes us further away from rather than bringing us closer to union. Concerning this superficial ecumenism, Father Dimitru Staniloae writes: “Every now and then an easy enthusiasm from a great desire for union is created which believes that it can with its affective warmth melt down reality and to shape it again without difficulty. Furthermore, a diplomatic compromising mindset is created which thinks that it can reconcile with mutual concessions of dogmatic positions or more generally conditions, which keep the churches separated. These two ways with which the reality is dealt with—or left unconsidered—show a certain elasticity or relativism of the value which is attributed to the defined articles of faith of the churches. This relativism reflects perhaps the very low importance, which certain Christian groups—as a whole or certain people from their circles—give to these articles of faith. They suggest the above from enthusiasm or a diplomatic mindset, these exchanges and

² See periodical, ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ, ‘I. Μητροπόλεως Κυδωνίας και Αποκορώνου, τεύχος 192, January, February 1998, Chania, Crete [Greek].

compromises, precisely because they do not have anything to lose with what they suggest. These compromises however present a great danger for Churches where the corresponding articles have importance of the first order. For these Churches, such suggestions of exchange and compromise are equivalent to overt attacks.”³

There exists another reason which requires us to know the differences: the preservation in a state of vigilance of the dogmatic consciousness of the Orthodox.

We live in an age of confusion, inter-Christian and inter-religious syncretism and promotion of the so-called “New Age.” The faithful of our Church are not left unaffected.

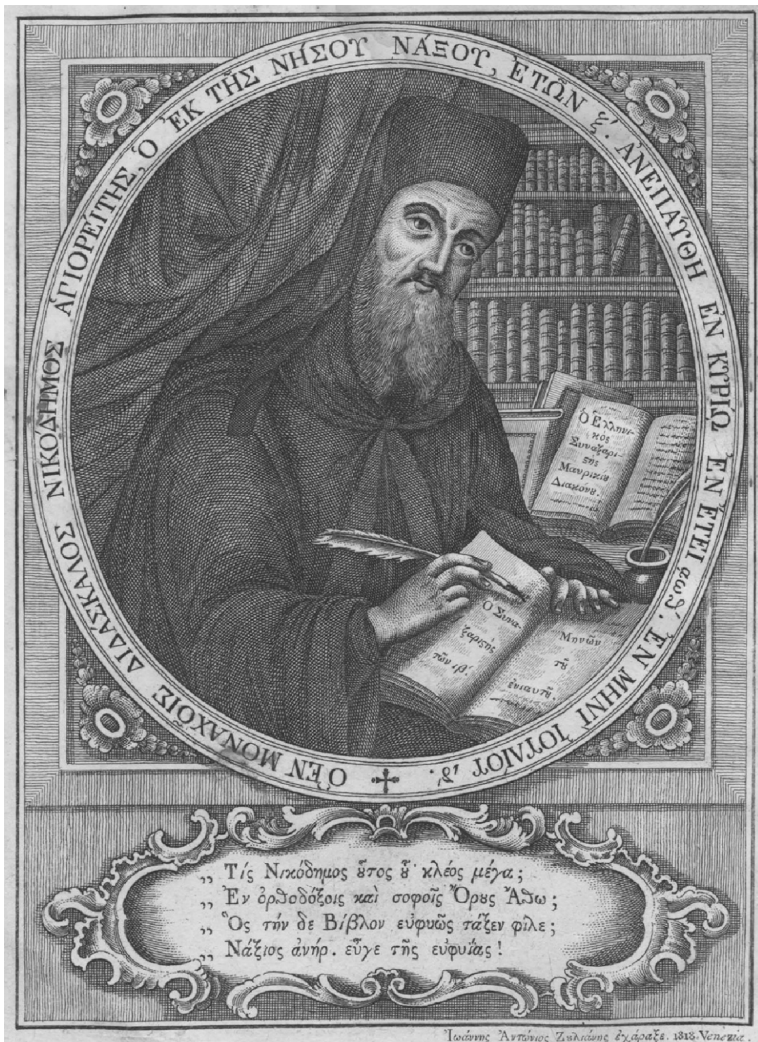
Recently, a professor at the University of Athens wrote that he can just as easily light a candle before the icon of the Panagia as before the statue of one of the gods of Hinduism.

It is the bounden pastoral duty of the Shepherds of our Church to confess the Orthodox Faith without compromises, when they dialogue with the heterodox, but also to teach it to the Orthodox people, especially where it is muddled by ignorance of the differences with the other dogmas and religions. Even more so must they teach the Faith and demonstrate the differences in regions where direct or indirect proselytism is being used. The counsel of the great Apostle Paul to the bishops and presbyters of the Church echoes still today: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”⁴

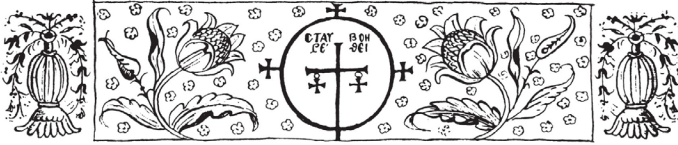
Let us examine the most important differences.

3 Dimitru Staniloae, *Concerning an Orthodox Ecumenism*, published ΑΘΩΣ, Piraeus 1976, pp. 19-20. [Greek].

4 Acts 20:28.



St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite



CHAPTER 1

The Vatican State

The Vatican is the center of the administrative-bureaucratic system of Roman Catholicism—of the Papal Church and of the Papal state. The Pope is the leader of the “Roman Catholic Church” and simultaneously the leader of the Vatican state which has government ministers, an economy, in older times an army, and today a police force, diplomacy and whatever else constitutes a state.

We all know how many long and bloody wars happened in the past on account of the Popes, and indeed during the Investiture Controversy which began with Pope Gregory VII in 1075 and which lasted for 200 years. The aim of these wars was the security but also the expansion of the Vatican state. Even today although territorially reduced, the Vatican still actively promotes its own interests, with the result that other peoples and indeed the Orthodox are struck as recently as the war of the Croats and Muslims against the Orthodox Serbs.

The Pope in various countries is represented by a Nuncio who is his eyes and ears. In Athens there exists the Latin Archbishop, the Uniate Bishop and the Nuncio—three representatives of the Pope. The Pope’s papocaesarist claims are summarized characteristically in what was said by Pope Innocent IV (1198-1216), the greatest of the me-