ORTHODOX–CATHOLIC RELATIONS

Fr. Chrysostom Frank

It is only in worship, with a keen sense of the transcendence of the inexpressible mystery ‘which surpasses knowledge’ (Eph. 3:19), that we will be able to see our divergences in their proper setting and ‘to lay ... no greater burden than these necessary things’ (Acts 15:28), so as to reestablish communion.... It seems to me, in fact, that the question we must ask ourselves is not so much whether we can reestablish full communion, but rather whether we still have the right to remain separated. We must ask ourselves this question in the very name of our faithfulness to Christ’s will for his Church, for which constant prayer must make us both increasingly open and ready in the course of the Theological Dialogue.¹

These words were originally spoke by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in the patriarchal Church of St. George in the Phanar in Constantinople in 1979. They were repeated thirteen years later in 1992 by Bishop Vsevolod, Ruling Hierarch of the Ukranian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada (Ecumenical Patriarchate), to a gathering in St. George’s Cathedral in L’viv of the Holy Synod of the Ukranian Greek Catholic Church.² The question these words pose is perhaps the most important issue in Orthodox-Catholic relations and perhaps the most important question for all of Christianity in our age: do we...
Orthodox and Catholics still have the right to remain separated? It is the question with which this reflection is concerned.

RECAPTURING THE HEARTS AND MINDS

Dialogue and communion between two communities exists, I would argue, on two levels: firstly, on the official, theological and hierarchical one, and secondly, in the hearts and minds of the people of God. For restoration of eucharistic fellowship to occur, dialogue and communion must take place on both levels. The official, theological, hierarchical one is certainly necessary since that is where the schism first took place, not in the hearts and minds of the faithful but in the break of communion between bishops and theologians. Consequently, it is on that level that restoration of communion must begin again, even when the faithful are not entirely ready for it. Theological dialogue and the fostering of an attitude of communion among theologians, clergy and bishops is necessary in and of itself, but it is also necessary in preparing for the restoration of communion at the second level, in the hearts and minds of the faithful.

The Council of Florence failed not only because of an inadequate grappling with the theological issues, but because the episcopate, agreeing among themselves for the most part, failed to carry the people with them. The restoration of communion had been achieved with paper and ink but not in the hearts and minds of the faithful. This is where a major front of the battle, then, must be fought. In 1981, the French Catholic theologian, Father Louis Bouyer, recounted how when he was present at a celebration in one of the great cathedrals of Russia at which Cardinal Willebrands had preached, the Orthodox faithful showed their enthusiasm in a very spontaneous way. A Russian Orthodox bishop then said to Cardinal Wilibrands, “Now you see the situation has changed completely. Florence was a total failure because it was just a combination, moved to some extent by political considerations, between the hierarchies and without the people really being interested. Now it is the opposite: it is the mass of people and the clergy who desire unity and believe it should be restored.” Since 1981, certain developments have occurred in eastern Europe which are not conducive to Orthodox-Catholic reconciliation (I shall discuss these more fully later). Nonetheless, in 1992 the Ukrainian Orthodox Bishop Vsevolod from the United States was still able to say to the Holy Synod of Greek Catholic Bishops in the Ukraine that “In these few days of my stay in Ukraine, the priests and faithful have frequently repeated how sincerely they desire and need to put an end to this division, how they want

3 “Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue Patmos and Rhodes” in Sobornost, 3 (1) 1981, p 92
We need to begin to prepare the hearts and minds of the faithful and to begin to break down the prejudices, the outworn theological perceptions, the fears that exist and have been built up over centuries.

to have one church in Kiev. Never in my life have I seen such popular enthusiasm for Christian unity. How true these claims still are in 1998 is perhaps a difficult question to answer. Nonetheless, they continue to point to a vital dimension in Orthodox-Catholic relations, that is, the need to recapture the hearts and minds of the people for reunion. The pastors and theologians of the churches have the spiritual responsibility for preparing their flocks for the restoration of union and communion. This is a pastoral task, and one that ought to be taken seriously. Whether the schism is healed in ten years or in a hundred years is irrelevant. We need to begin to prepare the hearts and minds of the faithful and to begin to break down the prejudices, the outworn theological perceptions, the fears that exist and have been built up over centuries. Bishops, theologians and pastors need to take seriously the words of Bishop Vsevolod:

The Lord has given us the possibility to accomplish this unity. Our task is to lead our flock on the right road according to the will of Jesus Christ in the path of church unity, to walk in the Orthodox Faith with a truly Catholic love which embraces everyone. We must find the ways to purify our motives and the motives of our faithful, to attain a church unity which is authentically Orthodox and authentically Catholic, to teach the Truth of the Holy Gospel and the genuine Christian life, which alone can bring us peace and salvation.

A good place to begin this process of leading our flocks “on the right road” has been suggested by the 1993 Balamand Statement, a tremendously significant accord reached by Catholics and Orthodox. The Statement suggests that within our own communities 1) we make clear that Orthodox and Catholics mutually recognise each other’s apostolic ministry and sacramental life and that 2) we present the history of our churches in a sympathetic and non-polemical way:

First of all, everyone should be informed of the apostolic succession of the other church and the authenticity of its sacramental life. One should also offer [in the preparation of future priests] all a correct and comprehensive knowledge of history aiming at a historiography of the two churches which is in agreement and even may be common. In this way, the dissipation of prejudices will be helped, and the use of history in a polemical manner will be avoided. This presentation will lead to an awareness that faults leading to separation belong to both sides, leaving deep wounds on each side.

4. “...Whether We Still Have the Right to Remain Separated,” p. 224.
5. Ibid.
6. The Balamand Statement was signed by representatives from the Catholic Church and the following Eastern Orthodox Churches: Ecumenical Patriarchate, Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarchate of Antioch, Church of Russia, Church of Romania, Church of Cyprus, Church of Poland, Church of Albania, and the Church of Finland. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Churches of Georgia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Czechoslovakia were not represented.

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This reappropriation of our divided history has been poignantly expressed by Pope John Paul II in his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. In a simple yet powerful way, the Pope expressed his conviction that, despite the schism, Orthodox and Catholics belong to the one holy church. In the discussion of mystical prayer, the Pope appealed not only to western saints, but also explicitly to St. Seraphim of Sarov, a post-schism eastern monk, and specifically called him a saint.\(^8\) That the Pope of Rome has ascribed sanctity and sainthood to Seraphim of Sarov, who lived and died outside of eucharistic communion with the See of Rome and within the bosom of Russian Orthodoxy, is very significant. It means that the Pope takes seriously that Orthodoxy is *church*, despite the break in sacramental communion with Rome. It is important that the Orthodox faithful realize that the Bishop of Rome values and venerates the holy ones whom they also value and venerate. It is this kind of reaching out, exemplified by Pope John Paul II, which can touch the hearts and minds of the faithful far more than theological statements on the *filioque* clause.

Another dimension of the pastoral task in preparing for the restoration of communion is the necessity to inculcate in ourselves — bishops, theologians, clergy, monastics and laity — an attitude of responsibility and accountability towards each other. This means accepting that the problems and crises within our respective churches concern *all of us*. When a brother or sister hurts or is struggling, it ought to be my hurt and struggle as well. The opposite of this, however, is what one often hears in Orthodox-Catholic relations. With a self-satisfied glee Orthodox can speak of the Roman Church “going down the tubes,” while Catholics can be heard referring in a smug way to Orthodoxy as a backward-looking community out of touch with the twentieth century. Our separation from each other over the centuries has made it easy to lose a sense of any accountability towards each other. To restore this sense is an immense pastoral task, but one which is necessary if we ever are to meet together at the eucharistic chalice.

There have been, of course, various historical circumstances through the centuries which have impeded the process of reconciliation, e.g., the Latin Crusades, the Islamic occupation of Christian lands, the emergence of nationalism, the creation of the Eastern-Rite (so-called Uniate) Churches. At the present time there are also developments which are not conducive to recapturing the hearts and minds of the faithful and preparing them for the restoration of full communion. I shall refer to two such developments.

One development concerns the specific situation of Orthodoxy in America. Here one finds relatively small, and often still ethnic, Or-

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The canonization of Father Alexis Toth by the Orthodox Church in America is a prime example of how local Orthodox concerns take precedence over the ecumenical task. Father Toth was a nineteenth-century Greek Catholic priest who had come to America from Austro-Hungary. After being rejected as a legitimate Catholic priest (he was a widower) by the local Roman Catholic hierarchy, Toth eventually entered the Orthodox Church together with three hundred and sixty one members of St. Mary’s Church in Minneapolis. This paved the way for the entrance of over 30,000 Greek Catholic clergy and laity into the Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{9}

I have heard it argued that Father Toth’s canonization was not an example of anti-Catholicism. Nor was it simply because he brought Greek Catholics into the Orthodox Church; rather, it was because of his holiness and pastoral work. This is a charitable interpretation of the event, but one which, it seems to me, is hard to defend. The official icon of St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, “Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in America” has him holding a scroll on which are written the following words: “This is the Teaching of the Christian Orthodox Church, This is the Teaching of Your Forefathers, Your Fathers: This is Your Faith, Through Which All of Us Will Come to Salvation. Hold to it! Amen.” The implication is obvious: Those Greek Catholics who joined the Orthodox Church have now “returned home,” returned to the faith of their ancestors and are now on the path of salvation. The Kontakion hymn is even more explicit (emphasis mine):

\begin{quote}
Let us the faithful praise the priest Alexis,

a bright beacon of Orthodoxy in America,

A model of patience and humility.

A worthy shepherd of the flock of Christ,

He called back the sheep who had been led astray

and brought them by his preaching to the heavenly kingdom.\textsuperscript{10}
\end{quote}

Here the Orthodox Church in America liturgically affirms that Greek Catholics have been led astray. One can also infer from the hymn, although this is somewhat ambiguous, that the “heavenly kingdom” itself was somehow out of their grasp. Father Toth’s preaching, however, led them to it. The official canonization proclamation of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, moreover, ominously asserts that Father Toth’s “missionary labors” offer “significant guidance and direction for the missionary outreach of the Orthodox Church today”!\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{9} For various articles on Father Toth and his canonization, see \textit{The Orthodox Church}, 30 (7/8) July/August, 1994 (the monthly newspaper of the Orthodox Church in America).

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 1.

this mean that all Greek Catholics (and perhaps even Roman Catholics) are "fair game" for Orthodox evangelism? How much does this differ from what Orthodox accuse Catholics of in eastern Europe?

Father Toth's canonization clearly reflects, it would seem, an older ecclesiology, one which has not yet come to terms with the sister-church ecclesiology espoused by the Balamand Statement. Moreover, the canonization is already being used to shore up the older ecclesiology. In an anonymous article which originally appeared in an American diocesan newspaper and was then reprinted in the British Orthodox journal, Suroz. A Journal of Orthodox Life and Thought, the author asserts that Father Toth's "chief work on this earth was his role in the reuniting of countless thousands of Eastern-Rite Roman Catholics (Uniates) to the holy Orthodox Faith, to the Catholic Church of Christ — for the true Catholic Church...is the Orthodox church...." The author then goes on to argue that the glorification of Father Toth is significant because it is an answer to those who, like the signatories of the Balamand Statement, embrace the "branch" or "two lungs" theory. Referring to the Balamand Statement's claim that "...there is no question of conversion of people from one church to another in order to ensure their salvation," the author asserts that "This statement, taken at face value, makes mockery of the action of Father Alexis Toth and all his flock, and of the action of anyone who converts from Roman Catholicism to Orthodoxy." In a sense, the author is correct. The canonization of Father Toth seems to be light-years away from the international Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, and its ecclesiological presuppositions are certainly very different from those of the Balamand Statement. At the very least, the canonization is ecumenically insensitive and triumphalistic in tone.

Another negative feature in Orthodox-Catholic relations in America is the attraction of a number of Protestant evangelicals to Orthodoxy. One need only recount the reception in 1987 of the "Evangelical Orthodox" (former Campus Crusade for Christ) into the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese or glance at the growing literature being produced by converted evangelicals. This trend is, of course, very positive in various ways. The former evangelicals, for example, have a far keener sense than many Orthodox of the moral-cultural battle being waged in America. One of my fears, however, is that their influx also means a


new injection of anti-Romanism into American Orthodoxy. Perhaps some of the baggage which these converts bring with them (and all converts carry some) is that traditional evangelical antipathy towards the See of Rome which now joins forces with bad historiography and outdated theological perceptions. One can see this, for example in Peter Gillquist’s book, *Becoming Orthodox. A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith*, in which he asserts:

The ultimate consequence of the Pope’s schemes was that the whole Roman Church ended up dividing itself from the New Testament Church. And that schism has never been healed.

As the centuries passed, conflict continued. All attempts at reunion failed, and the Roman Church drifted farther and farther from its historic roots. There are inevitable consequences to deviation from the church. The breaking away of the Roman Church from the historic church would prove no exception.¹⁴

This kind of presentation of Roman Catholicism as a community separated from the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, that is, from the Orthodox Church, is by no means either novel within Orthodox circles or an evangelical invention. I have already referred to it in connection with Father Toth’s canonization and will deal with it again later in this article. Gillquist’s way of presenting Orthodox-Catholic relations is nothing other than a bad (and fortunately watered-down) Orthodox version of an originally bad Catholic theology that was developed in order to legitimize the “bring them back” attitude of Catholic missionaries among Orthodox people. The Balamand Statement has rightly rejected this outdated ecclesiology, both Orthodox and Catholic, out of which such ideas have grown. There is a danger, however, that the new indigenous American Orthodox will be tempted to find security precisely in the kind of Orthodox isolationism and parochialism being presented by Gillquist and others, rather than in a continual quest “to purify our motives and the motives of our faithful, to attain a Church unity which is authentically Orthodox and authentically Catholic.” Because the restoration of communion between Orthodox and Catholics must take place in the hearts and minds of the faithful, a development such as this, if it is widespread, does not augur well for Orthodox-Catholic relations in America.

A second and much more publicized recent development which has impeded Catholic-Orthodox reconciliation has been the new situation created in parts of central and eastern Europe by the collapse of Communism.¹⁵ This collapse has enabled 1) the rebirth of the Eastern or Greek Catholic Churches in areas where they were previously

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¹⁴. *Becoming Orthodox*, p. 57.


repressed by Marxist governments, often with at least a tacit nod from the Orthodox hierarchies, and 2) the setting up in countries, such as the Russian Federation, of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical structures judged by the Orthodox to exceed what is required to care for the local Catholic populations. In other words, Orthodox have become fearful that their traditional territories are now once again terra missionis, that is, fair game, for Roman Catholic missionary activity. In response, the Orthodox Churches refused to send delegates to a special Catholic Synod of Bishops of Europe convened in 1991 by Pope John Paul II, to which they were invited. In 1992 the Synod of Bishops of the Church of Greece, not known for its ecumenical orientation, charged the Pope with being deceitful and dishonest in his relations with the Orthodox, and called on the Greek government to break off diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

The history of the Greek Catholic Churches, the so-called "uniate" Churches, in areas like the Ukraine and Romania, is a long and tortuous one. Let it suffice to say that many Orthodox consider the existence of these churches as a sign of Roman Catholic proselytism at its worst and a deceptive attempt to bring Orthodox Churches back into communion with Rome. In the Balamand Statement, moreover, both Orthodox and Catholics have acknowledged that "uniatism" is not the road to travel:

Because of the way in which Catholics and Orthodox once again consider each other in relation to the mystery of the church and discover each other once again as sister churches, this form of 'missionary apostolate' described above, and which has been called 'uniatism,' can no longer be accepted either as a method to be followed nor as a model of the unity our churches are seeking.17

One must also keep in mind that during the 1940s Greek Catholic Churches in the Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia were systematically suppressed by Marxist governments with, it would seem, little or no objection from Orthodox hierarchies. Over five million Greek Catholics were deprived of their religious freedom and compelled to join local Orthodox Churches. As Ronald Roberson has judiciously concluded on this topic, the precise extent to which the Orthodox collaborated with the Communist regimes in the violent suppression of these churches will probably never be known. Whatever role the Orthodox actually played in these events, however, many if not most Greek Catholics became convinced that the Orthodox Church willingly participated in the destruction of Greek Catholicism during the Communist era and so revealed itself as an all too willing collaborator with the forces of atheism and totalitarianism. For Greek Catholics, the experience of suppression only confirmed and intensified their conviction that the Orthodox Church is essentially corrupt and open to abuse by secular authorities.18 Such

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attitudes have resurfaced in a powerful way in post-Communist central and eastern Europe.

When the Greek Catholic experience of Orthodox betrayal combines with an Orthodox antipathy towards "uniatism," the situation can be, and has been, explosive. The nastiness of this problem has been real and has posed a serious stumbling block to Orthodox-Catholic relations. The dialogue, in fact, seemed to be on the verge of breaking down completely. Nonetheless, the very nastiness of the situation reveals how significant the Balamand Statement actually is in overcoming some of the problems. As already indicated, the Balamand Statement, following the 1990 Freising Statement, rejects "uniatism" as a way towards reconciliation. Nonetheless, it also affirms the right of the Greek Catholic Churches to exist: "...religious liberty requires that the faithful should be able to express their opinion and to decide without pressure from outside if they wish to be in communion either with the Orthodox Church or with the Catholic Church." It affirms that Catholic authorities will "assist the Eastern Catholic Churches and their communities so that they themselves may prepare full communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches." The authorities of the Orthodox Church "will act in a similar way towards their faithful."

The resurgence of the Eastern or Greek Catholic Churches has indeed posed a serious problem for Orthodox-Catholic relations. One must admit, however, that the history of these communities carries with it a black mark for both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. The anger and bitterness resulting from both proselytism and betrayal will undoubtedly remain in the ecclesial psyche for some time to come. There is a tremendous pastoral responsibility on the part of both Catholics and Orthodox to heal the wounds and to prepare the hearts and minds of their respective flocks for a reconciliation that is "genuinely Orthodox and genuinely Catholic," so that together we an "walk in the Orthodox Faith with a truly Catholic love which embraces everyone."

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Both uniatism and the betrayal of one's brothers and sisters are ecclesiastical failures. They have arisen out of a particular ecclesiological vision in which the Orthodox and Catholic Churches have identified themselves as the sole heirs of apostolic, catholic, orthodox Christianity. A new, and simultaneously older, ecclesiological vision of Orthodoxy and Catholicism as "sister churches" has now, however, been articulated by both Orthodox and Catholics in the Balamand Statement:

20. Ibid., paragraph 21, p. 24.

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On each side it is recognized that what Christ has entrusted to His Church — profession of apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, above all the one priesthood celebrating the one sacrifice of Christ, the apostolic succession of bishops — cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our churches. In this context it is clear that rebaptism must be avoided.

(14) It is in this perspective that the Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Churches recognize each other as sister churches, responsible together for maintaining the church of God in fidelity to the divine purpose, most especially in what concerns unity. 21

This affirmation by Catholics and Orthodox of each other as sister churches was given papal direction in 1967 when Pope Paul VI handed to Patriarch Athenagoras the brief *Anno Ineunte* (25 July). The brief affirmed that Orthodox and Catholics were already brothers “in very fact” by virtue of their common baptism, apostolic succession, priesthood, eucharist and participation in the gifts of God to his church, and acceptance of the “fundamental dogmas of the Christian faith on the Trinity, on the Word of God who took flesh of the Virgin Mary.” The Pope explicitly espoused a sister-church ecclesiology for our day:

For centuries we lived this life of “sister churches,” and together held the Ecumenical Councils which guarded the deposit of faith against all corruption. And now, after a long period of division and mutual misunderstanding, the Lord is enabling us to discover ourselves as “sister churches” once more, in spite of the obstacles which were once raised between us. In the light of Christ we see how urgent is the need of surmounting these obstacles in order to succeed in bringing to its fulness and perfection the already very rich communion which exists between us. 22

In taking up this papal idea and in affirming that both Orthodox and Catholics possess the same apostolic faith, sacraments, episcopate, priesthood and eucharist, the *Balamand Statement* was affirming that whatever may still separate Catholics and Orthodox from each other does so as a wall *within* the church and not as a wall separating one side from the church. Both are churches in the proper, and not just polite, sense of the word. This sister-church ecclesiology espoused by the *Balamand Statement* does indeed represent a shift in ecclesiological thinking for many Catholics and Orthodox, although less so for Catholics, who since Vatican II have both conciliar and papal confirmation that the priesthood and sacraments of the Orthodox Church are authentic. The Council’s “Decree on the Eastern Churches,” for example, allows Orthodox Christians to receive from Catholic priests the sacraments of confession, eucharist and anointing of the sick if “they ask of their own accord and have the right dispositions,” and allows Catholic Christians to ask for these same sacraments from Orthodox

Those Orthodox who reject the sister-church ecclesiology of the Balamand Statement might well consider that their position is not very far removed from the one upon which uniatism rests.

The branch theory contradicts our [Orthodox] belief that the church is one and indivisible. A local church that succumbs to doctrinal errors can no longer be considered a branch of the Vine (emphasis mine); if it corrects these errors it can be 'regrafted' in — in that event that church’s priesthood, sacraments, or apostolic succession can once again be considered to have life, since they have once again been rejoined to the Vine from which they receive life (Jesus Christ; cf. John 15). In the interim, it belongs only to God, and is not given to the Orthodox Church, either to affirm or deny (emphasis mine) the presence of priesthood, sacraments, or apostolic succession in the separated church, though we may continue to discern some of the ‘fruits’ of faith among its adherents. All in all, the agreement [the “Balamand Statement”] is a powerful endorsement of the ‘branch theory.’

The same anonymous author of the above quotation bemoans the fact that Pope John Paul II and, reports indicate, our own Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Bartholomaios, have explicitly subscribed to this thinking, only swapping metaphors: instead of speaking of the two churches, East and West, as two ‘branches,’ they speak of them as ‘two lungs’ of the Church.

Those Orthodox who espouse such ideas and who reject the sister-church ecclesiology of the Balamand Statement might well consider that their position is not very far removed from the one upon which uniatism rests. If Orthodoxy and Catholicism are not, in fact, two lungs of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, then it would seem morally and theologically imperative for the one to call the other “back home.” This, of course, provides the very rationale for uniatism, that is, the attempt to “save” at least some of the “separated brethren” even if the majority refuse the offer of salvation! Moreover, Orthodoxy knows her own form of Western-Rite uniatism. Although the historical origins of this movement are different from those of Eastern-Rite Catholicism and although because of much smaller numbers it has never had the same impact on either church life or ecumenical rela-

26. See, e.g., “Introducing Western Rite Orthodoxy” by Antony Hughes in Again, 16 (1) March, 1993, pp.16-19.
tions, nonetheless, it represents a phenomenon similar to the Greek Catholic Churches. If Orthodox object to Catholics “masquerading” as Orthodox clergy, then certainly Catholics can also object to Orthodox “masquerading” as Catholics.

While many Orthodox are themselves unhappy with the Western-Rite, nonetheless, it is an historical reality. Moreover, they often, perhaps unwittingly, provide its theological rationale by putting an equal sign between Orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the “true church,” the “catholic and apostolic church,” the “historic church,” the “New Testament church,” on the other hand. A “uniate mentality,” a call for the “conversion” of the brethren and to come back to the “true church,” whether Orthodox or Catholic, is built upon an ecclesiology in which there is an absolute equation between one’s own community, either Catholic or Orthodox, and the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Even an otherwise ecumenically sensitive Orthodox theologian such as Father Thomas Hopko has espoused this absolute identification of the Orthodox Church as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, the “true Church of Christ on earth,” over against both the Western churches of Rome and the Reformation.” (Notice, that Hopko uses a lower case c in “churches” when referring to the Roman Catholic Church as well as to Protestant communities.) Only in the Orthodox Church do Orthodox recognize the absolute identity and completely unbroken continuity of the catholic faith and life of the one church of Christ. In both the Roman Catholic and Protestant communions “the catholic fulness of Christ, the fullness of grace and truth, has been lost.” Hopko is able to assert these claims because of a distinction he makes between “formal,” “official” teaching and practice in the church and the personal failings of individuals:

The loss of perfect fullness in the church, its divine catholicity, is exactly what the Orthodox Church does not admit about itself in its claim to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ. The Orthodox Church denies to itself any formal and official deviations, diminutions [sic] or distortions of any aspects of the ‘fullness of life’ to which men have have come in Christ (Col.2:10; Jn.1:3,16; Eph.1:23). It claims on the contrary, despite all of the weaknesses, deficiencies and sins of its members, that the Orthodox Church alone, in all it formally and officially teaches and practices, remains perfectly faithful to the catholic fulness of God given to his church, the fulness of the Most Holy Trinity. 27

While one needs to make a distinction between the de fide position of the church and human failures and dissenting voices, there is more at issue than this. The weakness in Father Hopko’s assertion is that it is reductionist in character. Ultimately, it defines the catholic fulness of the church in a very limited fashion, that is, in terms of what the Orthodox

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27 All the Fulness of God, pp. 99-100
One does not need to fall into the Donatist heresy to recognize that the existential condition of the church cannot be so easily separated from the ideal. Between the weaknesses and failures of individuals and the formal, official teaching and practice of the church there is another important category, what one might call the “existential condition of a community.”

An example of this in Orthodoxy is our ecclesiastical nationalism and the loss of a catholic mindset, which, in turn, is related to what Father Aidan Nichols calls the loss of a pattern of koinonia in which there is an appropriate space for the Roman See, which embodies the universal pastorate of Peter and the apostolate to the gentiles of Paul. This loss is something less than “official,” “formal” teaching and practice, but something more than the failure of certain individuals. It is something which now permeates the way in which Orthodox both think and act. On this level, there is a loss of catholicity within Orthodoxy.

Only when one takes seriously this level of church life can one fully appreciate the degree to which Orthodox need communion with the See of Rome and, I would argue, the degree to which the See of Rome needs the Orthodox East. We need each other so that, as Bishop Vsevolod has said, we can “walk in the Orthodox Faith with a truly Catholic love which embraces everyone” and “attain a Church unity which is authentically Orthodox and authentically Catholic.” To reduce the ecumenical issue and the understanding of “catholic fullness” to a distinction between the official and formal dimensions of the church, on the one hand, and the failures of individuals, on the other hand, is a dead end and only impedes us from seeing our divergences and differences in a proper perspective and from seeing ourselves as we really are. There is a danger in some circles that “Orthodoxy” more and more becomes a platonic ideal disconnected from the concrete reality of church life.

I would argue, moreover, that despite the efforts at different times by both Catholic and Orthodox theologians and pastors to create the perception (and illusion) that our respective communities are self-sufficient and do not need each other, another more catholic, more embracing vision has never been completely obliterated. Bishop Kal-листос Ware (Ecumenical Patriarchate) has pointed out that the office of the “Synodikon of Orthodoxy,” used on the first Sunday in Great Lent, contains more than sixty anathemas against different heresies and heresiarchs. More than a third of these anathemas date from between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, a period in which doctrinal disagreements between East and West had emerged clearly into the open. There is one unexpected omission in the anathemas: there is no reference made to the “errors of the Latins,” no allusion to the filioque
controversy or to papal claims. This omission is an indication of the curious imprecision which has prevailed between Eastern Orthodoxy and the See of Rome.\textsuperscript{28}

Moreover, communion between Orthodox and Catholics continued in some places up until the seventeenth century, that is, six hundred years after the mutual bans of excommunication between Pope and Patriarch. Not even the sacking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade rendered the schism absolute and universal. At the Council of Florence in 1438-39, Greeks and Latins from the outset treated each other as members of the same Christian church, albeit mutually alienated. Neither side required the other to do penance as schismatics or heretics; nor was a formal act of reconciliation to the church required. Each side acted towards the other as if there was a schism \textit{within} the church, not a schism of one side \textit{from} the church. The preamble to the decree of union stated: “For the wall, which divided the Western and the Eastern Church has been removed \textit{from our midst} (emphasis mine).”\textsuperscript{29} As Bishop Ware has noted, the “wall” is \textit{inside} the church. There is no “receiving back” of one side by the other, since both were already within the catholic church of Christ. The reunion council did no more than make explicit an underlying unity which had never been wholly destroyed.\textsuperscript{30}

The Council of Florence failed to achieve any permanent union, polemical literature on both sides continued to grow, and in 1484 the Synod of Constantinople decided to receive western Christians into communion through anointing with holy chrism and an act of renunciation of the “shameful and alien dogmas of the Latins,” the \textit{filioque} clause and the Union of Florence. Nonetheless, in actual practice relations between Orthodox and Catholics in various parts of the Ottoman Empire, especially between 1600 and 1700, often continued to be extraordinarily amicable. “Vast numbers of Catholics and Orthodox, educated clergy as well as simple believers, acted as though no schism existed between East and West.”\textsuperscript{31}

Latin missionaries often recognized the local Orthodox bishop as their “ordinary,” sought “faculties” from him, and formally asked for permission to work in his diocese. With the blessing of Greek Orthodox bishops, Catholic priests preached in Orthodox Churches, catechized Orthodox children, heard the confessions of the Orthodox faithful, and even, albeit less frequently, gave them Holy Communion. (The western missionaries were in demand especially as teachers, preachers and confessors.) At \textit{Corpus Christi} processions, the Orthodox behaved with

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ware, “Orthodox and Catholics,” pp. 261-62.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 262-64.
\end{itemize}
There have been numbers of both Catholics and Orthodox who continued to regard the alienation and schism as a wall within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, a wall which has been high, but which has never completely kept us apart.

marked reverence towards the Latin sacrament. On the island of Andros, the Orthodox bishop himself took part in the Catholic Corpus Christi procession, accompanied by his clergy in full vestments carrying candles and torches. In 1628 a former abbot from Mount Athos requested Rome to open a school on the Holy Mountain for the monks. In 1644 the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Euthymios, asked the Jesuits to find a house in Damascus. In 1690 Metropolitan Damaskinos of Aegina wrote directly to Pope Innocent XI requesting him for two Jesuits to undertake pastoral work in his diocese. Ironically, when the Jesuits in Smyrna encountered opposition, it was not from the "schismatic" Orthodox, but from their own fellow Catholics, the Capuchins. The Greek Metropolitan became involved in the conflict and intervened vigorously with Louis XIII of France on behalf of the Jesuits. By 1750, however, all of this "ecumenical" activity had come to an end. Both Orthodox and Catholics became less pragmatic, hardened their positions, and employed a more rigorist approach to communicatio in sacris. Rome became less and less tolerant toward the eastern "schismatics" and the Orthodox became less and less tolerant towards the Catholic "trojan horse" in their midst. By the nineteenth century acts of shared worship had become little more than a dim and distant memory for both Catholics and Orthodox.32

While this history of continued communion between Catholics and Orthodox was indeed complex in terms of motives and goals and of the relationship between the "formal," "official" positions of the two churches and what people actually did, it nonetheless is important. It helps to show that the break between Orthodox and Catholics was not absolute. Both sides were able at times to recognise the same essential ecclesial reality in each other, despite differences and what they perceived as errors. There have been numbers of both Catholics and Orthodox who continued to regard the alienation and schism as a wall within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, a wall which has been high, but which has never completely kept us apart. The present-day Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, especially the recent Balamand Statement, is not, then, a new "modernist," "ecumenist" heresy, but a new appropriation of a part of our common history that was, unfortunately, largely forgotten or ignored. It is a rediscovery of a vision that has never entirely ceased to exist.

THE ISSUE OF THE PAPACY

The ecclesiological vision underlying the Balamand Statement and which I have adopted in this paper cannot, however, ignore the diff-

32. Ibid., pp., 264 ff.
ferences which remain between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Of the ones which are still commonly cited — the *filioque* clause, the papacy, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Theotokos, the teaching on purgatory, etc. — I would follow the lead of Father John Meyendorff and suggest that the fundamental issue is that of authority, and so, of the papacy. If this can be resolved, then the resolution of other differences, whatever remains of them, will undoubtedly follow.

If one takes seriously the patristic principle, *lex orandi est lex credendi*, which is emphasized in Orthodox theological circles, then perhaps a good place to begin an Orthodox discussion of the papacy is with the liturgical tradition. In the canon sung at Matins on the commemoration of "Our Father Among the Saints Leo, Pope of Rome," Leo is described as "heir to the throne of Peter, the 'chief,' having his character and godly-minded zeal for the faith" (Πέτρου του κορυφαίου, θρόνου κληρονόμου εχρηματισάς, τιν αυτού εχών γνώμην, και τον ξηλον θεοφρον της πιστεως) (Ode III) and "successor of the revered Peter, who has enriched the presidency of this one [i.e., of Peter] and acquired his fervent zeal" (Ο Πέτρου νυν, του σεπτού διάδοχος, και την τούτου προέδρειαν πλουτήσας, και το θερμον, κεκτημενος του ξηλου) (Ode VI). These liturgical hymns describe Leo's connection with St. Peter in both personal and institutional terms. On the one hand, Leo is hailed as having Peter's character and zeal, something which not all of Peter's successors may have. On the other hand, Leo is also described in institutional categories as being successor and heir to the throne and presidency of Peter, the one who was "chief." Liturgical texts such as these simply assume that the Bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter, the one who is heir to the Petrine ministry and presidency.

The question, of course, is what this language means, both in terms of the past and for us today. This is the great ecumenical question, and one which still requires a great deal of prayerful and sympathetic dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics. It has become common among Orthodox theologians to stress, on the basis of certain patristic texts, that *every* bishop is the successor of Peter, and not merely the Bishop of Rome. It seems entirely appropriate to assert, as does St.


34. I personally think that these other differences are more excuses to prevent reconciliation rather than genuine doctrinal discord.

35. For the Greek text, see the Μηναιον [for February 18] (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1972), pp. 99-100. For a similar acclamation of another Bishop of Rome as “successor of Peter,” see the texts for the aposticha at Vespers for the commemoration of St. Gregory Dialogist (12 March).

To assert that the Chair of Peter is found in each episcopal see and that it has a particular locus and source in the Church of Rome is to affirm that the “one-many” configuration in God, which includes both the “monarchy” of the Father and the equality of the three divine persons, is the basis for the worldwide communion and configuration of local churches.

Cyprian of Carthage, that the Chair of Peter is in every local church and that the episcopal authority throughout the church derives from Peter, because episcopatus unus est. This is not to deny, however, that there is an abiding contemporary source and locus Petri, and as the same St. Cyprian asserts, these are located in Rome. Priestly unity derives from the throne of Peter and the chief church, that is, from Rome (cathedra Petri et ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est).

The Arab Byzantine Orthodox theologian Theodore Abu Qurrah (c. 750-c.825) similarly asserted that St. Peter has perpetual successors in the church and that these successors are the Bishops of Rome. They, moreover, continue to exercise the Petrine ministry:

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, in every circumstance our recourse is simply to build ourselves on the foundation of St. Peter, who administered the six holy councils which were convened by the order of the bishop of Rome, the capital of the world. Whoever is established on her throne is the one entrusted by Christ to turn to the people of the church his ecumenical council, and to confirm them, as we have established in a number of other places.

This understanding of things seems to be perfectly in accord with the Orthodox liturgical tradition.

Questions which Orthodox liturgiologists and theologians need to ask are: 1) Does the Orthodox liturgical tradition ever refer to anyone other than the Bishops of Rome as the Successor of Peter and as exercising Peter’s presidency? 2) If not, why not? If it does, in what sense does it use these terms? 3) If the liturgical tradition does not, in fact, refer to anyone other than the Bishops of Rome as the Successor of Peter, what are the implications of this for that theological understanding which would interpret the Chair of Peter as existing in every episcopal see but without a contemporary source and locus in the Church of Rome?

Can we not overcome the dilemma between a single Successor of Peter in Rome and many successors in every episcopal see, as Paul McPartlan has suggested, by understanding the Pope not as “Peter” and other bishops as “apostles,” but by understanding the Pope as a definitive Peter in his own local church, constituting and enabling the presence of Peter in the various local churches? The universal ministry of the Pope exists in order to serve each local eucharist. To assert that the Chair of Peter is found in each episcopal see and that it has a particular locus and source in the Church of Rome is to affirm that the “one-many” configuration in God, which includes both the “monarchy” of the Father and the equality of the three divine persons, is the basis for the

37. The Unity of the Catholic Church, 4-5 and Epistle 55:24.
worldwide communion and configuration of local churches. The Pope is no more above the bishops, who head their own local churches, than the Father is above the Son and the Spirit. The uniqueness of papal primacy is to be located among the bishops, not above or apart from them. It can, however, be affirmed that the Pope is the source of the episcopal ministry in each local church just as the Father is the source of the Son and the Spirit, as the "one" who simultaneously is one among the "many" and yet constitutes the "many." It seems that we must say this if we are to affirm that the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" refers to both the local church and to the universal, worldwide communion of churches and that every authentic, catholic local church is a manifestation of the universal church in a particular place. To limit the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church to either the local church or to the worldwide church would result in either an inappropriate localism or an inappropriate universalism in ecclesiology.

Although the Pope is a bishop like all other bishops, exercising the Petrine ministry in his own local church of Rome, the worldwide communion of bishops depends existentially upon him as the "one" without whom the "many" are inconceivable. As Bishop Zizioulas has asserted, "there can be no communion of local churches without some form of universal synodality, and no universal synodality without some form of universal primacy." This is the specific ministry of the Bishop of Rome, and as such he is uniquely styled the Successor of Peter, without denying that every bishop, as head of a local church, shares in this Petrine ministry. An appropriate Orthodox understanding of papal primacy must, I would argue, take into account two factors: 1) the source of all episcopal ministry derives from the Chair of Peter and this Chair is to be found in every catholic episcopal see, and 2) there is a perpetual contemporary source and locus Petri, and these are found in Rome. Both the conciliarity of bishops and the primacy of Rome derive from the apostolic tradition.

The idea that the papal presidency is entirely due to the socio-political status of the city of Old Rome within the structure of the ancient Roman Empire, the so-called "principle of accommodation," is not a sufficient interpretation, either historically or theologically. Rome, no less than the rest of the church, did indeed accept ecclesiastical accommodation to imperial structures, and as Francis Dvornik has argued, it is quite possible that up until the fourth century the bishops of Rome

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40. The Eucharist Makes the Church, pp. 117, 208-209.
42. This is not to deny the eschatological character and source of the episcopal ministry as an image of God on his heavenly throne as found, for example, in the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch.
The principle of apostolicity means that the Roman Pope exercises his ministry of presidency because he is the successor of Peter, and not simply because he is bishop of a city which at one time was the capitol of a large empire.

drew sufficient authority and prestige from the fact that their residence was in the imperial capitol that it was unnecessary for them to invoke continually the Petrine origin of their see. Nonetheless, this origin was not forgotten, and its significance gradually developed in Christian thinking. By the second half of the fourth century the “principle of apostolicity” was so widely accepted that the See of Rome simply was known as the See of Peter. The principle of apostolicity means that the Roman Pope exercises his ministry of presidency because he is the successor of Peter, and not simply because he is bishop of a city which at one time was the capitol of a large empire.

Nor is the Pope simply an ecclesiastically appointed head with a “primacy of honor” (a diplomatic, political category), such as Canon 3 of the Council of Constantinople I (381) and Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451) might suggest, if read in isolation from the wider tradition. As Bishop John Zizioulas has asserted, no patriarch has a mere primacy of honor in relation to a synod. His presence is a sine qua non condition for all canonical deliberations. The synod, in fact, cannot function without its head; the “many” without the “one” are inconceivable. The primus, therefore, gives its theological status to the synod, and not simply honor. This claim, I would argue, must certainly apply to the universal primate in relation to the worldwide communion of bishops, especially when they meet in synod, but not only on such occasions. The relationship between bishops and their primates, both regional and universal, is an ongoing one.

The problem with Canon 28 of Chalcedon is that it makes no mention of the apostolic and Petrine origin of the Roman presidency, but reflects only the principle of accommodation to imperial structures. The council fathers, however, did not deny this origin, since in their deliberations and correspondence they clearly acknowledged Rome as the “Apostolic See” and the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter. One need only recall the acclamation by eastern bishops, “St. Peter has spoken through Leo,” after the reading of Leo’s famous tome. The eastern bishops who signed the Libellus Hormisdae of 519, which ended the Schism of Acacius, moreover, clearly acknowledged the Pope’s Petrine ministry of ensuring doctrinal orthodoxy and unity:

We cannot pass over in silence the affirmation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church....” These words are borne out by the facts: it is in the Apostolic See that the Catholic religion has always been preserved without stain ... it is for this reason that I hope to achieve communion with the Apos-

44. Ibid, pp. 40 ff.

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tolic See in which is found the entire, true, and perfect stability of the Christian religion.  

One finds, then, eastern bishops relating to the Roman See in terms of both the principle of accommodation and the principle of apostolicity. Depending on their current needs and situation, they emphasised one or the other. This produced an ambiguity which has tended to characterize eastern Christian thought with regard to the Roman presidency. The most balanced position, it seems to me, is that of the eastern Father, St. Maximus the Confessor, who in 643/644 acknowledged both the synodically-determined and divinely-given origin of Roman See:

... the very holy Church of Rome, the apostolic see, which God the Word himself and likewise all the holy Synods, according to the holy canons and the sacred definitions, have received, and which owns the power in all things and for all, over all the saints who are there for the whole inhabited earth, and likewise the power to unite and to dissolve....

One of the main problems with an understanding of primacy or presidency based on the principle of accommodation (which still tends to dominate Orthodox thinking on this issue) is that it is no longer applicable. The empire is gone. We have canons which speak of the old taxis of patriarchal sees and primacy but which no longer reflect the world in which we live. Constantinople and Alexandria, for example, are no longer even Christian centers. They are beleaguered sees, basically serving ethnic communities. If the origin of their status was socio-political, and that socio-political order is now gone, on what basis can they rank first and second in the hierarchy of patriarchal churches other than being simply a relic of the past? The reluctance of Orthodox even to reconsider this ancient taxis is perhaps partly due to the fear that there is, in fact, no basis upon which to rely for establishing order and unity other than the ancient socio-politically determined one. Another principle, however, is needed in church life, and that principle is the apostolic one. The Orthodox liturgical texts cited above direct us to this principle and provide us with a basic framework for a renewed understanding of the Roman presidency as one based on the succession of Peter. It was this very principle which Patriarch Athenagoras once again evoked when in 1967 he greeted Pope Paul VI as “holy brother and successor of Peter.”

A renewed Orthodox understanding of Roman primacy must, it seems to me, include the clear acknowledgment that as heir to the apostolic throne of Peter the Bishop of Rome is the visible, identifiable “chief” (κορυφαίος) and “president” (πρόεδρος), who exercises the ministry of

47. PL 63: 460; translation from Dvornik, Byzantium and the Roman Primacy, p. 61.
49. Towards the Healing of Schism, p. 159 (July 25).
I would, therefore, seriously take issue with the position espoused by some Orthodox theologians such as the eminent Vladimir Lossky that “Orthodoxy recognizes no visible head of the church,” but only a “certain primacy of honor” because “The unity of the church expresses itself through the communion of the heads of local churches among themselves.” Here, it seems to me, Lossky has fallen into a reductionist position in which he pits a visible head of the church over against the church’s conciliarity, that is, he suggests that an effective universal presidency is contrary to the church understood as the communion of local churches.

Another Orthodox theologian, Nicholas Afanassieff, has taken this idea even further. In the development of his well-known “eucharistic ecclesiology,” which he contrasts with what he sees as Roman Catholic “universal ecclesiology,” Afanassieff asserts that “eucharistic ecclesiology excludes the idea of primacy by its very nature,” since a universal primatial “power” “cannot pass beyond the bounds enclosing a local church.” “Priority” can belong to one of the local churches, but the “primacy” of any one bishop over the universal church is not possible. A particular local church may come to occupy a special position within the communion of churches. The basis of this priority is not that of either power or rights, but the authority of witness that flows from love and is made manifest in love. The priority of this church is reflected in its bishop, but Afanassieff considers this episcopal priority to be a “secondary phenomenon,” not an “essential phenomenon.” His startling conclusion is that “if you accept the idea of [episcopal] primacy you must ban eucharistic ecclesiology; conversely, accept the notion of priority and there is no room for universal ecclesiology.”

I would like to say two things about Afanassieff’s argument. First, Afanassieff would have the Bishop of Rome’s priority dependent on the historical witness of the church of Rome beginning at the end of the first century. At that time, she took over the position of “church-in-priority” from the church of Jerusalem. This is a common Orthodox argument based on historical contingency, one which dissociates a universal presidency in the catholic church from the Petrine office. Afanassieff was well aware of the problem this raises and ultimately tried to solve it by asserting that “Peter stood in a place apart from the apostles, and that his ministry was unique in kind and had no later parallels” (emphasis mine). Consequently, he has no successors as far as his particular ministry is concerned. As I have argued, this is not

52. Ibid., pp. 123 ff.
53. Ibid., p. 122.
true. The priority of the Roman church within the communion of churches is due, theologically speaking, not simply to historical contingencies with regard to the witness of the Roman church, but to the fact that this particular church and her bishop became associated with the apostle Peter.\textsuperscript{54} The \textit{locus Petri} as the source of the Petrine ministry in every catholic episcopal see is to be found in Rome.

Secondly, I would disagree with Afanassieff that a universal primacy or presidency is incompatible with a eucharistic ecclesiology. Afanassieff's emphasis on the eucharistic character of the church is, of course, a much needed recovery of a patristic ecclesiological vision. It is one which has been appropriated by both Catholics and Orthodox. The return by Orthodoxy to patristic ecclesiological foundations and to patristic theology in general must, moreover, be understood in its proper perspective. Bishop John Zizioulas has rightly pointed out that Orthodoxy's escape from its "Babylonian captivity" to scholasticism has been effected in this century through re-establishing a link with its patristic roots. This reestablishment is largely indebted to the work of western theologians:

The first important factor responsible for new, positive and creative developments in Orthodox theology in our century is, rather curiously, the work of "Western" theologians... [The] return to the ancient patristic sources, which has characterised Western theology in our century, is largely responsible for the Orthodox theological renaissance.\textsuperscript{55}

The French Roman Catholic theologian, Henri de Lubac, is undoubtedly one of the pioneers in the patristic revival in this century. His \textit{Corpus Mysticum} was a seminal work on the relationship between church and eucharist and a defence of the principle that the eucharist makes the church.\textsuperscript{56} One must keep this in mind so as not unwittingly to pit a supposedly "Orthodox" eucharistic ecclesiology against a supposedly "Catholic" universal ecclesiology and primacy as an unexamined \textit{a priori} judgment. It is precisely at this point that one should pay heed to the advice of Bishop Zizioulas when he urges that "the two theologies, Eastern and Western, need to meet in depth, to recover the authentic patristic synthesis" which will protect them from their own particular distortions.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} This is not to deny the association of Paul, as well as Peter, with the Church of Rome. Nonetheless, in church consciousness, both eastern and western, the Petrine presidency came to be associated with the See of Rome.

\textsuperscript{55} Quoted from McPartlan, \textit{The Eucharist Makes the Church}, pp. xiv-xv.


\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church} (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 20.
In their dialogue with each other, both Orthodox and Catholics have, moreover, committed themselves to an ecclesiology understood eucharistically and as a communion of local churches in which the universal church realizes itself in each local church. One finds this, for example, in the 1982 agreed statement, *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*, which makes the following significant affirmations:

1. There is only one church of God and Body of Christ.
2. Each eucharistic assembly gathered around the bishop is not merely a section of the Body of Christ; it is this holy church of God and Body of Christ, and so is identical with every other eucharistic assembly because there is only one mystery celebrated.
3. In the church the one and the many, the universal and the local, are necessarily simultaneous; unity and multiplicity cannot exist without each other.
4. The one and only church is a communion of communities, a *koinonia* of the churches.
5. The one and only church is realized in each local church.
6. Attachment to apostolic communion binds all the bishops maintaining *episkopé* [oversight] of local churches to the college of the apostles.
7. The care by a bishop for his local church cannot be separated from his care for the universal church.
8. The *episkopé* of the universal church is entrusted by the Spirit to the totality of local bishops in communion with each other.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its 1992 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion* has reiterated Rome’s acceptance that the category of “communion” lies at the heart of the church’s self-understanding. The Pauline expression, “the church is the body of Christ” means that in the eucharist Christ gives us his body and transforms us into one body. The eucharist is where “the church expresses herself permanently in most essential form.” The universal church is the body of local, particular churches, a communion of churches. Nonetheless, the universal church is not the mathematical sum or simply a federation of local churches. She is both ontologically and temporally prior to every individual, particular church. According to the Fathers, the church that is one and unique ontologically precedes even creation and gives birth to particular churches as her daughters, expressing herself in them. She is the mother, and not the offspring, of the local churches. Temporally speaking, the universal church was manifested on the day of Pentecost.

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in the community of the one hundred and twenty one gathered around Mary and the twelve apostles. Out of this original community the different local churches have arisen.

In each particular church the universal church, that is, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ is present and active. Because of this “mutual interiority” between the local churches and the universal church, no local church is self-sufficient or a subject complete in itself. It is true to say both that the church is in and formed out of the churches and that the churches are in and formed out of the church. The document goes on to argue that a proper eucharistic ecclesiology must not pit the local and particular over against the universal. No eucharist belongs to a local community alone, because in celebrating the eucharist and receiving the presence of Christ each community is the image and presence of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic and universal church. The eucharist itself renders all self-sufficiency on the part of a particular church impossible. By its very nature the eucharist opens up every local church to all other churches, that is, to the universal church. The Orthodox liturgical tradition accents the very same thing. The term, “catholic church,” is not only applicable to each local church, an identification which eucharistic ecclesiology has emphasised, but it is also and necessarily applicable to the universal, worldwide church. This is clearly expressed in the anaphora of the Orthodox Liturgy of St Basil: “Also, we pray Thee, O Lord, remember Thy holy catholic and apostolic church which is from end to end of the universe...” and in the anaphora of St. John Chrysostom: “Also we offer unto Thee this reasonable worship for the whole world, for the holy catholic and apostolic church.....” It is significant that the worldwide Christian community is described as a single church and not merely as a collection of local churches. According to the Orthodox liturgical tradition, then, the eucharist is offered not only for the local catholic church but for the universal catholic church scattered throughout the world. Rome has certainly expressed its concern that eucharistic ecclesiology not be interpreted so as to mean that a local, particular church can be understood as being the church apart from the communion of churches, that is, the universal church. Various Orthodox theologians have similarly stressed the place of each local church within the worldwide communion of churches. Father John Meyendorff, for example, has pointed out that eucharistic ecclesiology can be misunderstood in a “congregationalist” way, as a kind of affirmation of the self-sufficiency of each local church. Each local church, he argues, has the fullness of the presence of Christ “on condition that it is in union with all the other churches. No local church can be ‘catholic’ in isolation.” Both unity in

A renewed Orthodox understanding of the presidency of the Bishop of Rome as successor and heir to the throne of Peter needs to be placed within an ecclesiology understood eucharistically and as a communion of churches.

The purpose of the Pope's ministry is to maintain the unity and communion of the churches. This understanding is essential for catholicity. The one, Meyendorff argues, is inseparable from the others. For this reason St. Cyprian taught that the "episcopate is one" and "each bishop holds the fullness of his episcopate in solidum." Bishop Zizioulas has not only asserted that "a local church, in order to be not just local but also church, must be in full communion with the rest of local churches in the world." He has also unambiguously argued that "If a church is not at the same time local and universal, she is not the body of Christ. Equally the Eucharist has to be at the same time a local and a catholic event." In stressing that the local church can never be an authentic catholic church in isolation, these Orthodox theologians seem to be concerned, as does the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with an inappropriate "localism" in ecclesiology. Bishop Zizioulas, in particular, seems to be very close to the Congregation's understanding of a relationship of "mutual interiority" between the local church and the universal church.

A renewed Orthodox understanding of the presidency of the Bishop of Rome as successor and heir to the throne of Peter needs to be placed within an ecclesiology understood eucharistically and as a communion of churches. Here one finds, I would argue, its proper context. His presidency is not opposed to such an ecclesiology. On the contrary, it is grounded in it. All authority in the church, as Bishop John Zizioulas has argued, is relational. The purpose of the Pope's ministry is to maintain the unity and communion of the churches. He does this, first of all, by ensuring the communion of the college of bishops in their ministry of simultaneous oversight of the local churches and the universal church. As Father Louis Bouyer has argued on the basis of a letter of St. Gregory the Great to the Patriarch of Constantinople at the end of the sixth century, the special function of the papacy is to be understood not as diminishing or belittling the power of local bishops, but rather as supporting them and helping them to survive in full communion. Papal primacy is not an "institution" over the church, but the continuation of the Petrine ministry within the church, understood in both its local and universal dimensions. Because the universal

61. *Being as Communion*, p. 257.
63. A weakness in the Congregation's Letter is that it does not make a clear distinction between the historical, universal, world-wide church and the eschatological church which transcends space and time. The Bishop of Rome (and any other bishop, for that matter) exercises a ministry within the historical, universal, world-wide church which is not identical to his place within the trans-historical eschatological church. For example, one might say that the Pope is the "perpetual and visible source and foundation" of the world-wide church, but not of the eschatological church. This distinction needs to be made clear.

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church is made present in each local church, the Successor to Peter, “president” and “chief” within the communion of bishops of the universal church and the perpetual source of the Petrine ministry in each local church, has an immediate relationship with all local churches. As St. Maximus the Confessor affirmed, the Apostolic See “owns the power in all things and for all, over all the saints, who are there for the whole inhabited earth.”

The Pope’s Petrine function of ensuring the unity and communion of the entire church of God is compatible with the Orthodox tradition, if one understands this ministry of unity not as an isolated one, but as one which is shared with the entire episcopate on different levels. There is a sense in which every bishop who is in communion with the episcopate of the catholic church shares the throne of Peter, as St. Cyprian taught (“the episcopate is one” because the “throne of Peter is one”). Every bishop is the focal point of unity within his own local church and joins that local church to the entire episcopate. There are also certain bishops, that is, patriarchs, metropolitans and heads of self-governing churches, who ensure the unity of the episcopate and the communion of churches on the regional level. They fulfill the Petrine ministry on that level. Because of the historical association of the See of Rome with the apostle Peter, that see remains as the the source and locus Petri for the entire church, ensuring unity within the universal episcopate. The office of Peter can be said, then, to function at different levels throughout the church and to be a shared ministry. The Pope, it may be noted, functions on all three levels: he is Bishop of Rome, patriarch of the West and universal primate. It is important, however, that what he does patriarchically be distinguished from what he does in his capacity as source of the Petrine ministry in each local church throughout the world.

Pope John Paul II has already alluded to this sharing of the Petrine ministry in his discussion of the title, “Vicar of Christ,” a designation long associated in the western tradition with the Bishop of Rome. The title must be seen within the entire context of the gospel, he argues, in which every Christian is said to be alter Christus (another Christ) and every priest when celebrating the eucharist and other sacraments does so in persona Christi (in the person of Christ). With regard to the Bishop of Rome, the title, “Vicar of Christ,” emphasizes his Petrine ministry. Even in this regard, however, it must be understood in a shared sense:

The Pope is not the only one who holds the title. With regard to the church entrusted to him, each bishop is Vicarius Christi. The Pope is Vicar of Christ with regard to the church of Rome and, through that

67. For the idea of a shared Petrine ministry I am indebted to Father Adrian Nichols, who told me that Cardinal Ratzinger raised it as a possible way of surmounting the gap between the papal and patriarchal offices.
The fundamental Orthodox concern about the current Catholic articulation of papal primacy is that it can be understood as isolating the Pope from the rest of the episcopate and the communion of the churches.

Within a shared ministry there is, nonetheless, a taxis, an order. In the Orthodox context this taxis is expressed in Canon 34 of the so-called *Canons of the Holy Apostles*, which has traditionally governed the relationship between bishops and their regional primates. It takes into account the need for both headship and conciliarity and emphasizes that the "many" depend on the "one," while the "one" cannot do anything without the "many."

It is necessary that the bishops of every nation acknowledge him who is first among them and recognize him as their head (*ως κεφαλήν*), and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things concerning his own parish and country places which belong to it. But neither let that one who is first do anything without the consent of all. For so there will be oneness of mind, and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 

In trying to articulate within the eastern framework the position of the universal primate, one might extend this principle and apply it to the relationship between the regional primates of the church and the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter and head (*κεφαλή*) of the universal episcopate. The local episcopate of a given region would do nothing of consequence without the blessing of their primate. The regional primates, in turn, would do nothing without the consent of the Bishop of Rome. Neither the regional primates nor the universal primate would act in an individualistic way either, but in such a manner as to maintain and ensure the unity and communion of the bishops so that there would be "oneness of mind." 

This model would give tremendous authority to the Bishop of Rome as the president and head of the universal episcopate, as well as ensuring the communion of the bishops through his ministry. Primacy and conciliarity could then be seen as two sides of the same coin, with the one presupposing the other.

The fundamental Orthodox concern about the current Catholic articulation of papal primacy is that it can be understood as isolating the Pope from the rest of the episcopate and the communion of the churches. If this is not its intention, how must one understand both Vatican I and Vatican II's teaching that *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the Pope are

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68. Crossing the Threshold of Hope, p. 13.
69. For the Greek text, see the Πηδαλιον, p. 36; for the English translation, see Erickson, The Challenge of Our Past, p. 76.
70. For the extension of this conciliar principle to the universal primacy of Rome I am indebted to Bishop Basil Osborne of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain (Moscow Patriarchate).
irreformable of themselves and “not from the consent of the church”? If I were to venture a guess as to what the fundamental Catholic concerns were with regard to the Orthodox understanding of conciliarity, it would be along these lines: How does one stop the idea of episcopal consensus with regard to matters of faith and truth from degenerating into a matter of democratic votes? What happens if the episcopate itself is divided on an issue? Is there not a “first” teacher among the teachers of the church (the bishops) who must take responsibility for the authenticity of the bishops’ teaching as a whole? These kinds of concerns still need a much fuller consideration by both Orthodox and Catholics.

The assertion that papal ex cathedra pronouncements do not arise from the “consent of the church” can be interpreted as quite properly meaning that the church is not a democracy and that papal teaching is not merely the representative voice of an objectified democratic ecclesial structure. It also implies that in some sense the papal voice is not merely the mouthpiece of the episcopate either. Here, it seems to me, is the heart of the Orthodox-Catholic disagreement on papal authority. Within the Orthodox tradition, however, there is a way of thinking which goes some distance in resolving the issue. Theodore Abu Qurrah, the Arab Byzantine Orthodox theologian to whom I appealed earlier, was quite clear that the Petrine ministry exercised by the Bishop of Rome consists in confirming the teaching of the brethren.

According to Abu Qurrah, the Holy Spirit has made the episcopal council a perpetual substitute for the apostles, just as Moses made the gathering of Levites and judges a continuing institution to deal with differences among the Israelites after his own time. Within the parameters of the institution of the councils, the Bishop of Rome, as the Successor of Peter, administers the conciliar deliberations and confirms the orthodoxy of his brother bishops. The ministry of the Successor of Peter, and consequently the charism which enables this ministry to occur, is to confirm the orthodox faith by guaranteeing the authentic conciliarity of the confession of catholic Christians. As Sidney Griffith has pointed out, Abu Qurrah repeatedly asserted that the six ecumenical councils of his day were gathered “by order of the Bishop of Rome.” St. Peter, Abu Qurrah argued, administered the six holy councils which were convened by the order of the Bishop of Rome. The point of this historical inaccuracy had a theological meaning for Abu Qurrah. His intention was to counter the Muslim claim that the ecumenical councils were the result of Byzantine imperial interference and so represented a serious corruption of Christian teaching. Consequently, he appealed to their confirmation by Rome as a sign of their ecclesial authenticity.

72. The last question I have borrowed from Aidan Nichols, Rome and the Eastern Churches, p. 278.
This understanding of papal authority takes seriously the ecumenical synod, and consequently the conciliar nature of authority in the church. Moreover, it locates, as Griffith points out, the charism of the Bishop of Rome within the council. This is the primary point of reference for understanding the Pope's ministry of "confirming the brethren." The Pope's ministry, authority and charism, while not democratic or merely representative, are nonetheless relational in character. Their necessary context is the charismatic event of eucharistic and episcopal communion, as the Bishop of Rome (the "one") takes responsibility for guaranteeing the authentic conciliarity of the teaching of the bishops as a whole (the "many"). An Orthodox understanding of the papal ministry as a "universal responsibility, an all-embracing pastoral concern, for the entire family," means that the Pope cannot and must not be understood as an isolated, autonomous individual who acts without reference to his brother bishops.

The perception that Rome has, in fact, acted in such a manner is the root cause of Orthodox reactions against papal primacy. The twelfth-century Archbishop Nicetas of Nicomedia well expressed this concern when he wrote:

How shall we accept from her [the Roman Church] decrees that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? ... and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a church, and the Roman see would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves.

The recent Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life* (March 1995), demonstrates, however, that such an arbitrary, autonomous exercising of authority is not inherent in the papal ministry of "confirming the brethren." It is contrary to it. The Encyclical is a good example of how episcopal conciliarity and the unique office and charism of the Bishop of Rome are compatible. The Pope was asked by the Cardinals to confirm the value of human life and its inviolability. He, in turn, requested all Catholic bishops throughout the world to assist him in the drawing up of a document. In the creation of his Encyclical Letter, the teaching of the bishops is then confirmed by the Pope "with the authority of the Successor of Peter." Perhaps the attitudes and actions of the Roman See which gave rise to Nicetas of Nicomedia's concerns are beginning to fade, and we can now start the

74. Ibid., p. 31.
76. Ibid., pp. 120-121.
long process of recovering the intrinsic unity between episcopal conciliation and papal authority.

I am well aware that what I have said so far skirts the issue of papal and episcopal "infallibility" as it has been defined in Roman Catholic conciliar statements.\(^78\) Both Vatican I and II represent a specific western attempt to articulate the indefectibility and infallibility of the church. Whether this attempt, in all of its aspects, represents the faith of the universal church is still to be seen. While there is widespread, if not universal, resistance to such an understanding within Orthodoxy, it is also certain that no Eastern Orthodox ecumenical council has rejected it as heretical. One needs to keep in mind that the "reception" by the church of any conciliarly-defined doctrine has often been complex and has taken time. Reception cannot be limited to the local, jurisdictional or regional levels, but needs to be universal in character. It is precisely at this point, as Bishop Zizioulas has pointed out, that one should not hesitate to seek in the Bishop of Rome a ministry of universal reception, which meets the requirements of the church understood as communion.\(^79\)

In other words, as Successor of Peter and president within the communion of churches, the Pope should facilitate, as Father Aidan Nichols has suggested, a "re-reception" of the doctrines of the catholic church in the new context created by their juxtaposition with the Christian patrimonies of the separated East." Following Nichols' lead,\(^80\) I would argue that the possibility of overcoming the schism between East and West is largely dependent on two factors: 1) whether the catholic church is able to extract the positive teaching of those medieval and modern Councils which succeeded the Seven Councils and to re-express this teaching in a new context in which the eastern Christian tradition is allowed to have its full impact, and 2) whether the Orthodox churches are able and willing to take up this challenge of meeting the western tradition "head on," so to speak. A re-reading together of the entire tradition, both eastern and western, might well result in a reformulation and a more universal re-reception of those doctrines, such as infallibility, which are still stumbling blocks to the restoration of a full and perfect communion.

This meeting and re-reading of the past together can only take place if there is already an acceptance by both sides that the continuing differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism do not destroy the essential "ecclesiality" of either church. Cardinal Ratzinger has well expressed this point:

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79. See, e.g., John Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception,'" Centro Pro Unione 26, Fall 1984, pp. 3-6.
May the day soon come when Orthodox and Catholics will be able to look up and see in each other the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ. Then the answer to the question which began this reflection — do we have the right to remain separated? — will be obvious. □

The West may point to the absence of the office of Peter in the East — it must, nevertheless, admit that, in the Eastern church, the form and content of the church of the Fathers is present in unbroken continuity. The East may criticize the existence and function of the office of Peter in the West, but it must also be aware that, because of it, no other church exists in Rome than that of the first millennium — of the time when a common Eucharist was celebrated and when but one church existed.

When the Patriarch Athenagoras, on July 25, 1967, on the occasion of the Pope's visit to Phanar, designated him as the successor of St. Peter, as the most esteemed among us, as one who presides in charity, this great church leader was expressing the essential content of the doctrine of primacy as it was known in the first millennium. Rome need not ask for more. Reunion could take place in this context if, on the one hand, the East would cease to oppose as heretical the developments that took place in the West in the second millennium and would accept the catholic church as legitimate and orthodox in the form she had acquired in the course of that development, while, on the other hand, the West would recognize the church of the East as orthodox and legitimate in the form she has always had.81

May the day soon come when after much prayer and study both Orthodox and Catholics will be able to look up and see in each other the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ. Then the answer to the question which began this reflection — do we have the right to remain separated? — will be obvious. □

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