The "Sacred Legacy" of Saint Mark of Ephesus

An Anti-Heretical Struggle in Full Communion with Heretics?[1]

It is very consoling and gratifying that anti-ecumenism is constantly being expanded and strengthened on many levels.

Even our brothers in Christ, despite the fact that they are still within the domain of innovation, censure ecumenism very severely, characterizing it as "atrocious syncretism" and "worse than any other heresy," in no way agreeing with the ecumenical statements and activities of their Shepherds.

Paradoxically, however, although they have our Father among the Saints Mark Evgenikos, Archbishop of Ephesus, as a symbol, they propound the following slogan, "A struggle, but inside the walls!," evidently regarding all those not in communion with the ecumenists—who are worse, in any case, than the Latin-minded unionists of the fifteenth century—as being supposedly "outside the walls."

In our humble opinion, this attitude and these declarations are contradictory, and are certainly at variance with the "Sacred Legacy" of Saint Mark of Ephesus.

Let us explain in brief, basing ourselves exclusively on texts of this Atlas of Orthodoxy.

1. St. Mark maintained a consistent and unwavering position towards the Latinizers; he would not accept even the slightest expression of communion with them, "not even after death."

[1] Source: *Ὀρθόδοξος Ἐνημέρωσις,* No. 23 (January-March 1997), pp. 86-87.

• "I neither desire nor accept communion with him or his lackeys, in no way whatsoever, neither during my lifetime nor after my death."

• "Just as, throughout my life, I was separated from them (*viz.* the Latinizers), so also at the time of my departure, and even after my death, I reject communion and union with them."

• "And I adjure, I command, that none of them approach either at my funeral or at memorial services for me" and attempt "to concelebrate with our clergy."

• "For it is necessary that they (*viz.* the Latinizers) be completely separated from us."[2]

2. St. Mark regarded communion with the Latin-minded unionists as "mixing what cannot be mixed"; now, how did he justify this unqualified stand?

• "[F]or I am absolutely convinced that the more I distance myself from him (*viz.* the Latin-minded Patriarch) and those like him, the closer I draw to God and all the faithful and Holy Fathers; and just as I separate myself from these people, even so am I united with the truth and the Holy Fathers and theologians of the Church; just so am I convinced that those who agree with them distance themselves from the truth and the blessed teachers of the Church."[3]

3. With Patristic authoritativeness St. Mark advised the other anti-unionists to do likewise:

• "I beseech Your Holiness, therefore, to recover your zeal for God,... and to exhort the Priests of God in every way to avoid communion with him (*viz.* the Latin-minded Metropolitan of Athens) and not to concelebrate with him or commemorate him at all, and not to consider this man a Hierarch, but a wolf and a hireling."[4]

• "Therefore, brethren, avoid communing with those with whom you are out of communion and commemorating those who should not be commemorated."[5]

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[2] St. Mark of Ephesus, "Apologia Uttered Impromptu at the Time of His Death," *Patrologia Græca,* Vol. CLX, cols. 536-537; *Patrologia Orientalis,* Vol. XXV, pp. 346-348.

[3] See note 2.

[4] St. Mark of Ephesus, "Epistle to Hieromonk Theophanes in Evripos," *Patrologia Græca,* Vol. CLX, cols. 1096D-1100A.

[5] See note 4.

• "We should flee from them (*viz.* the Latinizers) as one flees from a serpent, for they, and those who are certainly far worse than they, are sellers and traffickers of Christ."[6]

• "Flee from them, therefore, brethren, and from communion with them; for such men are pseudo-Apostles, workers of deception, who transform themselves into Apostles of Christ."[7]

4. St. Mark provided the following basis for these exhortations:

• "He who is Latin-minded will be judged with the Latins and will be reckoned an apostate from the Faith."[8]

• "They (*viz.* the Latinizers) have dishonored and corrupted the Church by making her mingle with those putrid members that have been cut off from her for many years and are subject to countless anathemas, and through communion with them they have besmirched the spotless Bride of Christ."[9]

5. Now, what stand did the anti-unionist zealots for piety maintain during that crucial period?

• "The majority of my brothers, taking confidence in my exile, are censuring the villains (*viz.* the Latinizers) and apostates from the right Faith and the decrees of the Fathers, and banishing them from everywhere as scoundrels, suffering neither to liturgize with them nor in any way to commemorate them as Christians."[10]

• "The fool of Monembasia (Latin-minded).... is neither commemorated by his monks nor in any way honored as a Christian."[11]

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6 St. Mark of Ephesus, "To Orthodox Christians Everywhere on Earth and the Islands," §§ 6, 7, *Patrologia Græca,* Vol. CLX, cols. 172B, 201CD.

• In this famous encyclical, St. Mark, speaking about the Papists, says pointedly that "we have split and cut them off from the common body of the Church"; "we have, therefore, rejected them as heretics, and for this reason we are separated from them"; "they are, then, heretics, and we have cut them off as heretics" (cols. 157B, 160A, 161A).

7 See note 6.

8 See note 4.

9 St. Mark of Ephesus, "Epistle to Hieromonk Theophanes," who lived the monastic life on the mountain called "of Monobyzos," on the island of Imbros, in Archimandrite Andronikos K. Demetrakopoulos (ed.), *Ὀρθόδοξος Ἑλλάς: ἤτοι, περὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τῶν γραψάντων κατὰ Λατίνων καὶ περὶ τῶν συγγραμμάτων αὐτῶν* [Orthodox Greece: or, concerning the Greeks who wrote against the Latins and concerning their writings] (Leipzig: Metzger kai Vittig, 1872), pp. 106-107.

10 See note 4.

11 See note 4.

6. The result of this consistent Patristic resistance against the Latinizers was that the (pseudo-)unionist endeavor ran aground, in spite of the harsh persecutions and exiles of the anti-unionists.

• The Latinizers "in order to validate the innovation that they have brought about," threaten that "they will soon initiate a persecution of those who fear the Lord, since the latter do not accept communion with them at all."[12]

• "But (in spite of the restrictions under the Latin-minded emperor) the word of God and the power of truth are not bound, but rather spread and prosper"; "be assured that the false union (*viz.* of Ferrara-Florence) will presently be destroyed by the Grace and power of God, and that the doctrine of the Latins, instead of being confirmed by the false synod, which was always their (*viz.* the Latinizers') aim, has rather been overturned and refuted, and is everywhere denounced as blasphemous and impious, and those who ratified it do not dare even to open their mouths in support of it."[13]

7. St. Mark and the other anti-unionists broke off all communion with the Latin-minded unionists; thus, they proved themselves genuine continuators of the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox, far removed from the (pseudo-)dilemma, "inside or outside the walls."

They were obedient to St. Cyril of Alexandria, who advised the pious zealots of Constantinople who were struggling resolutely against the heretic Nestorios (prior to his decisive condemnation) as follows:

• "Preserve yourselves unblemished and untainted, neither communing with the aforementioned (*viz.* Nestorios), nor paying any attention to him as a teacher, if he remains a wolf instead of a shepherd"; "We are in communion with the clergy and laity who are separated from or were deposed by him on account of the right Faith, not confirming his unjust election, but rather praising those who have suffered, and saying this to them: 'If you suffer reproach in the Lord, you are blessed; for the Spirit of power and the Spirit of God rest in you.'"[14]

They were obedient to canonical order and Synodal Tradition, which not only does not condemn those who "wall themselves off" even "before a synodal verdict" from heretical pastors, and not only does not consider them to be "outside the walls," but declares them worthy "of

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12 See note 9.

13 See note 4.

14 St. Cyril of Alexandria, "Epistle XVIII, 'To the Clergy and Laity of Constantinople,'" *Patrologia Græca,* Vol. LXXVII, col. 125BC.

the honor due to those of right belief,"[15] because "they have separated not from a Bishop, but from a false bishop and false teacher; they have not created a schism against the Church, but have, rather, delivered the Church from schisms, insofar as they were able."[16]

8. In conclusion: we call on our anti-ecumenist brothers, who are still within the domain of innovation and have the sense that they are waging "a struggle, though inside the walls," to reply to the following significant questions; if they respond to them, they will ascertain for themselves whether they are following the footsteps of St. Mark Evgenikos and whether they are truly preserving his anti-unionist "Sacred Legacy."

• Do they believe that the ecumenists have "dishonored"[17] and "corrupted"[18] the Church by their inter-Christian and interfaith activities, and that they have "besmirched"[19] the spotless Bride of Christ through their hobnobbing with heretics and those of other faiths?

• Have they recognized that the more they avoid communion with ecumenists "as villains and apostates from the right Faith and the decrees of the Fathers,"[20] the more they draw near and are united with God, the Truth, and the Holy Fathers?[21]

• Are they concerned to flee from communion with ecumenists "as one flees from a serpent,"[22] even at the time of their deaths?[23]

• Do they take care not to concelebrate[24] with ecumenists, not to commemorate them,[25] not to call them "in any way Christians,"[26] and to banish them "from everywhere as scoundrels"?[27]

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15 Canon xv of the First-Second Holy Synod in Constantinople.

16 Monk John Zonaras, in G. Ralles and M. Potles (eds.), *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν Κανόνων* (Thessalonica: B. Regopoulos, 2002), Vol. II, p. 694.

17 See note 9.

18 See note 9.

19 See note 9.

20 See note 4.

21 See note 2.

22 See note 6.

23 See note 2.

24 See note 4.

25 See note 4.

26 See note 4.

27 See note 4.

• Do they regard the ecumenists as "sellers and traffickers of Christ"[28] and "pseudo-Apostles,"[29] and as "completely separated"[30] from the Orthodox both "during their lifetime" and "after death"?[31]

9. If, finally, our anti-ecumenist brothers within the domain of innovation skirt the problems raised by these questions and think that it is possible to conduct an anti-heretical struggle for Orthodoxy while at the same time being in full communion with the (pan-)heretical ecumenists, in our humble opinion, they have lost even a sense of the "walls" of the Church or of Truth. In this case, we would urge them, in a brotherly way, to delve afresh into the admonitions of St. Mark, and especially into the following concluding words:

• "For the struggle is no longer a matter of words, but of deeds"; "those who love God must stand valiantly arrayed with their very deeds and must be prepared to suffer every peril for the sake of the true Faith and not to be defiled by communion with the impious."[32]

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[28] See note 6.

[29] See note 6.

[30] See note 2.

[31] See note 2.

[32] See note 9.