

## **Proposal for Dealing with the Ukrainian Issue**

*Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios*

Translation of the Greek text: «Πρόταση για την αντιμετώπιση τοῦ Οὐκρανικοῦ θέματος»

The Ukrainian issue has preoccupied the Orthodox Church in recent times, from 1990 until today, a period of about thirty years. When the Ukrainians formed a state, they too wanted to acquire an autocephalous Church and Patriarchate. The Church of Russia did not give its consent, but only granted increased autonomy. For this reason it also punished those who proclaimed the Ukrainian Church to be an Autocephalous Patriarchate by deposing them. From that time onwards in Ukraine there was a Church that comes under the Church of Russia and another two groups that were schismatic.

I have written twenty articles on this subject. The first was written in 2008, the second in 2014, and the others in the two years 2018 and 2019. In these articles my main concern was the deeper cause of the issue, from which various other issues have arisen from time to time.

In the articles I have written I have tried to accentuate six serious topics. Firstly, the regime of the Church is synodical, but also hierarchical. Synodality cannot be emphasised on its own, without the hierarchical system, because this is a Protestant way of thinking. Secondly, the Autocephalous Church cannot function independently of all the other Churches, as ‘autocephalism’; rather, it is self-administering, but not completely independent. Thirdly, Apostolic Succession is inseparably linked with the Apostolic life and tradition within the mystery of Pentecost. Fourthly, the Church resolves the issues that arise with strictness and economy, and economy is used subject to certain conditions and essential prerequisites. Fifthly, from time to time various ecclesiastical illnesses appear, which I would describe as dysfunctions of the synodical and hierarchal regime of the Church, such as the theory of “the Third Rome”, which aim to overturn the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. Sixthly, the document for granting the *Tomos* of autocephaly to a Church had been agreed at the Pan-Orthodox conferences, but there was a disagreement, for which the Church of Moscow is responsible, about who would sign this *Tomos*.

It is mainly these six points that concerned me in the articles that I wrote as a Hierarch of a Local Church, but also as a Hierarch of the Church as a whole.

I note that some people are concerned with specific issues, which they make into absolutes. In particular, they persist in analysing actions that took place in the past, such as, for example, the granting of the *Tomos* of Autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarch to Ukraine, without seeing the causes of the disease that I referred to earlier, and without looking at the present and the future.

The Standing Holy Synod, at its meeting on 28 August 2019, after hearing the report of the two Synodal Committees, namely, the Committee for Dogmatic and Canonical Matters

and the Committee for Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian Relations, took the decision that “it recognises the canonical right of the Ecumenical Patriarch to grant Autocephaly, as well as the privilege of the Primate of the Church of Greece to deal further with the issue of recognising the Church of Ukraine.”

I am waiting for this report to be published in full, together with the rationale on which the decision is based.

It seems, from statements and articles, that the Archbishop will inform the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece, which will hold its regular meeting this coming October.

Independently of how the issue will develop further in the Hierarchy, this matter remains basically open to a solution. That is to say, canonical, ecclesiological and theological arguments are expressed on all sides, but at some point a serious solution must be sought, so that the Orthodox Church can regain its unity that has been shaken.

By means of the present article, I shall submit a specific proposal for dealing with the Ukrainian issue. I do so with great respect towards the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, especially Patriarch Bartholomew. My desire is to help, and not to surpass them. In any case, I know that all issues are resolved within the synodical and hierarchical regime of the Church.

I am very well aware that the Ecumenical Patriarchate has great experience in dealing with ecclesiastical problems. For example, it dealt with the schism that existed in Greece for seventeen years (1833-1850) as a result of the unilateral declaration of Autocephaly, and it resolved it with wisdom and discernment. We see the same with regard to other local Churches.

I have absolute respect for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and what I shall now respectfully submit belongs within the context of the sayings: “Give the opportunity to a wise man, and he will be wiser” (Prov. 9:9) and “For a wise man who hears these things will be wiser, and the man of understanding will gain direction” (Prov. 1:5).

It goes without saying that I shall greatly rejoice if a better way of solving this problem is found, because no one is infallible, since infallibility belongs to the Church that operates within the mystery of Pentecost, with Hierarchs who confer synodically and hierarchically.

Before I set out the proposal, I shall refer to the state prevailing in the Church during the fourth century, and to how St Basil the Great, that great Father of the Church, described it and dealt with it.

## **1. Disturbance of the Unity of the Church**

The period between the First Ecumenical Council (325) and the Second (381) was a troubled one. Many bishops and theologians appeared who attempted to theologise about the divinity of the Word and the divinity of the Holy Spirit, with the result that the local Churches were disturbed.

St Basil the Great lived through this time, and as a good and vigilant leader he tried to deal with the situation. There is a wonderful piece of writing in which he dramatises the situation prevailing in the Churches. At that time about thirty Synods were convened.

I shall cite this amazing text. The translation is that made by Blomfield Jackson at the end of the nineteenth century, with a few slight revisions. I think that the description reveals similar circumstances prevailing today. The passage will be divided into more paragraphs than in the original to make it easier to read.

### **St Basil the Great: Account of the Present State of the Churches\***

“To what then shall I liken our present condition? It may be compared, I think, to some naval battle which has arisen out of time old quarrels, and is fought by men who cherish a deadly hate against one another, of long experience in naval warfare, and eager for the fight. Look, I beg you, at the picture thus raised before your eyes. See the rival fleets rushing in dread array to the attack. With a burst of uncontrollable fury they engage and fight it out. Fancy, if you like, the ships driven to and fro by a raging tempest, while thick darkness falls from the clouds and blackens all the scenes so that ensigns are indistinguishable in the confusion, and all distinction between friend and foe is lost.

To fill up the details of the imaginary picture, suppose the sea swollen with billows and whirled up from the deep, while a vehement torrent of rain pours down from the clouds and the terrible waves rise high.

[Suppose] from every quarter of heaven the winds beat upon one point, where both the fleets are dashed one against the other. Of the combatants some are turning traitors; some are deserting in the very thick of the fight; some have at one and the same moment to urge on their boats, all beaten by the gale, and to advance against their assailants. Jealousy of authority and the lust of individual mastery splits the sailors into parties which deal mutual death to one another.

Think, besides all this, of the confused and unmeaning roar sounding over all the sea, from howling winds, from crashing vessels, from boiling surf, from the yells of the combatants as they express their varying emotions in every kind of noise, so that not a word from admiral or pilot can be heard. The disorder and confusion is tremendous, for the extremity of misfortune, when life is despaired of, gives men licence for every kind of wickedness.

Suppose, too, that the men are all smitten with the incurable plague of mad love of glory, so that they do not cease from their struggle each to get the better of the other, while their ship is actually sinking down into the deep.

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\* St Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, ch. 30, para. 76-79 in *Letters and Select Works*, in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, ed. Philip Schaff & Henry Wace, Vol. 8, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, reprinted Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1996, pp. 48-50

Turn now, I beg you, from this figurative description to the unhappy reality. Did it not at one time appear that the Arian schism, after its separation into a sect opposed to the Church of God, stood itself alone in hostile array? But when the attitude of our foes against us was changed from one of long standing and bitter strife to one of open warfare, then, as is well known, the war was split up in more ways than I can tell into many subdivisions, so that all men were stirred to a state of inveterate hatred alike by common hostility and individual suspicion.

But what storm at sea was ever so fierce and wild as this tempest of the Churches? In it every landmark of the Fathers has been moved; every foundation, every bulwark of dogma has been shaken: everything resting on an unsound basis is dashed about and shaken down. We attack one another. We are overthrown by one another. If our enemy is not the first to strike us, we are wounded by the comrade at our side. If a foeman is stricken and falls, his fellow soldier tramples him down. There is at least this bond of union between us that we hate our common foes, but no sooner have the enemy gone by than we find enemies in one another.

And who could make a complete list of all the wrecks? Some have gone to the bottom on the attack of the enemy, some through the unsuspected treachery of their allies, some from the inexperience of their own officers. We see, as it were, whole churches, crews and all, dashed and shattered upon the sunken reefs of disingenuous heresy, while others of the enemies of the saving Passion have seized the helm and made shipwreck of the faith. And then the disturbances wrought by the princes of this world have caused the downfall of the people with a violence unmatched by that of hurricane or whirlwind.

The luminaries of the world, which God set to give light to the souls of the people, have been driven from their homes, and a darkness verily gloomy and disheartening has settled on the Churches. The terror of universal ruin is already imminent, and yet their mutual rivalry is so unbounded as to blunt all sense of danger. Individual hatred is of more importance than the general and common warfare, for men by whom the immediate gratification of ambition is esteemed more highly than the rewards that await us in a time to come, prefer the glory of getting the better of their opponents to securing the common welfare of mankind. So all men alike, each as best he can, lift the hand of murder against one another. Harsh rises the cry of the combatants encountering one another in dispute; already all the Church is almost full of the inarticulate screams, the unintelligible noises, rising from the ceaseless agitations that divert the right rule of the doctrine of true religion, now in the direction of excess, now in that of defect.

On the one hand are they who confound the Persons and are carried away into Judaism; on the other hand are they that, through the opposition of the natures, pass into heathenism. Between these opposite parties inspired Scripture is powerless to mediate; the traditions of the apostles cannot suggest terms of arbitration.

Plain speaking is fatal to friendship, and disagreement in opinion is all the ground that is wanted for a quarrel. No oaths of confederacy are so efficacious in keeping men true to sedition as their likeness in error.

Every one is a theologian though he have his soul branded with more spots than can be counted. The result is that innovators find a plentiful supply of men ripe for faction, while the self-ordained and place-hunters reject the government of the Holy Spirit and divide the chief dignities of the Churches. The institutions of the Gospel have now everywhere been thrown into confusion by want of discipline; there is an indescribable pushing for the chief places while every self-advertiser tries to force himself into high office. The result of this lust for power is that our people are in a state of anarchy; the exhortations of those in authority are rendered wholly purposeless and void, because there is not a man but, out of his ignorant impudence, thinks that it is just as much his duty to give orders to other people, as it is to obey any one else.

So, since no human voice is strong enough to be heard in such a disturbance, I reckon silence more profitable than speech, for if there is any truth in the words of the Preacher, 'The words of wise men are heard in quiet,' in the present condition of things any discussion of them must be anything but becoming.

I am moreover restrained by the Prophet's saying, 'Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time,' a time when some trip up their neighbours' heels, some stamp on a man when he is down, and others clap their hands with joy, but there is not one to feel for the fallen and hold out a helping hand, although according to the ancient law he is not uncondemned, who passes by even his enemy's beast of burden fallen under his load. This is not the state of things now. Why not? The love of many has waxed cold; brotherly concord is destroyed, the very name of unity is ignored, brotherly admonitions are heard no more, nowhere is there Christian pity, nowhere falls the tear of sympathy. Now there is no one to receive 'the weak in faith,' but mutual hatred has blazed so high among fellow citizens that they are more delighted at a neighbour's fall than at their own success. Just as in a plague, men of the most regular lives suffer from the same sickness as the rest, because they catch the disease by communication with the infected, so nowadays by the evil rivalry which possesses our souls we are carried away to an emulation in wickedness, and are all of us each as bad as the others.

Hence merciless and sour sit the judges of the erring; unfeeling and hostile are the critics of the well disposed. And to such a depth is this evil rooted among us that we have become more brutish than the brutes; they do at least herd with their fellows, but our most savage warfare is with our own people.

For all these reasons I ought to have kept silence, but I was drawn in the other direction by love, which 'seeketh not her own', and desires to overcome every difficulty put in her way by time and circumstance. I was taught too by the children at Babylon, that, when there is no one to support the cause of true religion, we ought

alone and all unaided to do our duty. They from out of the midst of the flame lifted up their voices in hymns and praise to God, regardless of the host that set the truth at naught, but sufficient, three only that they were, with one another.

Wherefore we too are undismayed at the cloud of our enemies, and, resting our hope on the aid of the Spirit, have, with all boldness, proclaimed the truth. Had I not so done, it would truly have been terrible that the blasphemers of the Spirit should so easily be emboldened in their attack upon true religion, and that we, with so mighty an ally and supporter at our side, should shrink from the service of that doctrine, which by the tradition of the Fathers has been preserved by an unbroken sequence of memory to our own day. A further powerful incentive to my undertaking was the warm fervour of your 'love unfeigned', and the seriousness and taciturnity of your disposition; a guarantee that you would not publish what I was about to say to all the world, not because it would not be worth making known, but to avoid casting pearls before swine.

My task is now done. If you find what I have said satisfactory, let this make an end to our discussion of these matters. If you think any point requires further elucidation, pray do not hesitate to pursue the investigation with all diligence, and to add to your information by putting any uncontroversial question. Either through me or through others the Lord will grant full explanation on matters which have yet to be made clear, according to the knowledge supplied to the worthy by the Holy Spirit."

### **Summary and Comment**

This remarkable text, cited above in translation, describes the state prevailing in the Church in the fourth century. It is vividly presented by St Basil the Great and shows the way in which this great Hierarchy of Caesarea in Cappadocia and Universal Teacher dealt with the situation. A few points will be highlighted.

1. This text describes accurately and in detail what happens in a sea battle. The whole image is explosive, with the clash between the ships, the strength of the fighters, the stormy sea, the darkness of the night, the powerful winds, the mutual destruction of the combatants, the noise caused by the ships, the human cries, the prevailing confusion, the sinking of the ships, but also the conflict among people for first place, even in this terrible situation.

2. All these characteristic features of the sea battle resemble the state prevailing in the Churches on account of the Arian heresy, but also the heresy of the Pneumatomachians. There is turmoil in the Churches, which resembles a rough sea, as the boundaries and foundations set by the Fathers of the Church are shifted. There is a conflict between the bishops and Christians. The Christians are sunk by their enemies, but also by the inexperience of their leaders. Churches, which resemble ships, are sunk, because they collided with the sunken reefs of heretics. But those who took on the leadership of the Churches were also shipwrecked in the faith. There is a hostile atmosphere from the rulers, spiritual darkness everywhere, and rivalry among Christians. People are killing one another. The dogmas of the

Church are distorted. Those who are full of blemishes make their name as theologians, and, although they are self-ordained, they have taken on the administration of the Church. Lust for power dominates.

3. Since St Basil the Great saw this entire situation prevailing in the Church, he confesses that he would prefer not to speak, because no one would listen to him. He would prefer to keep silent. The times are evil. There is no compassion: some aim to bring about their rivals' downfall; others jump for joy over the fallen; people applaud one another's falls.

Love has taken flight. There is no sympathy. Hatred has been kindled, and people rejoice over the misfortunes of others. The same happens as in epidemics: everyone has caught the disease. There are harsh judges and unfeeling critics.

4. Although St Basil the Great would have preferred to keep silent in these circumstances, love conquered him, and he wrote this text to his friend Amphilochius of Iconium, who had asked him about the matter.

He was also urged on to write by the Three Youths in Babylon, who were cast into the furnace because they considered that one should do one's duty, even in the absence of any other ally in godliness. The Three Youths extolled God in the flames of the furnace, and it was sufficient that they supported one another.

St Basil the Great says that, like the Three Youths in the fiery furnace, he too is not afraid of the multitude of opponents, but has boldly proclaimed the truth. He has placed his hope in God's help, and has presented the teaching that he inherited from the Fathers.

At the end he says to the recipient of this letter, St Amphilochius of Iconium, that, if what he has written is sufficient, that is good. But if it seems inadequate, he does not mind if he works diligently to investigate the matter fully. He prays that the Lord may help him, either through himself or through others to complete any inadequacies by the knowledge granted by the Holy Spirit to those who are worthy of these gifts.

These words of St Basil the Great express my own views absolutely. Today, too, a similar situation predominates in the Church. It resembles a sea battle and a war, or even an epidemic. We see this in the situation that exists in all the Churches, particularly in Ukraine. In these circumstances, sometimes one keeps silent, because one feels that one will not be heard, and sometimes out of love one dares to speak from inside the burning fiery furnace.

Finally, even when we write something, we ought to be aware that it is inadequate. In setting out this inadequate knowledge, we leave it to God to bring it to completion through someone else, who will be illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

We do our duty and we entrust it to the Church to judge it, to reject it or to make use of it. It is in this spirit that I dare to write what follows, and it is in this spirit that it should be read. Here too the words of the poet Nikos Karouzos apply: "Don't read me if you are right", if you are convinced of the correctness and infallibility of your point of view.

## 2. The Current State of the Church Prompted by the Ukrainian Issue

I shall refer to the existing facts concerning the current Ukrainian issue, and the manner in which the matter could be resolved.

### a) The Existing Facts

With the passage of time we have arrived at the following complicated points.

**Firstly.** Through Pan-Orthodox conferences an agreement was reached on the text about granting autocephaly to a Church. A disagreement arose about who should sign the *Tomos* of autocephaly, so no decision was taken.

After that, the Ecumenical Patriarch granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, as he had done to other local Churches, according to so-called customary law. This Autocephalous Church was made up of the schismatic group of Philaret, who had been deposed, and the schismatic group of Macarius. Doubt is cast on the priesthood and apostolic succession of this latter group.

In my view, the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted autocephaly once it had evaluated the situation existing in Ukraine, and particularly once it had fully understood the tactics of the Patriarchate of Moscow to the detriment of the Ecumenical Throne. I believe that the Ecumenical Patriarchate will not revoke it.

**Secondly.** The Patriarchate of Moscow did not accept this decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to grant autocephaly in Ukraine. It is opposed to the intervention of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Ukraine. In view of the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to grant autocephaly, it actually ceased commemorating the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the Diptychs, and also advised Russians and Ukrainians not to have ecclesiastical communion with Churches that commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

In my opinion, it seems so far that the Church of Moscow for various reasons will not give way and will not accept the accomplished facts in Ukraine. I consider that, even if some Orthodox Churches recognise the autocephaly of Ukraine, the problem will remain, insofar as the Church of Moscow will not accept it.

**Thirdly.** The other Autocephalous Orthodox Churches find themselves, for various reasons, in a state of waiting, or else they support Moscow. They are hesitant to recognise Epiphanius as the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. I do not know what they will decide in the near future. In any case, at the enthronement of Epiphanius no representatives were present from the other Autocephalous Churches except for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and congratulations were not sent to him on becoming Primate of the Autocephalous Church of Ukraine.

**Fourthly.** The ecclesiastical situation in Ukraine continues to be irregular. There is Archbishop Epiphanius as the Primate of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Ukraine; Metropolitan Onuphrius, who comes under the Church of Russia; and the so-called

‘Honorary Patriarch Philaret’, who withdrew from his original agreement and did not accept the *Tomos* granting autocephaly, because he does not agree with the abolition of the ‘Patriarchate’ that he had proclaimed. There will probably be other developments as well. The events are like shifting sands.

**Fifthly.** There are other local Churches belonging to other Patriarchates which have from time to time expressed their desire to acquire autocephaly, since they belong to particular state entities, on the basis of Canon 34 of the Apostles, Canon 17 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, and Canon 38 of the Quinisext Ecumenical Patriarch, in accordance with St Photius the Great’s statement that ecclesiastical boundaries change together with civil boundaries. There may perhaps be other Churches as well that have not said anything so far, but will ask for autocephaly. Names of particular Churches have been published, which I do not wish to mention here, to avoid creating an additional problem.

To be sure, so-called autocephaly in the first millennium functioned differently from how it functions in the second millennium based on the principle of Feudalism, the Reformation, and the principle of nationalism that appeared in the twelfth century and was developed through the Enlightenment and the French Revolution of the eighteenth century, as Professor Gregory Papathomas has analysed.

This means that a decision must be taken on how autocephaly is granted, within the framework of the synodical and hierarchical regime of the Orthodox Church, so as to prevent the creation of continual tensions and schisms in the Orthodox Church prompted by this issue.

As, by economy and for the time being, a decision was taken for the diaspora – what is called the “heresy of overlapping jurisdictions” – with the Episcopal Assemblies, so a decision should be taken on the subject of granting autocephaly to a Church.

It is well known that an attempt was made to solve this serious problem. Unfortunately, however, it stopped at the point concerning who would sign the *Tomos* granting autocephaly. In other words, the privileges of the First-Throne Church of Constantinople, New Rome, were undermined.

This is the aim at present: that the discussion about granting autocephaly should be reopened – a Pan-Orthodox decision already exists on the content of the text – not only with regard to the Church of Ukraine, but also with regard to other ecclesiastical provinces of other Patriarchates, to prevent new tensions and new schisms arising. It is obvious that this should be resolved by a Pan-Orthodox Council or a Meeting of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches.

All these factors complicate the problem, and, to avoid this schismatic situation becoming permanent, because, as the Greeks say, “long-lasting problems are hard to cure”, a solution must be found.

## **b) Some Informal Actions**

As this is how things stand, the question that arises is how this serious ecclesiastical issue, which causes problems in the relations between all the Orthodox Churches, will be solved.

Until now I have not heard any serious proposals for solving the issue. The only serious proposal that has been heard is that a Pan-Orthodox Council should be convened to deal with this issue and to take final decisions. Some other proposals that have been made cannot even be discussed, because they are impossible to implement.

The problem is, however, that, in order to decide to call a Pan-Orthodox Council, there has to be serious preparation and a proposal on which the majority of Orthodox Churches agree, and which, of course, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Moscow accept. A Pan-Orthodox Council or a Meeting of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches cannot be convened unless the Ecumenical Patriarch convenes it, and unless the issue is ripe for a solution. Certainly, if there is no convergence of opinions beforehand on a specific proposal that the local Churches will accept, particularly the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Moscow, there is no reason for a Pan-Orthodox Council to take place.

This means that some influential figures in the Church should draft a proposal that it would be possible for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Church of Moscow and the Church of Ukraine to accept. There must, of course, also be discussion with the political leadership in Ukraine. Because, if I judge the situation in relation to the granting of autocephaly to the Church of Greece and the granting of the 'New Lands' to the Church of Greece, there was a decision and acceptance by three parties: the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Church of Greece and the Greek state.

Unless this sort of serious preparatory work takes place, with persistent action, sobriety, discretion and prayer, it impossible for the Pan-Orthodox Council to meet, because in that case it would meet in order to ratify the disagreement, and it would, of course, fail to take a specific decision. Thus the existing split between the Orthodox Churches would become even more evident.

## **c) A Proposal to be Developed**

So, which proposal could be seriously developed?

I shall attempt to specify a proposal, which may perhaps have shortcomings, and will need to be improved.

**First.** There should be a meeting, albeit informal in the beginning, of the representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Moscow, to decide that the dialogue should continue about completing the discussion on how autocephaly is granted to a Church, and to draw up a preliminary plan for solving the problem of Ukraine, in accordance with the points that will be set out below.

**Secondly.** The decision of the Patriarchate of Moscow to suspend ecclesiastical communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch and not to commemorate him in the Diptychs, particularly as a form of pressure to prevent autocephaly being granted in Ukraine, and subsequently to urge its faithful not to take part in Liturgies and services in which the Ecumenical Patriarch is commemorated does not constitute a responsible ecclesiastical action.

The sacrament of the Divine Eucharist, which is a sacrament of unity, and the sacrament of Confession, cannot be used to exert pressure on other Churches, particularly on matters of secondary importance.

It is customary, in episcopal concelebrations of bishops from all the Orthodox Churches, for bishops to refrain from participating in the Divine Liturgy, because representatives from other Churches with which they are not in communion are taking part. It is, therefore, unacceptable that they should at the same time participate in official banquets and dinners, praying and feasting together.

For this reason, in order for an attempt to solve this issue to commence, the Church of Moscow should revoke its decision, and, as a sign of good will, the Patriarch of Moscow should begin to commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Diptychs.

In any case, the possibility of dialogue between the two Churches must be ensured, because otherwise, while they are in isolation, this issue will never be solved.

**Thirdly.** Discussion between the representatives of the Orthodox Churches should be based on agreeing and ratifying the two texts that had been prepared for submission to the Council held in Crete in June 2016, but in the end there was no agreement that they should be discussed and signed at that Council.

These two texts concern *Autocephaly* and the *Diptychs*, both of which are canonical subjects. If the Church of Moscow had not had a different opinion with regard to how the *Tomos* granting autocephaly should be signed, and if these texts had been submitted to the Council of Crete for decision, we would not have these problems with Ukraine today.

Consequently, the discussion between representatives of the Orthodox Churches, which was interrupted, about how the *Tomos* granting autocephaly should be signed, should begin, so that the debate on this subject can be completed. In this perspective, it will be decided how autocephaly will be granted to a Church from now on, as has been laid down in the existing text, without overlooking the canonical and traditional privileges of the Ecumenical Throne.

**Fourthly.** When a Preparatory Commission, made up of representatives of all the Churches, has prepared these two texts on *Autocephaly* and the *Diptychs*, a Council of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches and those accompanying them should then be convened, which would ratify them.

This Pan-Orthodox Council ought to state that today there are fourteen Churches; to ratify the patriarchal dignity and honour of some more recent Patriarchates, so that an outstanding situation can also be resolved; to ratify the decision of the Ecumenical

Patriarchate to grant autocephaly to the Church of Ukraine, so that there will be fifteen Churches; and to deal with specific issues that have arisen.

**Fifthly.** It should be agreed in advance how the ecclesiastical regime in Ukraine in all its dimensions will be resolved and take effect. It ought perhaps to be solved with ecclesiastical economy “for a time”.

One solution is for a way to be found for all the ecclesiastical jurisdictions that exist in Ukraine to come under this Autocephalous Church.

By economy, and perhaps for a time, approximately what happens in the Church of Greece could apply, where the bishops of the Autocephalous Church of Greece and the bishops of the Ecumenical Throne in Greece, those of the ‘New Lands’, meet and make joint decisions.

If, for various reasons, this cannot apply in Ukraine, then the system of Episcopal Assemblies that prevails in the Diaspora, the canonical functioning of which was approved by vote at the Council of Crete in 2016, could operate. The Rules of Operation exist already, and could be adapted as appropriate for the Autocephalous Church of Ukraine.

Within this framework, either with the form of administration of the Church of Greece, or operating in the manner of the Episcopal Assemblies, a Synod could function, which would be made up of all the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, and which would have an Archbishop. And if this cannot happen, then the existing regime in Greece could operate, with the Autocephalous Church and the New Lands; the semi-autonomous Church of Crete; and the Metropolises in the Dodecanese.

The Metropolitans of the various ecclesiastical jurisdictions would commemorate the Church to which they report, either the Patriarch of Constantinople or the Patriarch of Moscow, and would also include their Synods: “First of all, remember, O Lord, our Archbishop and Patriarch [Bartholomew or Kyrill] and our Holy Synod, who rightly expound the word of Your truth.”

The Standing Holy Synod, which would consist of twelve bishops, with the President of the Holy Synod as thirteenth, would include equal numbers of members from the existing ecclesiastical jurisdictions. All the Hierarchs of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine would take part in the Hierarchy.

The first time the bishops meet they would could either to elect a Primate of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, or decide who it was to be.

**Sixthly.** I think that influential ecclesiastical and political figures in Ukraine should work in this direction. I mention political figures as well, because even in the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, the decisions were always imposed by law by the Emperors. If a Council takes decisions on its own, they cannot be put into practice unless the political authorities intervene to ratify them with laws. It was for this reason that the Ecumenical Councils were convened by the Emperors, and their decisions were read out in the palace on the final day, where the decision was made that they should apply by law. A characteristic

example is the Quinisext Ecumenical Council, which was called the Council ‘in Trullo’, precisely because it took place in the great hall of the palace which had a dome (*troulos*).

What I have referred to is, in my opinion, a realistic assessment in principle of the situation, and it is a proposal according to economy “for a time”, or rather, an outline in principle that can be further improved or else rejected.

To be sure, any better proposal ought also to be put forward and studied, particularly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which has great experience over time in dealing with serious ecclesiastical problems, in order to lead to the resolution of the issue, not only in Ukraine, but above all in the relations between the Orthodox Churches, which are at their worst at present, and are rather reminiscent of the description of the situation in St Basil the Great’s time, which was mentioned earlier in this article.

I too could keep silent in order to please everyone, but out of love for the Church, and for no other reason, I have concerned myself with this subject and recorded my thoughts in writing, according to the principle “Give the opportunity to a wise man, and he will be wiser” (Prov. 9:9).

I think that, on this subject too Christ’s Beatitude applies: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9).

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