

Greek Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Church in the USA¹

V. Rev. Archimandrite Elpidophoros Lambriniadis
Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod
of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

Venerable Hierarchs,
Rev. Dr. John Behr, Dean,
Reverend Clergy,
Brothers and Sisters,

It is a particular privilege and pleasure to be among you today, in the academic halls of St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, this nursery of theological letters and priestly vocation, which has been grounded in the Russian spirituality and intellectual thought of such great theologians and ministers of the church as the fathers George Florovsky, Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the successors of these extraordinary theologians for the invitation extended to me to participate in this distinguished scholarly Symposium in order to enjoy the opportunity to convey to all of you the paternal greetings and Patriarchal blessings of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Primate of the Great Church of Christ, the Mother Church of Constantinople.

¹ Lecture during the Summer Seminar at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, New York, June 12, 2010.

[I regret that, owing to the last session of the Holy and Sacred Synod, my arrival was delayed and consequently did not permit me to attend the two extremely interesting presentations by Dr. Timothy Clark and Dr. George Lewis Parsenios.]

The topic that I have been asked to address today: “Greek Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Church in the USA.” Beginning with the content and historical development of the phrase “Greek Orthodoxy,” I will endeavor to explore its relationship to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in order, finally, on this basis, to interpret the perception of the Church of Constantinople with regard to the ecclesiastical situation in the United States and present its vision for the future of Orthodoxy in this land.

From its very foundation on this earth by our Lord Jesus Christ, but especially from the outset of its organization by the local Bishops, the Church of Christ was profoundly – and quite naturally – influenced by the political, administrative and cultural context of the Roman Empire, which was in turn characterized as an empire by syncretism, multiethnicism and multiculturalism as well as uniformity of law, government, language, currency, and so forth. From the moment that Christianity was first registered as recognized and tolerated after the period of persecution and thereafter as formal religion of the empire, the very identity of the Church was directly affected, while in turn affecting the identity of the Roman citizen. I will discuss neither the degree to which Divine Providence in this way prepared the political and cultural historical context for the extension and establishment of the Church of Christ, nor the scope to which the multiethnic and multicultural identity of the empire facilitated a Christianity that was based on the same external elements.

Nevertheless, I would like to draw your attention to the concept and content of the Roman citizen (or inhabitant of the Roman Empire),

especially from the time that he or she began to sense the Christian faith as a characteristic feature of identity.

The Roman Christian could – at least ethnically – belong to any race and have any native language. Yet, in spite of this, the Roman Christian would be a faithful under the *one* Bishop of a particular city that served as either temporary or permanent residence, just as he or she would be subjected to the Roman administrator or governor of the region. The identity of the Roman Christian as citizen of the Kingdom of God bore – analogically speaking – the same characteristics of identity enjoyed by every citizen of the Roman Empire, irrespective of race, language or origin.

The same applied to one's identity within the Church of the Roman Empire: namely, the basis and criterion of organization was always geographical, with one bishop elected for every city, to whom all inhabitants of the region were submitted without any discrimination (linguistic or other), in accordance with the Apostolic instruction: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male nor female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3.28)

On the basis of the same principle, the Orthodox Churches today are called "Church of Alexandria," "Church of Antioch," "Church of Jerusalem," "Church of Russia," and so on – that is to say, they are defined geographically. In this respect, it is both untraditional and uncanonical from an ecclesiastical perspective for the Patriarchates to be named "Russian," "Serbian," "Romanian," "Bulgarian," or "Georgian," or for their Patriarchs to be addressed as "Patriarch of the Russians," "of the Serbs," "of the Romanians," "of the Bulgarians," or "of the Georgians." For these characterizations introduce – not only in the Diaspora, but also in the local Orthodox Churches – a criterion of ethnophyletism, thereby dividing the flock of the local Bishop on the basis of ethnic origin and allowing the possibility of infringement into

another eparchy or jurisdiction. This applies to both realities, in local Churches and in Diaspora, since the sacred Canons cannot have selective or circumstantial but universal application.

This experience and teaching of the Church was also confirmed by the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, which codified and recorded in a binding manner for all of Christianity not only the “faith once delivered” together with its doctrine, but also the principles of administration and organization. I would remind you that the Ecumenical Councils did not dogmatize *ex nihilo*; nor did they impose definitions and conditions of ecclesiastical organization that hitherto did not exist. Both in matters of faith and in matters of administration, they codified the Apostolic teaching, the Church experience and the Patristic tradition. There is no reason here to expand on the well-substantiated refutation of the erroneous distinction of sacred Canons into doctrinal (and therefore not conducive to revision) and administrative (and hence susceptible to modification).

Resuming the analysis of the terminology, I would call to mind the fact that the Church within the Roman Empire – that which Western historians in the 18th century labeled as Byzantine – was in fact originally called Roman, particularly when schismatic and heretical ecclesiastical structures appeared and required some form of distinction from a terminological perspective. This was especially evident and instituted in the Orthodox east after the Schism of 1054 and, in particular, with the prevalence of the Ottoman over the Eastern Roman Empire.

Henceforth, the non-Christian Sultan ratified and formally instituted the phrase “Roman Nation” (*Rum Milleti*), which included all Christian Orthodox inhabitants of the occupied empire. For the Sultan, just as for his predecessor the Roman Empire, there were no distinctions according to race, but only according to religion and confession. This is precisely why the populations that embraced Islam were not called

“Roman Muslims” but Turks. Those who converted to Islam became Turkish – that is to say, they changed identity.

Therefore, the Ottoman Empire adopted and respected the existing ecclesiastical terminology, according to which the conquered Roman Christian was not distinguished on the basis of linguistic or ethnic origin, but on the basis of his or her identity as a member of the Church.

In this respect, in the eastern languages (namely, Greek, Turkish, and Arabic), the Patriarchates (the Ecumenical Patriarchate as well as those of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) were characterized as “Rum (or Roman) Orthodox” in contradistinction to “Rum (or Roman) Catholic” or the Armenian and Syrian Churches.

Problems arose when, with the rise of nationalism in the Balkans (19th century), the term “Rum” was translated as “Greek” in order also to determine the principle of reorganization and independence of the various Orthodox peoples from an ecclesiastical viewpoint. Meanwhile, of course, the Greek Nation had been established and every concept of Hellenism was understood in nationalistic terms, thereby attributing an entirely different content to the original term “Rum.”

Without further expanding, I would summarize as follows: The source of the phrase “Greek Orthodoxy” has in our day assumed an ethnic sense, which however distorts reality. The phrase “Greek Orthodoxy” or “Rum Orthodox” is more accurately rendered in English as “Roman Orthodox.” Just as the phrase “Roman Catholic” cannot be translated as “Italian Catholic,” so too the term “Rum” or “Roman” when referring to Orthodox Christians should not be translated as “Greek Orthodox” in a way that conveys an ethnic content to a purely ecclesiastical terminology.

The original sense of the term is even preserved in the Uniate Churches, which unfortunately bear the inappropriate title “Greek Catholic.” For their members are certainly not Greeks, but Uniates

subjected to the Pope and adhering to the Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) rite.

Another characteristic fact is that all the Slavic peoples – at least in the period preceding the rise of nationalism – had no problem whatsoever in being called “Rum Orthodox” and being under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which – we should not forget – never endeavored to Hellenize them, since this was contrary to its principles and very identity as Ecumenical. Indeed, there was no attempt to Hellenize the Slavs even during the period of their Christianization. On the contrary, their language was enhanced – essentially engendered – with the creation of a specific alphabet and the consolidation of a cultural identity.

It is not by chance that the Church of Russia from the 18th century until the October Revolution had no difficulty being called “Greek-Russian,”² while even your own Church here in the United States was, until 1971, called “Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America.”³

Thus, since I believe that we have together established sufficient evidence that the phrase “Greek Orthodox” – at least in reference to the Patriarchates of the East – is not an accurate rendering of their actual reality, we may better interpret contemporary developments in Diaspora as well as within the Patriarchates themselves.

Ever since the creation of the independent Greek State, which terminologically was also identified with the Patriarchates of the East, all of these Churches underwent a period of crisis of identity.

² Metropolitan Evgeny Volchovitinov, *Словарь исторический о бывших в России писателях духовного чина Греко-российской Церкви*, St, Petersburg 1818.

³ *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 259.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate granted Autocephaly to the Churches of Greece, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, Albania, as well as the Czech Lands and Slovakia (19th-20th centuries); moreover, following the destruction of Asia Minor, with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne and the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, it lost almost all of its flock remaining within Turkey.

The Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem also underwent a period of crisis of identity inasmuch as their Greekness risked being identified with the fate of the Greek Nation and the politics of the Republic of Greece. Moreover, having been reduced to a state organ following the dissolution of the Patriarchate by Peter the Great, the Church of Russia was compromised with the Pan-Slavist direction of the Russian State's foreign policy after the 19th century because the latter provided the possibility of promoting its own interests with the full support of the State. Thus, with the formation of the Palestinian Society on May 28, 1882, which intended to offer assistance for Russian pilgrims, it also became an instrument of Czarist interests in the Middle East, while at the same time advocating its interests in this sensitive region.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria directed its attention to missionary activity among the peoples of Africa. After evolving and establishing an organized mission, in 2001, it officially sought from the Ecumenical Patriarchate the concession of jurisdiction over the entire continent. From that time, the phrase "And of All Africa" was added to the title of the Patriarch of Alexandria, whereas hitherto he was only known as "And of All Egypt."

Nationalism encroached upon the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, whose Palestinian faithful could not readily understand why their Church bore the title "Rum (improperly rendered as 'Greek') Orthodox", while they communicated in Arabic and enjoyed an Arabic conscience. Nevertheless, through prudent and pastoral sensitivity to the needs of its Palestinian

flock, it managed to confront the various nationalistic predicaments that appeared from time to time.

I feel that this outline was necessary in order to appreciate the contemporary situation of the Orthodox Church in the United States as well as the approach of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

For the Ecumenical Patriarchate is not ethnic in the modern sense of the term. It is the continuation of the traditional and patristic expression of Christianity, as this was organically shaped in the historical context of a non-ethnic, ecumenical Empire and as this was recorded and codified in the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils.

The Ecumenical Councils recorded the original Christian and Apostolic understanding regarding the organization of Church life purely on the basis of geographical criteria and not any linguistic or ethnic origin. The jurisdiction of each Church was accurately described and defined in their decisions, while the holy and inspired Fathers knew very well that certain regions existed outside the boundaries of the Roman world and outside the then-known “oecumene,” which they labeled with the term “barbarian.” The pastoral responsibility for these regions was assigned to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

The geographical jurisdictions of the Churches and Patriarchates that were created later – that is to say, after the Ecumenical Councils – were also accurately described and defined by the Patriarchal and Synodal Tomos’ issued by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, assuring and expressing the Pan-Orthodox conscience and consent.

It has been sufficiently proven by scholarship that the Church of Russia developed missionary activity in Alaska from the 18th century, when this region comprised a Russian territory, just as other imperial Churches of the time pursued in their colonies.

The canonical question that arises is the following: Does the territorial expansion of a state comprise a self-evident extension of the

jurisdiction of that Church in that particular region? And by analogy: Does the development of missionary activity in a geographical region outside a particular jurisdiction at the same time imply a claim by that jurisdiction?

The preaching of God's word and the spread of Christ's Gospel are clearly praiseworthy, while the saintly and sacrificial ministry of the early missionaries is universally admired and respected, however, the geographical jurisdiction of the Church of Russia is plainly defined in its Tomos of Autocephaly received from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The argument that it was first to evangelize a portion of the American continent is neither ecclesiological nor canonical, expressing instead a mentality of colonialism. At this point, we could also cite the examples of Russian missionary activity in China and Japan, lands where the Church of Russia claims as its canonical territory. The proper response to similar circumstances, as we have already observed, is that of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, which requested and officially received jurisdiction over the entire African continent.

The later development of Orthodox Christianity in the United States around the end of the 19th and during the 20th centuries bears all the characteristics of the Orthodox Diaspora throughout the world: Accordingly, Orthodox Christians organized themselves ecclesiastically on the basis primarily of ethnicity and their Churches of origin.

Consequently, it is not fair to claim that "this unity was broken and then arbitrarily replaced with the unheard-of principle of 'jurisdictional multiplicity.'"⁴

⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, "To love is to remember," in: *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 12. See also p. 188.

The ancient Patriarchates respected the 28th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council and the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate over regions outside the geographical boundaries of the Orthodox Churches. The only exception, unfortunately, was the Patriarchate of Antioch, which, in the confusion created toward the end of the 19th century with the otherwise correct rendering and accurate content of the phrase “Rum Orthodox Patriarchate,” was misled by the rise of Arab nationalism, making unconventional ecclesiological choices in order to survive at the time in an environment recognized for its dangerously intensifying anti-Western mentality, at least from a geo-political perspective.

The ongoing presence of the Church of Russia in the United States was deeply influenced by the ramifications of the October Revolution of 1917 and the establishment in Russia of an atheist state. Communication with the troubled Patriarchate of Moscow became ever difficult, while dependence on it was regarded with suspicion and increasing reservation, criticized for cooperation with the atheistic state. The Cold War between the two superpowers later contributed to this attitude, rendering any ecclesiastical subjection to Moscow inconceivable for American citizens.⁵

Already in 1924, as you well know, the decision was made for the “temporarily self-governing” of the presence of the Church of Russia in

⁵ See the Christmas Encyclical of Metropolitan Irinei to the Orthodox Patriarchs (1966): “Even when the political relations between the two states are normal and friendly, the Church which is under the authority of a foreign leadership is suspected of being ‘alien’. What can be said then about our situation, when the relations between the two political giants of our era, the Soviet Union and the United States of America, continue to be grounded in mutual distrust and competition?” in: *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 269.

the United States.⁶ Moscow questioned its canonicity,⁷ while here the Patriarch of Moscow was commemorated as its ecclesiastical head by way of formality.⁸ We cannot overlook the fact that, in 1946, there was an attempt – albeit in vain – to subject the Church here to the then Patriarch of Moscow Alexei I.⁹ A similar effort again occurred in 1966, when Metropolitan Irinei communicated with all the Orthodox Primate.¹⁰

The events that led to granting of “autocephaly” to the Metropolia, which the Patriarchate of Moscow had renamed only in 1970 from “Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America” to “Orthodox Church of America,” are well known.¹¹

Beyond the issue concerning the canonicity of this “autocephaly” (which it is not by chance that only the Churches of Soviet influence recognized),¹² the following questions arise:

- Was the pursuit of regional independence by the Metropolia from the Church of Moscow exclusively and solely dictated

⁶ During the 4th All American Church Sobor held in Detroit (March 20-April 2, 1924). See *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 184.

⁷ “... the Metropolia not only had no support from its Mother Church but was denounced by the latter as “schismatic” and deprived of canonical basis,” in: *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 184.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁹ *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 201.

¹⁰ *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, pp. 267-69.

¹¹ This is mentioned in the same telegram dated April 13, 1970, from Patriarch Alexei to Metropolitan Irinei, where the granting of “autocephaly” is announced. See *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 264.

¹² *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 201.

by ideological reasons as well as by ecclesiological principles regarding the local nature of the Church? Or was it an inevitable choice and need to divest itself of any suspicion that it is spiritually subjected to and directed by a State Church, which was considered the primary threat against the United States?¹³

- Are the words of Fr. John Meyendorff verified today, forty years later, that: “the criticisms which [autocephaly] encountered were provoked not by any canonical or ecclesiological considerations, but by the fear that the ‘phyletistic’ (or ethnocentric) structure of the existing ‘jurisdictions’ would henceforth be decisively challenged by a canonical and healthy American Church, which, at the same time, would be fully open to the preservation of all valid national customs and traditions of the various Orthodox immigrant groups?”¹⁴

The efforts by the OCA to establish in the United States a concept and reality of the *local Church* are welcome and admirable. As we noted earlier, this is also the vision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Yet, I wonder whether a jurisdiction can claim *locality*, when in fact it comprises a minority, when it overlooks all the other Churches.

¹³ See the opinion: “The Metropolia always experienced its separation from the Mother Church as forced upon it by events beyond its control, always looked forward with hope to the day of reunion and restoration of normal relations,” in: *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 261.

¹⁴ The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America, in: *America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 244.

In reading the Encyclical of the OCA Hierarchy, whereby in 1970 the granting of “autocephaly” was officially proclaimed, I discerned a threefold goal at the time:

- “The task of uniting all the Orthodox Christians of America into one Church.”
- “The task of witnessing freely to the true Christian faith in the whole world.” And:
- “The task of growing spiritually from strength to strength, through the prayers of the holy Father Herman of Alaska.”

Once again, I wonder whether, today, after forty years, we could readily admit success in any of these three goals. The first goal has clearly not been achieved. With regard to the other two goals, I would simply pose the following two questions:

- Was the granting of an autocephaly necessary to meet these two goals? Did not precisely the same possibilities exist prior to the granting of this “autocephaly”? And, related to this:
- Were the other Orthodox Churches in the United States in any way deprived in these areas of “witnessing freely” and “growing spiritually from strength to strength” by not having the status of autocephaly?

Summarizing my humble reflections on the granting of “autocephaly,” permit me to say that it appears that, no matter how good intentions may be in the Church, the violation of the sacred Canons never produce positive results. The consequences of uncanonical actions must be addressed sooner or later, as we recently (2009) witnessed in the decisions of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy (Geneva). That is to say, while the OCA commenced with all the praiseworthy optimism of uniting all the Orthodox in the USA and establishing a conscience regarding the geographical nature of the

Church, today it comprises a hindrance and problem to be resolved inasmuch as it is not a Church recognized by all Orthodox. This is because, in accordance with Article 1 of the “Rules of Operation for Episcopal Assemblies in the Orthodox Diaspora,” approved by the Pan-Orthodox Conference, states: “All Orthodox Bishops of each region, from those regions defined by the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, who are in canonical communion with all the local Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, form each Episcopal Assembly.” Moreover, in its Decision 2c) regarding “The Orthodox Diaspora,” the same Conference declared that “Decisions on these subjects will be taken by consensus **of the Churches** who are represented in the particular Assembly.”

The Ecumenical Patriarchate organized its own jurisdictional presence in the United States following the migration there of faithful from the regions of Thrace, Pontus and Asia Minor after the great destruction. This was a natural historical development with a specific historical significance. Therefore, it founded the “Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America”, without implying that this was created solely for Greeks. Proof of this lies in the fact that the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate includes Albanians, Ukrainians, Carpatho-Russians and Palestinians, without any of these ever feeling that they have as a result been either Hellenized or in any way slighted. The very founder of the Holy Archdiocese, Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) spoke in his enthronement address about the pastoral concern for all Orthodox Christians in the Diaspora, making

particular reference to the faithful in the United States.¹⁵ The same Patriarch not only resists any distinction between faithful according to ethnic origin, but also refers to the decisions of the Great Council of Constantinople in 1872, which condemned ethnophyletism. It is important to recall that this Council proclaimed as heretics all those who established “separate altar” and created “their own ethnic faction” – namely, on the basis of exclusively ethnic criteria, which were deemed “contrary to the teaching of the Gospel and the sacred Canons of our blessed Fathers.”¹⁶

This jurisdictional dependence of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese thus constituted no impediment for its spiritual and administrative progress. Or, at the very least, one cannot claim that the Archdiocese is in any way lacking in anything or in any field by comparison with the “autocephalous” OCA. On the contrary, without ceasing to be direct jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, its experience and development have materialized the vision of the late Prof. Anton Vladimirovich Kartashoff concerning the restoration “of *sobornost* (i.e.,

¹⁵ “We should also make explicit reference to the administration of the Orthodox Churches in the Diaspora ... where the Great Church of Christ is canonically obliged to take swift precautions for the appearance of the Orthodox Church even in the Diaspora, maintaining inviolable the canonical order, which the great Council that convened in Constantinople 50 years ago proclaimed to be essential for the preservation of spiritual unity in the bond of peace. I have, in any case, personally witnessed the far greater majority of the Orthodox Church in the Diaspora, and I have personally experienced the degree to which the name of Orthodoxy will be elevated, especially the great United States of America, if the over two million Orthodox faithful are organized into one, united Church administration as an American Orthodox Church,” In: *Ekklesiastiki Alitheia Konstantinoupoleos*, XL, 4, January 29, 1922, p. 30.

¹⁶ See A. Nanakis (Metropolitan of Arkalochorion), “The Ecumenical Patriarchate: From the Condemnation of Ethnophyletism (1872) to the Macedonian Struggle,” [In Greek] in *Apostolos Titos*, III, 3, December 2005, pp. 91-2.

the responsible participation of the entire people of God, clergy as well as laity, in the life of the Church) from the top to the bottom...”¹⁷

The Ecumenical Patriarchate has always responded with prudence and understanding to the various historical challenges presented by the OCA. When the latter was confronted with controversy regarding its canonicity in relation to the Church of Russia during the Soviet era, the Ecumenical Patriarchate maintained constructive cooperation and communion. Even when, despite every concept of canonical order, it was granted “autocephaly,” the Ecumenical Patriarchate regarded this more as a settlement of a pendency with the Patriarchate of Moscow and manifested sensitivity by practicing canonical *economia* and not rupturing communion with it, continuing to concelebrate with its Hierarchs. I do not wish here to expound upon the arguments of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the subject; after all, these are well known and documented. However, I consider it my obligation to underline our common visions and common principles, which are often undermined and overlooked in jurisdictional juxtaposition, which usually monopolizes our relations. In this respect, I would like to remind you of the words of the late Metropolitan Irinei, who in his Christmas Encyclical to the Orthodox Patriarchs in 1966, stated that: “... unity can be reached only through an agreement between all the national churches,”¹⁸ and consequently not by means of unilateral actions of dubious canonicity.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate did not come to this land as an ethnic Church in order to establish an ethnic jurisdiction. This would have been incompatible with both its ecclesiological principles and its very identity, but also with its long history. The Archdiocese is “Greek” in the sense

¹⁷ *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 261.

¹⁸ *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 268.

analyzed at the outset of my address, without this signifying the abolition or oppression of the ethnic origin, language and culture of the faithful that comprise its jurisdiction, whether these are Greeks or not. And I believe that we are all in agreement on this.¹⁹

When speaking about the Greek Archdiocese in America, it should be underlined that one encounters parishes where Greek is the liturgical language primarily used and others where there is an equal emphasis on Greek and English, while still others that adopt either mostly or only English. In other words, therefore, while one may have an initial impression of the heavy Greek influence in the Church, the truth is that this is simply not the case.

Nevertheless, I would dare to advance the following argument as well: The Greek language itself became a “victim” of the prevailing nationalism, serving even in the United States as an instrument of the notion of independence from the “Mother Churches.” This, too, is surely regretful inasmuch as Greek is not merely an ethnic language, but the language of the Gospel, of the definitions and decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, of exceptional and influential representatives of the Patristic tradition, as well as of the original texts of liturgical sources in the Orthodox Church.

Finally, I wonder why it is that the Archdiocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate cannot constitute the expression of the entire, united Orthodox presence in the USA simply because it bears the title “Greek”,

¹⁹ See Message to All Orthodox Christians in America, 1970: “We firmly believe that this variety constitutes the richness of American Orthodoxy and that whatever is true, noble, inspiring and Christian in our various customs and practices ought to be fully preserved and, if possible, shared. Therefore, although we insist that the One Orthodox Church here must be the home of all, we equally stress that there must be no loss of our respective national and cultural heritages and certainly no domination of any group by any other but full equality, total trust and truly Christian brotherhood.” *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 277.

while the same claim is made by the OCA despite officially bearing until 1970 the title “Russian” (and “Greek”) and being administered until recently by Hierarchs of Russian descent.²⁰

In this regard, then, “Greekness” did not constitute any impediment for our faithful becoming genuine Americans, devoted citizens of the United States and willing supporters of its interests.

Moreover, the hesitation of some to accept the term “Diaspora,” which by definition includes an element of temporariness, is comprehensible and perhaps justifiable. Of course, for the greater majority of Orthodox faithful in the United States – and beyond – the element of temporariness with regard to their existence in these regions constitutes an anachronism. Nevertheless, we are obliged to realize that, in speaking of “Diaspora,” we are not referring simply to *people* that have been “dispersed” but, above all today, to the *geographical region* where the “Diaspora” has occurred. In this sense, then, it is neither a pejorative nor anachronistic to make reference to the particularity of a *geographical region* with a specific terminology from an ecclesiastical perspective. I do

²⁰ See expressions such as “... Russian leadership of the North American Church...” In: *Orthodox America, 1794-1976, Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, New York 1976, p. 191. Archbishop Eftym expressed the same in 1927: See *The Orthodox Catholic Review*, I, 4-5, April-May, 1927: “For a hundred years the Russian leadership and control over Orthodoxy in America was unquestioned....” Such expressions are in agreement with the viewpoint of Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow (1905): “In North America a whole Exarchate can easily be established, uniting all Orthodox national churches, which would have their own bishops under one Exarch, the Russian Archbishop». In: *Orthodox America*, p. 268. Of course, in an Encyclical dated September 1969 on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of Orthodox presence in America, Metropolitan Irinei states that the Metropolia “was never Russian in the narrow meaning of the word: everyone who confessed Holy Orthodoxy ... was received with love in its boundaries.” In: *Orthodox America*, p. 297. These words reflect the genuine Orthodox conscience of an Orthodox Hierarch, who maintains a geographical principle and not an ethnic criterion. The question that arises, however, is: Why is this possibility not recognized for the Hierarch representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who is in any case granted this right by the Ecumenical Councils?

not believe that anyone would refuse to accept that the pastoral concern of regions outside the geographical boundaries of the local Churches is a matter that today preoccupies the entire Orthodox Church and must at the very least be claimed and named in order to be evaluated and resolved. Those formerly dispersed are today native, established Christians, who have spread roots and borne fruits in this land.

In and of itself, the American dream which you rightly invoke does not presuppose the erasure of historical memory and culture of the people that comprise it, but promotes their creative synthesis in the remarkable mosaic called the United States of America. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” says the American Declaration of Independence. And former US President Jimmy Carter adds: “We become not a melting pot, but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.”²¹ President Carter’s words echo Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey: “Fortunately, the time has long passed when people liked to regard the United States as some kind of melting pot, taking men and women from every part of the world and converting them into standardized, homogenized Americans. We are, I think, much more mature and wise today. Just as we welcome a world of diversity, so we glory in an America of diversity – an America all the richer for the many different and distinctive strands of which it is woven.”²²

In concluding my presentation to you, I would like to state that uncanonical actions and developments – even when dictated by historical necessity – do not constitute correct choices because they will always

²¹ 39th President of the United States of America (1977-1981)

²² 38th Vice President of the United States of America (1965-1969) and US Senator of Minnesota (1949-1964 and 1971-1978).

return to haunt and hinder our journey for Pan-Orthodox unity and witness. Thus, the decisions of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference provide an historical opportunity for Orthodoxy and for America to transcend the competitive mentality of the past and see that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is governed by the same trans-ethnic principles as the OCA and the USA. Respect for the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, as well as for the nurturing Orthodox tradition and faith, and relating this faith to our contemporary life constitutes the only sure way toward unity and progress in Christ.

In his address to the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, who convened at the Phanar in October 2008, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew boldly declared:

«We have been deigned by our Lord to belong to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, whose faithful continuation and expression in History is our Holy Orthodox Church. We have received and preserved the true faith, as the holy Fathers have transmitted it to us through the Ecumenical Councils of the one undivided Church. We commune of the same Body and Blood of our Lord in the Divine Eucharist, and we participate in the same Sacred Mysteries. We basically keep the same liturgical typikon and are governed by the same Sacred Canons. All these safeguard our unity, granting us fundamental presuppositions for witness in the modern world.

Despite this, we must admit in all honesty that sometimes we present an image of incomplete unity, as if we were not one Church, but rather a confederation or a federation of churches. ... Of course, the response commonly proffered to this question is that, despite administrative division,

Orthodoxy remains united in faith, the Sacraments, etc. But is this sufficient? When before non-Orthodox we sometimes appear divided in theological dialogues and elsewhere; when we are unable to proceed to the realization of the long-heralded Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church; when we lack a unified voice on contemporary issues and, instead, convoke bilateral dialogues with non-Orthodox on these issues; when we fail to constitute a single Orthodox Church in the so-called Diaspora in accordance with the ecclesiological and canonical principles of our Church; how can we avoid the image of division in Orthodoxy, especially on the basis of non-theological, secular criteria?

We need, then, greater unity in order to appear to those outside not as a federation of Churches but as one unified Church. Through the centuries, and especially after the Schism, when the Church of Rome ceased to be in communion with the Orthodox, this Throne was called – according to canonical order – to serve the unity of the Orthodox Church as its first Throne. And it fulfilled this responsibility through the ages by convoking an entire series of Panorthodox Councils on crucial ecclesiastical matters, always prepared, whenever duly approached, to render its assistance and support to troubled Orthodox Churches. In this way, a canonical order was created and, accordingly, the coordinating role of this Patriarchate guaranteed the unity of the Orthodox Church, without in the least damaging or diminishing the independence of the local autocephalous Churches by any interference in their internal affairs. This, in any case, is the healthy significance of the institution of autocephaly: while it assures the self-governance of each

Church with regard to its internal life and organization, on matters affecting the entire Orthodox Church and its relations with those outside, each autocephalous Church does not act alone but in coordination with the rest of the Orthodox Churches. If this coordination either disappears or diminishes, then autocephaly becomes “autocephalism” (or radical independence), namely a factor of division rather than unity for the Orthodox Church.

Therefore, dearly beloved brothers in the Lord, we are called to contribute in every possible way to the unity of the Orthodox Church, transcending every temptation of regionalism or nationalism so that we may act as a unified Church, as one canonically structured body. We do not, as during Byzantine times, have at our disposal a state factor that guaranteed – and sometimes even imposed – our unity. Nor does our ecclesiology permit any centralized authority that is able to impose unity from above. Our unity depends on our conscience. The sense of need and duty that we constitute a single canonical structure and body, one Church, is sufficient to guarantee our unity, without any external intervention».

Thank you for your attention.