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## THE UNION OF BREST AND THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF SISTER CHURCHES

The controversial issue of the Union of Brest requires particular honesty and intellectual integrity in research work. The Balamand document of the international Catholic-Orthodox Commission (1993) stresses the need to overcome prejudices and polemical treatment of the events. It encourages (par. 30) to work out „an honest and global presentation of history” aiming, if possible, at a common historiography of the two Churches (the French original says: „une présentation honnête et globale de l’histoire, tendant à une historiographie concordante ou même commune des deux Églises”<sup>1</sup>

An honest presentation of history means more than just a correct knowledge of it. A global presentation implies taking into account all possible considerations and points of view, so that it could lead to a comprehensive understanding of events. One has to admit that we are as yet quite afar from such an ecumenical initiative. It will serve our purpose to look carefully at the existing attempts to interpret origins and history of the Union of Brest. They are predominantly marked by confessional or even polemical approach, insensitive to real intentions and theological preoccupations of the other side<sup>2</sup> It is difficult then to speak about „an honest and global presentation of history”

I am setting before my eyes this difficult requirement of honesty in research when I propose to deal with the Union of Brest in the light of ecclesi-

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<sup>1</sup> *The Balamand Statement*, „Eastern Churches Journal” 1(1993-94), No. 1, pp. 17-25; French original: *L’uniatisme, méthode d’union du passé et la recherche actuelle de la pleine communion*, „Episkopos”, 24(1993), No. 496, pp. 16-22, here 21.

<sup>2</sup> See for example M. H a j d u k, *Unia brzeska 1596*, Białystok 1995; H. D y ł a - g o w a, *Dzieje unii brzeskiej*, Warsaw 1996; B. K u m o r, *Geneza i zawarcie unii brzeskiej*, [in:] R. Ł u ż n y, F. Z i e j k a, A. K ę p i ń s k i (eds.), *Unia Brzeska. Geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje w kulturze narodów słowiańskich*, Kraków 1994, pp. 26-44.

ology of Sister Churches. One has to say right at the beginning that uniatism did not succeed in re-establishing unity between the Church of the East and the Church of the West. Division remains, as the Balamand document states (par. 9), „embittered” by partial unions with the See of Rome. Greek-Catholic Churches born out of those unions involved each time only a part of the Orthodox Mother Church, which defended herself against the loss of her faithful. Orthodox opposition to these partial unions was a defense reaction, inspired by a sense of dignity and by the conviction of being the true Church of Christ. Unionist movement tended instead towards ignoring Orthodoxy as a spiritual space of salvation, grace and truth, thus breaking away from an old tradition of Sister Churches. Did Orthodox promoters of the Union of Brest expect such developments?

#### I. EARLY EXPECTATIONS AND HOPES

It seems impossible to understand initial expectations and real intentions of those Ruthenians who were in favour of the union, without taking into account a long process of resistance to the schism between Rome and Constantinople. The awareness of the division was slowly and reluctantly acknowledged in the Ruthenian lands. It came to Rus' from the outside. Almost as late as the end of the 12th century, the schism was believed to be only local, confined to Constantinople and Rome. The conviction that all Christians belonged to the same Church of Christ persevered for a long time. It found its most striking expression in mixed marriages of that time. This refers above all to members of reigning dynasties and princely families. In the 12th century alone, one can count about ten such mixed marriages. The very fact of such marriages was tantamount to the recognition of Baptism, Eucharist and other sacraments. The sacramental reality of the Church did not cease to be the most significant factor linking both sides of Christianity.

After the Union of Florence, the metropolitanate of Kiev turned more and more towards Constantinople, without formally rejecting the union with Rome. There are no indications that Rome interpreted relations of metropolitan Gregory (the successor of metropolitan Isidore) with Constantinople as the lack of loyalty to the Florentine union. Metropolitan Gregory (†1472) was never considered unfaithful to this task of assuring the survival of that union in the Ruthenian lands. Some prominent successors of Gregory also remained

in communion with Rome without breaking relations with their own Patriarch in Constantinople.

Gregory's successor, metropolitan-elect Misael sent to pope Sixtus IV a special memorial, signed together with two archimandrites and thirteen prominent representatives of nobility. It was an official request to re-establish unity with Rome according to the decisions of the Council of Florence<sup>3</sup> The signatories of the message were complaining that the Latin hierarchy had treated them badly or even tried to force them to be rebaptized and to give up their Eastern rite. They expected that Rome would contribute towards improving the situation of growing distrust and enmity. There is, however, no mention in the memorial about any possible break of communion with the Mother-Church of Constantinople while accepting the union with Rome.

This fact deserves special attention. The Church of Kiev had never formally broken communion with the Roman See. Trying to remain in communion both with Rome and Constantinople it followed the wise attitude of Patriarch Peter III of Antioch. When the news of mutual excommunications between Rome and Constantinople (1054) had reached the Patriarch, he wrote a conciliatory letter to Patriarch Cerularius. He explained in it that essential questions (especially *Filioque*) should be maintained and a permanent schism avoided<sup>4</sup> The Church of Antioch had since then made effort to remain neutral in the long quarrel between Rome and Constantinople. Precisely this attitude had become a source of inspiration for the Church of Kiev which defended herself for several centuries against the schism and tried to maintain connections with both sides.

These facts were known at the end of the 16th century, when the Ruthenian bishops decided to conclude officially the union with Rome. In the early period of preparation they had their own understanding of ecclesiology, not affected yet by Latin theology. The most significant piece of evidence in this respect were the deliberations held on December 2, 1594, i.e. two years before the formal conclusion of the Union of Brest in 1596. The bishops expressed their conviction of being „the people of the same God (*unius Dei homines*)”, „like children of one Mother, the Holy Catholic Church (*tanquam*

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<sup>3</sup> *Poselstvo do papeža rymского Siksta IV (Litterae synodales ad Sixtum IV)*, [in:] *Monumenta Ucrainae Historica*, vol. 9-10, Rome 1971, No. 4, pp. 6-30 (the original text), pp. 30-55 (the Latin translation).

<sup>4</sup> PG 120, 812-813.

*unius Matris Sanctae Ecclesiae Catholicae filii*)”<sup>5</sup> This is a clear evidence that the consciousness of belonging to the same Church of Christ had not vanished among Ruthenians at that time. They firmly believed themselves to be members of the same „Holy Catholic Church”, within the same Body of Christ. They did not doubt the possibility of salvation within their own community. At the same time they also realized all the negative effects of the schism in the Church in those, as they put it, „most unhappy times (*his infelicissimus temporibus nostris*)”<sup>6</sup>

Here are some features of the situation: many people are subject to the heavy influence of „different heresies (*variae haereses*)” and depart from „the true and Orthodox Christian faith (*plurimi recedentes a vera et Orthodoxa fide Christiana*)”; they leave the Church of God and abandon the true worship of God in the Trinity (this is a clear reference to the spread of antitrinitarianism). All this happens, stress the bishops, „because of disagreement” with Romans. The division foils any mutual help and support: „*ab iis divisi sumus, unde auxilio praesidioque invicem nobis prodesse nequimus*” The bishops note that they have been expecting new initiatives for reunion from the Eastern Patriarchs, especially from the Patriarch of Constantinople („*spectando semper Superiores nostros, et expectando*”). This hope, however, was fading all the time because of the Turkish captivity. The Ruthenians themselves try then to achieve what the Greeks could not, even if they wanted to („*servitute paganorum opressi, etiamsi fortasse vellent, non possunt*”) <sup>7</sup> To justify their own initiative of reunion, the bishops stress therefore their soteriological preoccupations: without reunion of the Churches people have serious obstacles on the way towards salvation; the salvation of many is endangered by discord in matters of religion <sup>8</sup>

This important synodal document reveals unambiguously the real intentions and hopes of the initiators of the Union of Brest. They wanted not only to preserve their own Eastern heritage and identity, but also to remain in communion with all the Orthodox local Churches, while at the same time being united with the Roman See. The Kievan metropolitan Church wished to live in communion both with the East and the West. The possibility of breaking

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Documenta Unionis Berestensis eiusque auctorum (1590–1600)*, ed. A. G. Welykij, Romae 1970, No. 17, pp. 32-35, here p. 33 (further quoted: DUB).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

the bond of unity with the other Eastern Churches was not even taken into consideration. It soon became clear, however, that the union with the Latins inevitably led to severing relationship with the rest of the Orthodox Churches.

Some other documents deserve a careful analysis as well. Very significant in this respect is the declaration of four Ruthenian bishops of August 27, 1595<sup>9</sup> It was signed by Cyril Terlecki of Lutsk, Michael Kopystynski of Przemyśl, Gedeon Balaban of Lvov and Dionisius Zbirujski of Chelm. Kopystynski and Balaban were soon to change their minds and go over to the opposition. In their common declaration they still shared the same soteriological concern. The unity of the Church of God appeared then to all those bishops „useful to our salvation (*poleznuju do spasenija našego*)”, because Christ himself wanted it for His Church<sup>10</sup> Nothing was said which could denote a soteriological and ecclesiological degradation of their own Church.

In the expectations of the Ruthenian bishops the new union was about to bring better fruit than the Union of Florence itself: Isidore was alone, they are many, enlightened by God's grace for the salvation of their people. According to the report of nuncio G. Malaspina, they said this during their decisive meeting with the Latin hierarchy and nobility in Cracow on September 22, 1595, shortly before leaving for Rome<sup>11</sup> There is another very interesting statement in this report. If accurate, it would indicate that the Ruthenian bishops had already been strongly influenced by Roman soteriological and ecclesiological exclusivism.

Dissero [...] che erano costituiti in tal termine, che o dovevano ritornare allo stato della dannatione, riconoscendo il Patriarca di Constantinopoli (il che essi non volevano fare in eterno, ma piu tosto eleggevano di morire), ovvero doveano unirsi con la chiesa latina. Che senza capo non potevano stare, ne altro legittimo conoscevano, se non il Romano Pontefice. Che non ambizione, non altro rispetto humano li haveva indotti alla Unione, ma si ben la gratia et lume celeste, quale li haveva levati dalle tenebre<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> DUB, No. 79, pp. 126-127.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>11</sup> DUB, No. 95, p. 152.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Malaspina's account seems very clear on this point: without reunion with Rome, by recognizing only the Patriarch of Constantinople, Ruthenians would have to „return to the state of damnation” They are supposed to have said this themselves, describing their previous state as that of „darkness”<sup>13</sup>

## II. THE DENIAL OF ECCLESIOLOGY OF SISTER CHURCHES IN THE CONSTITUTION *MAGNUS DOMINUS* (1595) AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

The change in motivating ecclesiology the union with Rome by Ruthenian bishops would be incomprehensible without taking into account the tragic axiom of those times: *extra Ecclesiam Romanam nulla salus* – outside the Roman Church there is no salvation<sup>14</sup> When a delegation of bishops came to Rome in November 1595, they brought 32 articles composed synodically as quasi-conditions of the Union. They wanted some guarantees on the part of Rome, so that even those Ruthenians who still hesitated or were hostile to the Union might have safeguards for everything that was truly their heritage. Pope Clement VIII had the Ruthenian condition scrutinized by a special commission of cardinals and theologians. The most serious reservations came from a Dominican theologian Juan Saragoza di Heredia: as membership of the Roman Church is necessary for salvation, it cannot be subject to any preconditions! The Ruthenian bishops had to yield to that uncompromising attitude.

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<sup>13</sup> A year earlier, in his letter of November 12. 1594 card. I. Aldobrandini expressed quite clearly his theological opinion while speaking about those Ruthenian bishops who had been ready to acknowledge the primacy of the Roman See. „[...] Se li vescovi di Russia [...] si mostreranno saldi nel proposito di riconoscere l'autorità et il primato di questa Santa Sede, sara cosa non solo per se stessa utilissima et salutare ad infinite anime che vanno miseramente dannate, ma sara argomento che la divina Providentia, toccando cosi li cuori degli uomini, voglia lasciar placare l'ira sua, per esserci poi nelle cominciate imprese più propitia” (DUB, No. 15, p. 32). Here again we can see „infinite souls going miserably to be condemned”, because they live outside the true Church. Those who are ready to acknowledge the authority and the primacy of the Pope can consequently be seen as a sign of divine Providence touching human hearts to appease the the wrath of God.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. H r y n i e w i c z, *Soteriological Exclusivism at the Basis of Uniatism*, [in:] K. Ch. F e l m y [et alii] (eds.), *Kirchen im Kontext unterschiedlicher Kulturen. Auf dem Weg ins dritte Jahrtausend*, Göttingen 1991, pp. 521-533, especially pp. 521-524.

On arrival in Rome, the Kievan delegation had to face a concept of union much different from what they had been expecting and aiming at during their early synodal deliberations. Their sacramental vision of the Church was now challenged by a predominantly institutional ecclesiology developed by Latin theologians after the Council of Trent. From the Roman perspective it was not enough to restore the sacramental communion with the Kievan Church. The Ruthenians had to be incorporated, as individual Christians, into the institution of the Roman Church under the leadership of the pope. The Union was reduced to an ecclesiastical legal act of submission, considered then essential to the very existence of the Church. The Eastern Christians were supposed to have lived, before reunion with Rome, outside the true Church of God.

Let us look at the very text of the constitution *Magnus Dominus* (1595) which solemnly proclaimed the union. It says that Ruthenian bishops came to the conclusion that they themselves and the flock entrusted to their responsibility „had not been members of Christ’s body which is the Church, because they lacked any link with the visible head of his Church, the supreme Roman Pontiff (*non esse membra corporis Christi, quod est Ecclesia, qui visibili ipsius Ecclesiae capiti Summo Romano Pontifici non cohaerent*)”; that „they were not inside the sheep-fold of Christ, inside the Ark of Salvation, and in the house built on a rock (*intra Ovile Christi, intra Arcam salutis et intra Domum illam non essent, quae est aedificata supra petram*)”<sup>15</sup> Therefore „they firmly decided to return to the Roman Church, their Mother and the Mother of all faithful, to come back to the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth, the common Father and Shepherd of the whole Christian people (*firmiter decreverunt redire ad suam et omnium fidelium Matrem Romanam Ecclesiam, reverti ad Romanum Pontificem Christi in terris Vicarium, et totius populi christiani communem Patrem et Pastorem*)”<sup>16</sup>

The Constitution notes that this return takes place after more than 150 years which had elapsed since the Union of Florence, and thus should be understood as accepting the union again. The category of *return* plays a decisive role in this ecclesiological thinking. The Roman Church is called „the Head, the Mother and the Teacher of all Churches (*Caput, Mater et*

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<sup>15</sup> DUB, No. 145. pp. 217-226, here p. 218.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

*Magistra omnium Ecclesiarum*)”<sup>17</sup> In their confession of faith, the Ruthenian bishops pledged to preserve the „true Catholic faith, outside which nobody can be saved (*extra quam nemo salvus esse potest*)” in all its integrity and purity<sup>18</sup>.

The constitution displays soteriological and ecclesiological exclusivism inspired by a rigidly confessionalist interpretation of the old axiom: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Such exclusivism, as I tried to show elsewhere<sup>19</sup>, had permeated Latin theological thinking since the Middle Ages. No wonder that the Ruthenian bishops, the clergy and the faithful were canonically received into communion with the Roman Church not as a metropolitan Sister Church, but simply as individuals, coming to the Church from the outside and asking individually for reunion. No mention was even made of the synodal decision of the Ruthenian bishops in this matter. There was, on the part of Rome, no recognition of the Kievan Sister Church.

This is a clear case of collision of two different ecclesiologies. Sacramental understanding of the Church had to yield to a powerful institutional ecclesiology centred around the primacy of the pope. Ruthenian bishops, inspired by a sacramental vision of the Church, came to Rome to ask the pope for admission of their autonomous metropolitan Church to communion with the Roman See. Instead they had to comply with the Roman model of union, shaped in the spirit of soteriological and ecclesiological exclusivism.

Some time later the promoters of the union had to justify theologically its necessity. They did it in accordance with the constitution *Magnus Dominus*. For metropolitan Hipatius (Pociej, Potij) the Roman Catholic Church is „the Ark of Noah” and everybody who does not belong to it must burn in hell<sup>20</sup>. The very term „the Ark of Noah” is only the echo of „the Ark of Salvation” in the constitution. The most dramatic expression of the same conviction appears in the spiritual testament (1637) of metropolitan Joseph Velamin Rutki: „So I testify before the whole world that I believe all that the Holy Catholic Church proposes to believe in, and that without this faith, especially without communion of the Holy Roman Church nobody can be saved (*sine hac fide et speciatim*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>18</sup> *Professio fidei catholicae Hypatii Potij*, [in:] DUB, No. 14, p. 215.

<sup>19</sup> See above note 14.

<sup>20</sup> H. P o c i e j, *Kazania y homilie*, Supraśl 1714, p. 190.



*sine communione S. Ecclesiae Romanae nemo salvus esse potest*)”<sup>21</sup> His last words before his death were: „There is no salvation outside the Roman Church”<sup>22</sup>.

### III. WHAT TO DO WITH THE PAINFUL PAST?

After the Council of Trent, everything outside the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be missionary territory. The Orthodox were treated as schismatics to be converted to the only true Church of Christ. While the Florentine decision still contained some germs of an authentic reconciliation of the Churches, the anti-Protestant defense hardened Catholic ecclesiology. Uniatism was a result of not respecting the principles of the Council of Florence in the post-Tridentine Roman Church<sup>23</sup> As a historical error it consisted in imposing on the Orthodox Churches which sought union with Rome the profession of faith and the institutional Roman structures, developed after the Council of Trent. No wonder the Orthodox have understood uniatism above all as an instrument of proselytism and latinization.

Uniatism was a consequence of abandoning a common ecclesiology of Sister Churches. It came into being as a result of an ecclesiology of exclusivism, annexation and conversion. The Churches became alien to each other, often hostile. Each one of them began to consider itself to be the only true Church of Christ, and to degrade ecclesiologically the other side. Hence the denial of ecclesiality of the other Church, the practice of rebaptism, and doubts about the possibility of salvation and validity of the sacraments administered in the „other” Church.

The whole ethos of the Balamand Statement is directed against a mentality of „converting” faithful of one Church to the „other” Church. Neither Church should claim an exclusive monopoly on the possibility of salvation, which always remains God’s sovereign gift. „What Christ entrusted to his Church

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<sup>21</sup> *Testamentum spirituale* (Jan. 28, 1637), [in:] *Monumenta Ucrainae Historica*, vol. XI, Romae 1974, No 167, pp. 190-192, here p. 190.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. J o b e r t, *De Luter à Mohila. La Pologne dans la crise de la chrétienté 1517-1648*, Paris 1974, p. 367.

<sup>23</sup> See A. de H a l l e u x, *Le concile de Florence: union ou uniatisme?*, „Proche Orient Chrétien”, 41(1991), pp. 201-219.

[...] cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our Churches” (par. 13).

To admit this principle means, in fact, to direct the dialogue towards a higher level of ecumenical wisdom. Every form of soteriological exclusivism should be abandoned; in the past it was at the basis of uniatism and gave rise to a centuries-long illusion of the need to convert the Orthodox to Catholicism. This applies in a particular way to Russia<sup>24</sup> Partial unions of the past have become „a source of conflicts and of suffering” (par. 8) for both sides. That is why „uniatism can no longer be accepted either as a method to be followed nor as a model for the unity our Churches are seeking” (par. 12). Referring to the Pan-Orthodox Conferences and to the Second Vatican Council, the Balamand document states unambiguously that Catholics and Orthodox „discover each other once again as Sister Churches” (par. 12) and „recognize each other as Sister Churches” (par. 14).

The ecclesiology of Sister Churches obliges us today to admit the lack of evangelical brotherhood and mercy in our mutual relations. The burden of historic faults and sad experiences of the past continues to live in our memory. The deep roots of distrust still make the progress of reconciliation a very difficult ecumenical task.

What we need is a prospective ecumenism that does not allow us to remain the prisoners of the past. The lessons of the past should not be forgotten, but all negative memories require healing. Only a healed and purified memory will allow us to open up a new future and give us hope for better days. The question of forgiveness, the „will of pardon”, as the Balamand Statement puts it (par. 20) are of the utmost importance in this context. An essential part of the process of reconciliation would be the acknowledgement of what other Christians have experienced at the hand of our church community. A compassionate appropriation of each other’s memories thus becomes indispensable.

The history of uniatism did not begin in our century. The Catholic side has to admit faults and injustices done during the long process of consolidating the union, when „outside elements” and „extra-ecclesial interests” (par. 8) played their role. The question of guilt and responsibility is complex and

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<sup>24</sup> See W H r y n i e w i c z, *Czy Rosję należy nawracać? Ekumeniczna lekcja przeszłości a dialog z prawosławiem (Should Russia Be Converted? Ecumenical Lessons from the Past and the Dialogue with the Orthodoxy)*, „Zeszyty Naukowe KUL”, 37(1994), No. 1-2, pp. 3-20.

dramatic. It is the duty of historians and theologians to investigate the past together, as objectively as possible, and to show the degree of responsibility of both sides for their mutual estrangement. We all need God's mercy and forgiveness. For this reason alone one should show more understanding and compassion for the history of our Churches, that have so often been marked by the suffering of many people. Mutual forgiveness could no doubt be fostered by joint respect for the martyrs and confessors of the recent period of persecutions. „Their sufferings call us to unity” – says the Balamand Statement (par. 33).

Shortly after the changes in Eastern and Central Europe occurred, a voice of reconciliation was heard among the Orthodox in Poland, asking the Greek-Catholics to forgive. Michael Klinger, son of the late Polish Orthodox theologian Jerzy Klinger (†1976), addressed a message of sympathy and confession of sins to the Greek-Catholics under the significant title *Brothers, forgive!*:

We must confess openly: we are all guilty about the Uniates. The time has come for all of us – Orthodox, Latin Catholics, and Uniates themselves – that having mutually confessed our faults we should start to nurture, with special attention, truly Christian forms of coexistence... I see our Orthodox share of guilt in the Ukrainian drama in the fact, that denying the very idea of *unia*, we have denied at the end the Uniates themselves<sup>25</sup>

These are very courageous words. At the time they were written, their prophetic far-sightedness was not perceived. History itself has offered to all of us a chance to end the whole period of hostility which undermined the sense of mutual belonging to the same Church of Christ. The moral authorities of our communities have to do everything positive so that we may emerge with dignity from this difficult time of trial.

The Balamand Statement does not simply display a kind of retrospective ecumenism when it says: „Whatever the past may have been, it must be left to the mercy of God, and all the energies of the Churches should be directed so that the present and the future conform better to the will of Christ...” (par. 23). This is, no doubt, a prospective ecumenism in which the process of reconciliation and forgiveness has a very important role to play. Without

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<sup>25</sup> M. Klinger, *Bracia wybaczcie!*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, January 17, 1990, No. 13, p. 6.

a real will to pardon and be reconciled, all efforts aimed at overcoming the present crisis are doomed to failure.

#### IV NO RIGHT TO LIVE IN ISOLATION

At the beginning, with the Balamand Statement, I was advocating an honest and comprehensive presentation of historical and theological background of the Union of Brest. Uniatism has become today a painful and difficult ecumenical problem. An unbiased and thorough examination shows that regardless of real intentions of the initiators of the „union”, it came to being within a vision of the Church which should belong to the past. Historical uniatism cannot serve the ecumenical reconciliation of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, but Greek-Catholics can and should work for this purpose.

The Balamand document states unambiguously that „the Eastern Churches have the right to exist and to act in response to the spiritual needs of their faithful” (par. 3). One cannot demand an immediate abolition of their separate existence. On the other hand, the Greek-Catholics have to discover in the near future their clear ecumenical image. Serge Keleher has rightly stressed that duty:

The Eastern Catholic Churches do *not* have the right to exist in isolation. For an Eastern Catholic Church to be true to herself, and to her vocation from God, she must be responsive both to Catholicism and to Orthodoxy, always anxious to act in such ways as are conducive to the full reconciliation between them which will render Eastern Catholicism as a separate option redundant<sup>26</sup>

It would indeed be inconceivable to maintain distinct Greek-Catholic Churches after the restoration of full communion between the two Sister Churches, the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. One can anticipate that restoration and prepare the future already today.

Most advanced in this effort is the Greek-Catholic (Melkite) Church of Antioch, which openly seeks her own disappearance as a separate religious community. In the 1970s, the Greek-Catholic archbishop of Baalbeck, Elias

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<sup>26</sup> S. Keleher, *Balamand and the Greek-Catholic Church of Antioch*, „Eastern Churches Journal”, 3(1996), No. 1, p. 24.

(Zoghby) was advocating the possibility of a „double communion”<sup>27</sup> The reaction of Rome was at the time quite negative. But the courageous Archbishop has not given up. As emeritus he published recently a short profession of faith with commentary (1995)<sup>28</sup> This profession has been acknowledged as sufficient to re-establish unity between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Church. The agreement was expressed by the Antiochian Orthodox metropolitan George (Khodr) and the Greek-Catholic archbishop Cyril (Salim Bustros). The profession of faith has also been signed, with two exceptions, by all the hierarchs of the Greek-Catholic Synod of Antioch, and then presented to the two Patriarchs, both Antiochian Orthodox and Greek-Catholic<sup>29</sup> A special joint commission set up in 1995 worked on this project. The Greek-Catholic Synod held on July 22-27, 1996 in Rabweh under the presidency of Patriarch Maximos V (Hakim) took the decision to restore the unity of the Patriarchate of Antioch. The Synods of the two Churches have still to determine practical ways of this process which includes also the dialogue with Rome<sup>30</sup>

An extraordinary assembly of sixteen Orthodox bishops of the Patriarchate of Antioch in Damascus (October 8-10, 1996), gathered under the leadership of Patriarch Ignatius IV, stressed the need for the further dialogue on ecclesiological issues. The Orthodox bishops do not want to arouse new animosities. Common participation in sacraments presupposes, according to them, a complete doctrinal identity. This applies above all to the main dividing issue of the papal primacy. One has to remove all ambiguities in its understanding. The notion of a double communion suggested by Greek-Catholic bishops is considered insufficient to solve the problem as long as the full agreement between Rome and Orthodoxy has not been reached. The first step would rather be to reduce the significance of the councils held in the West after the schism and cease to consider them as ecumenical. The

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<sup>27</sup> *Tous schismatiques?*, [Beirut] 1981.

<sup>28</sup> *Orthodoxe uni? Oui! Uniate? Non!*, [Beirut] 1995 (a 32-pages brochure). English translation: *Orthodox in Union? Yes! Uniate? No!*, „Eastern Churches Journal”, 2(1995), No. 2, pp. 16-28.

<sup>29</sup> *Initiative of Archbishop Elias (Zoghby)*, *ibid.*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>30</sup> *Les évêques melkites grecs-catholiques se prononcent pour le rétablissement de l'unité du patriarcat d'Antioche*, „Service Orthodoxe de Presse – SOP”, septembre-octobre 1996, No. 211, pp. 12-13. The Synod of thirty-four bishops and four general superiors issued a document titled *Reunification of the Antiochian Patriarchate*. See „Eastern Churches Journal”, 3(1996), No. 2, pp. 7-12.

initial optimism on both sides seems now to yield to a more cautious approach. The primate of the Greek-Catholic Melkite Church, patriarch Maximos V, took part in the last day of the deliberations of Orthodox bishops. He also admitted that everything should evolve „in calm and serenity”<sup>31</sup>

The project to restore the unity of the Patriarchate of Antioch was conditionally approved by the Vatican in the joint letter sent on June 11, 1997 by three Cardinals of the Roman Curia (J. Ratzinger, A. Silvestrini, E. Cassidy). It agrees with the move towards unity, but recommends „patience and carefulness” to avoid precipitating theological problems, especially to avoid any simplification which might ignore different points of view on critical issues. The Vatican letter states in conclusion: „The dialogue of fraternity undertaken by the Melchite Greek Catholic Patriarchate will be all the more useful to ecumenical progress if it strives to implicate, in the maturation of new sensibilities, the whole Catholic Church to which it belongs”<sup>32</sup>

The Greek-Catholics of Antioch seek effectively reconciliation with Eastern Orthodoxy, ready to disappear themselves as a distinct Church. They want to do it in continuity of communion with the See of Rome. This communion is understood however within the frame recognized by the Fathers of the East during the first millennium. This way the concept of a double loyalty remains, in spite of all difficulties, theologically both legitimate and fruitful. The Antiochian initiative should be for all the Greek-Catholics a great encouragement to undertake their own ecumenical involvement with similar openness and lucidity.

It has to be noted, however, that those responsible for the legacy of the Union of Brest will have a much more difficult task to accomplish in the context of internal divisions within Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine has formally accepted the Balamand document and tries to implement its practical recommendations. The ongoing divisions of the Orthodox and their indecisiveness to follow the Balamand Statement hinder considerably all ecumenical efforts in that country. If the Orthodox manifest

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<sup>31</sup> Bishop N i c h o l a s (Samra), *The Melkite Initiative: A Profession of Faith to Heal Divisions*. „Eastern Churches Journal”, 4(1997), No. 1, pp. 24-28. See also *Damas: Assemblée de l'épiscopat du patriarcat d'Antioche*, „SOP”, novembre 1996, No. 212, pp. 1-2; *Beyrouth: Après la proposition melkite de réunifier le patriarcat d'Antioche*, *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>32</sup> *Vatican Approves Antiochene Unity*, „The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) News Report” 10(1997), No. 7-9, p. 40.

more understanding and openness, this would no doubt encourage the Greek-Catholics to trust them and to shape together a better future. But for this purpose all violence and rivalry has to be stopped on both sides.

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The varying reception of the Balamand Statement – from condemnation to recognition – tells us once more how difficult it is to overcome mistrust, fears and negative memories of the past. Reception requires an experience of a true encounter, a new thinking and a new mentality on both sides.

A special duty of today's theologians is to ask what their own Church can and should do, to renounce all that diminishes her credibility, ecumenical honesty and the possibility of reconciliation. Our Churches do not seem to be ready to change, quickly and painlessly, the established style in mutual relationships. The most difficult task is to convert the Churches to one another in compassion and forgiveness. A real breakthrough is needed – a kenotic act of renouncing everything which does not serve the work of reconciliation and mutual recognition as Sister Churches.

## UNIA BRZESKA A EKLEZJOLOGIA KOŚCIOŁÓW SIOSTRZANYCH

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Unia Brzeska (1596), jej historyczne oraz eklezjologiczne konsekwencje są ciągle przedmiotem analiz i sporów badaczy i teologów. Autor niniejszego artykułu analizuje kontrowersyjne zagadnienie Unii Brzeskiej w świetle eklezjologii Kościołów siostrzanych.

W części I przedstawia początkowe oczekiwania i nadzieje Rusinów, będących inicjatorami oraz zwolennikami unii. Opierały się one na przesłankach soteriologicznych: brak zjednoczenia Kościołów stoi na przeszkodzie do zbawienia wiernych. Rusini pragnęli z jednej strony zachować własną tożsamość i dziedzictwo, pozostając we wspólnocie ze wszystkimi lokalnymi Kościołami prawosławnymi, a z drugiej strony dążyli do zjednoczenia ze Stolicą Rzymską.

Część II artykułu przedstawia zderzenie dwóch eklezjologii – zachodniej i wschodniej. Pierwsza z nich, instytucjonalna, ześrodkowana wokół prymatu papieża, uprawiana była przez teologów łacińskich po Soborze Trydenckim. Druga, typowa dla chrześcijaństwa wschodniego, za punkt wyjścia miała sakramentalną wizję Kościoła. Zwyciężyła eklezjologia instytucjonalna, wskutek czego Unię Brzeską zredukowano do eklezjalno-prawnego aktu podporządkowania, w wyniku którego Rusini mieli być wcieleni w instytucję Kościoła rzymskiego. Wydana

w owym czasie konstytucja *Magnus Dominus* (1595) objawia soteriologiczny i eklezjologiczny ekskluzywizm, wynikający z konfesyjnej interpretacji poglądu, że *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

Problem „bolesnej przeszłości” jest przedmiotem analiz zawartych w III części artykułu. W Hryniewicz stawia tezę, iż uniatyzm stanowi konsekwencję odrzucenia wspólnej eklezjologii Kościołów siostrzanych. „Ekskluzywizm” i „nawrócenie” to kategorie myślenia charakterystyczne dla katolickiej eklezjologii potrydenckiej. Przyczyniła się ona do traktowania prawosławnych jako schizmatyków, których trzeba doprowadzić do jedynej prawdziwego Kościoła Chrystusa. Nie dziwi zatem, iż prawosławni rozumieli uniatyzm jako instrument prozelityzmu i latynizacji. W Dokumencie z Balamand, będącym owocem dialogu katolicko-prawosławnego, stwierdza się, że żaden Kościół nie ma wyłącznego monopolu na zbawienie, które pozostaje suwerennym darem Boga. Chrześcijanie nie mogą pozostawać więźniami przeszłości. Rozwijana współcześnie eklezjologia Kościołów siostrzanych zobowiązuje nas do uznania braku ewangelicznego braterstwa we wzajemnych relacjach. Przebaczenie i pojednanie są konieczne, aby przezwyciężyć obecny kryzys ekumeniczny.

W części IV Autor zauważa, iż po przywróceniu pełnej komunii pomiędzy Kościołami siostrzanymi: rzymskokatolickim i prawosławnym, pod znakiem zapytania staje dalsze istnienie Kościołów grekokatolickich (unickich). Podaje przykład wysiłków Kościoła melchickiego Antiochii (grekokatolickiego), który otwarcie dąży do tego, by przestać być osobną wspólnotą religijną. Kościół melchicki stara się dążyć do przywrócenia jedności na bazie osiągnięcia podwójnej komunii: z Rzymem i prawosławnym Patriarchatem Antiochii. Inicjatywa Antiocheńczyków, zdaniem W. Hryniewicza, powinna skłaniać wszystkich grekokatolików do podejmowania zaangażowania ekumenicznego w podobnym duchu.

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