



### **The Unity of Heart that is of Love, May it take Root in Us**

A dangerous and strange teaching has begun to circulate in the Orthodox Church. It can be summarized as follows:

- The claim that there is a difference between unity of doctrine (dogma) and unity of love.
- That achieving unity of doctrine (dogma) will take a long period of time and may potentially never be reached; thus, we should practice unity of love as we pray in the Divine Liturgy “Unity of the heart that is of Love, may it take root in us”.
- That the Holy Bible calls for unity of love for ‘diversity’ (1 Corinthians 12) and unity of submission.
- That the unity of ‘diversity’ is in fact unity of ‘diverse doctrine’.
- That unity cannot occur if we desire to diminish doctrinal discrepancies first; however, let us practice *love* which will in turn diminish these doctrinal discrepancies and barriers.
- That we can practice unity, while the Orthodox are Orthodox, the Protestant are Protestant, and the Catholic are Catholic.
- That anyone, irrespective of his/her denomination, may unite with God and in God we shall all be united.
- That the three denominations “Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant” are an icon of the Holy Trinity, and as the Holy Trinity is one in essence, so are the three denominations one in essence – “A true form of unity, not an apparent one for the sake of photographs and television” and that we cannot present our faith in the Holy Trinity nor can we understand it unless we believe that the three denominations are truly united through the unity of love.
- That those who believe in the unity of ‘diversity’ are from God and those who do not believe in the unity of ‘diverse doctrine’ are fanatics, blind and are not from God but from the *devil*.

This summarizes the new erroneous teaching.

Is this not in fact typical *non-denominationalism*? The danger of this teaching is that it offers candy coated poison. Extensive discourse about ‘unity’ and ‘abandoning the blind spirit of ‘fanaticism’ is as sweet as honey, but the talk of abandoning sound doctrine is the poison that is easily implanted within.

As our teacher St. Paul instructed us saying:

*“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ”*  
(Galatians 1:6-10).

And furthermore he instructs us:

*“Now I urge you, brethren, **note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.** For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple”*  
(Romans 16:17-18).

Is our teacher St. Paul misinformed for not learning about the unity of love or the unity of ‘diversity’? Let us contemplate upon the teachings of St. Paul the apostle, and affirm the following truths:

- This teaching about the ‘unity of diversity’ will not establish unity but on the contrary, will establish schisms and offenses.
- These individuals do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ.
- They are misleading and deceptive.
- We must expose them.

In order to respond to these novel heresies which have crept into the Church, let us ask the following questions:

### **First, is it possible to pursue spiritual life without religious doctrine?**

This new heresy claims that every individual from any denomination may unite with God and that we all shall unite together in Him. Is it possible to unite with God and have a spiritual life while with deviant doctrine, not knowing the “truth shall make you [me] free” (John 8:32)? And here we shall say that sound doctrine ensures the soundness of one’s spiritual life, and if one’s doctrine is erroneous, so shall his spiritual life be.

St. Paul teaches us:

*“According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward” (1 Corinthians 3:10-14).*

Thus, Christianity is based on this foundation which is the one faith in Christ “which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us Love equates to keeping His commandments:

*“If you love Me, keep My commandments...He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'...If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love...You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 14:15,21,23; John 15:10,14).*

Since the *commandments* encompass sound doctrine, no true Love towards God or neighbor can be found through erroneous doctrine.

St. John teaches us:

*“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it” (1 John 2:5; 2 John 1:6).*

We can even say that it is *impossible* to pursue an upright spiritual life in the absence of a foundation of upright faith and sound doctrine. It is impossible to have ‘the unity of heart that is of love’ without fulfilling the commandments of God which encompass those of faith and doctrine.

## **Second, what is the meaning of ‘The Unity of Heart that is of Love, may it take root in us’?**

Our Lord commanded us to Love all people, including our enemies – to love Christians and non-Christians, atheists, Jehovah’s witnesses, Mormons, Jews, and Buddhists. We ought to love all without distinction. Does this entail ‘true and genuine unity’ with all of them? So then, why is the concept of ‘unity of Love’ applied to the three Christian denominations exclusively? Do we not love all people?

Some may say that these three denominations are united by the core Christian principles such as the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of Crucifixion and Resurrection, but might I inquire – what about the remaining doctrines such as the mysteries of the Church, and the role of works and spiritual struggle in salvation, etc. – are they necessary or can they be simply overlooked? Are the Eucharist (John 6), Baptism (John 3, Romans 6) and spiritual struggle (James 2) necessary for one’s salvation, or not?

We pray in the Divine Liturgy according to St. Basil, “*Make us Worthy O Our Master to partake of Your Holies for the purification of our souls, bodies and spirits. That we may become one Body and one Spirit and have a share and inheritance with all your Saints*”.

Thus, unity is fulfilled through our communal partaking in the One Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread ” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

How then can we speak of true and authentic unity with those who do not believe in the Mystery of the Eucharist?

Furthermore, what is love? If I see my brother whom I truly love with a life-threatening illness, is it out of love that I would leave him as he is, or to pursue a cure for his healing? If I see my brother walking in a deviant path which will prevent him from achieving his purpose of Salvation and Eternity, is it out of love to leave him walking in this path of deviation, or shall I much rather work towards leading him to the true path? The Holy Bible has strictly warned us that “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*” (Proverbs 16:25). So is it *love* to see my brother walking in this path which appears to him to be upright, and accept him as he is without advising him or guiding him in the path of Life?

Oh Love, many have spoken in your name to deceive the simple-minded, causing them to perish.

Thus we can say, that whenever we speak of love, we mean *true* and *authentic* love, whether it be towards Christians or not Christians “*For God so loved the world...*” (John 3:16). And because we love them in truth and authentically, we must lead them in the path of upright faith and sound doctrine. But when we speak of *true* and *authentic* unity, we speak of unity of Faith, doctrine and Love inseparably.

## **Third, what is the unity of diversity spoken of by St. Paul the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12?**

In 1 Corinthians 12, our teacher St. Paul does not speak of diversity in *doctrine*, but he speaks of diversity in *talents, services and works*. In the first verse of the chapter he says “*Now concerning spiritual gifts...*” (1 Corinthians 12:1), and goes on to affirm “*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all*” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). However, when St. Paul speaks of **doctrine** in the same chapter, he says:

“*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Also, in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, where he also speaks about gifts in the eleventh verse, he affirms the importance of having *one* faith by saying:

*“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:3-6).*

Later in the chapter he teaches us that God has given these gifts:

*“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, **till we all come to the unity of the faith** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” (Ephesians 4:12-13).*

In other words, the many and diverse gifts were given to the Church in order for us to attain the *one* faith – so how can we claim true and authentic unity if there is no unity of faith between us?

It is considerably deceptive to say that St. Paul the apostle speaks of unity of diversity in *doctrine*, and to liken the various doctrines to the strings of a single harp, confusing between diversity of *gifts* and differing doctrines.

As for the distinction in the Holy Trinity, it is a distinction of hypostatic traits – the Father is the begetter of the Son and from the Father proceeds the Holy Spirit, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. There is also a diversity of roles; for instance, the *“times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority”* (Acts 1:7) whereas Judgement has been given to the Son *“...for the Father judges no one”* (John 5:22). For this reason, it is particularly erroneous to liken the three denominations to the Holy Trinity between whom there are core dogmatic differences, saying that “the Trinity is one in essence and so are the three denominations”.

#### **Fourth, how can we become a new creation in Jesus Christ?**

One Father was asked “Will Protestants enter heaven?” so he responded without hesitation saying “Protestants will not enter heaven”. Then after a brief silence he said “Neither will Catholics”. Finally, after another period of silence, he said “Neither will the Orthodox enter heaven, but those who have become a new creation in Christ Jesus – those shall inherit heaven”. This response was then interpreted to mean that any individual who is newly created, irrespective of his denomination, will enter Heaven.

Now we will inquire, how can we become a new creation in Jesus Christ?

Our teacher St. Paul says *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). How can we be *in* Christ?

1) Faith in Him is necessary. *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him”* (John 3:36). Thus, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is an essential condition in order to become a **new creation** in him. And in this context, Faith means accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Redeemer, and entails sound doctrine, as is the meaning of *confidence* in God.

2) A life of repentance and purity is necessary, accompanied by confessing our sins for forgiveness: *“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?”* (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). How then

can we speak of unity with Christ and abiding in Him to become a **new creation** while we are sinners? In order to achieve this, the remission of sins is necessary by means of confession and repentance.

3) Baptism, through which we are purified from our sins and experience a new birth from the Holy Spirit, so we are made Holy and are united with our Lord Jesus Christ, becoming a **new creation**. *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:27). St. Paul also teaches us of the work of Baptism to purify our sins:

*“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”* (Ephesians 5:26-27).

Our teacher St. Paul has experienced for himself the powerful efficacy of Baptism and the cleansing of sins when he himself was baptized and Ananias said to him:

*“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

Our teacher St. Peter also affirms this in his saying regarding baptism:

*“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21).

4) Anointing with the Holy Spirit renews our beings, rendering him a **new creation** and a temple of God.

*“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”* (Titus 3:4-7).

And we receive this anointing by means of the Holy Oil (Myron) [1 John 2:20-27], the laying of hands [Acts 8:17], and the Holy Breath [John 20:22] in the mystery of Holy Chrismation.

5) Communion from the Holy Mysteries, as our Lord, to him be the Glory, taught us:

*“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.’”*  
(John 6:53-57).

Thus, we cannot abide in Christ without communion, and there is no **new creation** without this mystery.

6) Walking in the Spirit as a **new creation** in Jesus Christ is necessary.

*“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:3-4).

Also,

*“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”* (Romans 8:13-

He furthermore affirms the importance of walking in the Spirit, saying:

*“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”*  
(Galatians 5:16,24-25).

From all these things <sup>c.f.1-6</sup>, it becomes clear to us that sound doctrine, upright faith, pursuing the mysteries of the Church, walking in a spiritual path and in spiritual struggle are all *necessary* in order to being a new creation, heirs of the Kingdom. How can one who rejects all these things become a **new creation**?

### **Fifth, who are the sons of the devil?**

After all of this, we ask – who is the son of God, and who is the son of the devil? Our Lord Jesus Christ says:

*“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”* (John 8:44).

It is therefore he in whom the truth *does not* dwell and teaches lies and deception – such is the son of the devil.

Now, it is up to you to decide – either to walk in Truth, abiding in it, and testifying for it in order to be a new creation and a son of God, *or* to follow lies and believe deception, living as one who is tricked, becoming a son of the devil.

Our Holy God, we ask and entreat you to open the eyes of our hearts and to enlighten our minds, that we may know the Truth and be freed, as your Sons – a new creation, abiding in you forever. Amen.