

Dedicated to our new calendar friends

THE THREE STREAMS
Or
Jesuits Know What Side Their Audiences Are Buttered On

By Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

Some fifteen years ago, a student from the nearby new calendar seminary came by the monastery and told me about an interesting event that had taken place just a couple of days before.

It seems a Jesuit priest had been invited to speak there at the seminary to a large assembly of the local Greek-American community. As I recall, the subject of his talk was Saint Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas, and their contributions to the theology of the Orthodox Church and to Roman Catholicism, respectively.

During the course of his talk, the Jesuit priest made the following point (according to the student who reported this to me):

"When we in the West look at Byzantium in the East, we see a great civilization that had three major streams of tradition running through it.

"The first stream — actually a mighty torrent, a great river — was the tradition of the Church Fathers: Saint Basil the Great, Saint Athanasius the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint John of Damascus, and all the other eminent Fathers who articulated the Church's doctrines in the Ecumenical Councils of the early centuries.

"The second stream of tradition that we see — another mighty torrent — are the Monastic Fathers: Saint John of the Ladder, Saint Isaac of Syria, the Lausaic History, Saint Maximus the Confessor again, and all the Fathers whose works are found in the *Philokalia*.

"And then there is this tiny little stream — actually, sometimes just a minute little trickle that almost disappears, but manages somehow to survive from generation to generation all the way through Byzantium's more than one thousand year-long history. That is the wonderful classical tradition of the great philosophers of Ancient Greece: Plato, Aristotle and the others.

"Now, it seems to us here in the West, that the work of the re-unification of our Churches would be greatly expedited if the Greek Orthodox peoples of today could once again embrace and espouse their wonderful ancient heritage: the great philosophers of Ancient Greece."

At that point, the Greek-American audience broke into wild and enthusiastic applause.

The student who was relating this incident to me was thoroughly scandalized. He asked me, "For Heaven's sake, what does the re-embracing of our pagan heritage have to do with the re-union of the Churches?!"

"Everything!", I responded. "If you espouse the values of the ancient Greeks, you will soon be speaking the same language as the Western 'theologians'. After that, it will only be a matter of time before you are one with them in the way you think."

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. This is what the "Latin Captivity" is all about.

But we must admit: the Jesuit priest made a *very* astute observation: returning to our pagan roots will certainly expedite the "re-union of the Churches."