

Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference

# Ecumenism

Origins - Expectations - Disenchantment

## Conclusions

Ceremony Hall

**Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

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Organization:

**Department of Pastoral and Social Theology of the  
School of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

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**The Society of Orthodox Studies**

The Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference “Ecumenism: Origins - Expectations - Disenchantment” was convened on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004 in Thessaloniki, Greece and carried out its work until September 24<sup>th</sup> with great success. The conference was organized by the Department of Pastoral and Social Theology of the Theological School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Society of Orthodox Studies. Conference sessions were held in the Ceremony Hall of the University.

The conference commenced with a proclamation by His All-holiness Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki. In attendance were many Metropolitans and Bishops, as well as the mayor of Thessaloniki (Mr. Panagiotis Psomiadis), members of the Greek Parliament, and university professors, who offered greetings to the conference attendees.

Over the five days of the conference, 60 respected speakers, including Hierarchs from various Orthodox Churches, analyzed every aspect of Ecumenism before a packed audience of the abbots of holy monasteries, clergy, monks, and laity, among which were many theologians, professors from both Theological Schools, and students of the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki

Conference participants came to the following conclusions, based on the numerous presentations and accompanying discussions:

### A. Findings

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**Ecumenism: a Creation of Papism and Protestantism,  
which camouflages estrangement from the True Church**

Ecumenism began within the bosom of Protestantism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an effort to regain unity for a protestant world divided into innumerable groupings and off-shoots. Ecumenism has no relation whatsoever to the ecumenicity and

catholicity of the Church, which is fully preserved, both geographically and ecclesiological, in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, i.e. the Orthodox Church, which continues to believe that which has been believed “always, everywhere, and by all.” The existence of heresies negates neither the unity nor the ecumenicity nor the catholicity of the Church. The Church continues to be one and universal. Heresies and schisms such as the “catholic” and protestant “churches” of the West as well as the anti-Chalcedonian churches of the East are not the legitimate and authentic local churches of those lands; these churches recover unity and catholicity, they constitute true churches, when they are reincorporated into the faith and life of the Orthodox Catholic Church, which is not simply the true Church, but the only Church. Consequently, from its beginnings until today, the so-called “World Council of Churches”, as the vehicle of Protestant Ecumenism, is in a true ecclesiological sense a “World Council of heresies and schisms.”

Papalism departed from the unity and catholicity of the Church at the beginning of the second millennium with the schism of 1054 and the adoption of heresies such as the “filioque” and “papal primacy.” The then orthodox Church of Rome, which had shown forth many saints, martyrs and confessors, was drawn into heresy and delusion. Cut off from the one and true Church, the local Church of Rome, as a captive of scholasticism and the worldly aspirations of the popes, not only failed to keep western Christianity unified, but became the source of new heresies and schisms, such as the protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in its varied forms, Anglicanism and Old Catholicism. It falsified the theanthropic character of the Church, changing it into a human institution with total control over the faithful, and led to the de-Christianization and un-churching of Europe. The speakers and attendees of the conference accepted the most suitable definition of Ecumenism left to us by the venerable Elder Fr. Justin Popovich: “Ecumenism is the common name for pseudo-christianities and all pseudo-churches of Western Europe. Within it is found the heart all of the European humanisms, with Papism at its head. And all of these pseudo-christianities, all of these pseudo-churches are nothing but one heresy after another. Their common name, according to the Gospel, is panheresy.”<sup>1</sup>

The attempts at union between Rome and Constantinople over a period of five centuries, from the schism to the fall in 1453 of Constantinople to the Turks, along with their corresponding theological dialogues, failed because they were not accompanied by true repentance, a readiness to renounce delusion and return to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Dispensations and compromises in matters of faith for the accomplishment of unity were always refuted by the ever-vigilant and watchful conscience of the flock of the faithful. In spite of obvious worldly agendas and political manipulation, these attempts never ended in the dogmatic minimalism, syncretistic leveling and worldly talk of love, as have the ecumenical dialogues of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The apostolic and patristic principle that “there is no room for compromise in matters of faith” prevailed.

That which could not be accomplished for centuries by Papism, has been attempted, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Protestant Ecumenism; and Papist Ecumenism in its turn, has supported these efforts since the Second Vatican Council (1963-65). Both Papism and Protestantism are continuously losing their prestige and authority in America, Europe and throughout the world. Through ecumenism, they are attempting to cover themselves, to conceal their alienation and departure from the one, true Church of Christ,

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<sup>1</sup> Archimandrite Justin Popovich, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Thessaloniki, 1974, pg. 224.

to fortify the greatest ecclesiological heresy ever; namely, that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church does not exist, that it has ceased to be, that all of the christian confessions retain aspects of the Church, such that their faithful need not fret nor bother to seek out the true Church and their salvation.

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**The Reasons Advanced in Support of Orthodox Participation  
Do not Correspond to the Truth of Things, but are Proven False**

Regrettably, the Orthodox Church, on the ill-advised initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was involved from the outset in the pan-heresy of Ecumenism, with its grave *sotiriological* consequences. With the well-known encyclicals of 1902, 1920, and 1952, the Ecumenical Patriarchate entered into the ecumenistic *modus operandi*, and indeed, assumed a leading role within it. Its venerable apostolic and patristic stance against heresies and schisms was radically altered from 1902 onwards under pressure from worldwide political events. Indeed, from the time of Patriarch Athenagoras until today it has become the official position of the Church of Constantinople, into which other autocephalous churches have been drawn bit by bit, although the majority of them initially confronted the respective initiatives with hesitation and reservation until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the Conference, it became clear from the various presentations and discussions that the autocephalous churches were not motivated to participate in the Ecumenical Movement by spiritual concerns but rather from political, social and nationalistic interests. By its participation, each church independently sought either to insure the protection and support, or to avoid the wrath, of the all-powerful western Christian world, just as had happened at the union councils during the time of the crusades and shortly before the fall of Constantinople.

Because of the absence of theological and spiritual motivation, the genuine evangelical word and salvific truth has not been offered to the heterodox; of course, the supporters of Ecumenism will not admit this, although admittedly among them have been important theological figures with benevolent motivations and orthodox witness, especially in the early stages of Ecumenism. There are two basic theological and spiritual reasons which have been used both currently and in the past to justify Orthodox participation in bilateral and multilateral theological dialogues and in the so-called "World Council of Churches" : to show love toward the heterodox and to witness to the Orthodox faith. Love, however, cannot be separated from the truth. When the dialogue of love does not co-exist with the dialogue of truth and does not lead to an encounter with, and acceptance of, the saving truth which is Christ and His Church, it becomes a dangerous snare which leads to syncretistic indifference and a dissociation from the unity of faith and communion of the Holy Spirit; it disassociates one from salvation. There is nothing worse than the deprivation of salvation, and the only thing it *cannot* be said to be, is a work of love. Is it possible for love to be turned against truth? Heresy is untruth, deceit, demonization, hatred, a love of falsehood and a distortion of the truth of the Church. In the ecumenical dialogues, the word love has been "used" in abundance while the truth has been lost - the truth which was regarded as the object of inquiry, as not to be found in any one of the churches. The Orthodox Catholic Church is not in search of the truth. She has it. In love she must give it to the heterodox who are deprived of it or have distorted it. The truth is preferred to love, as Saint John Chrysostom teaches: "If you see piety (εὐσέβειαν) suffering anywhere, do not

prize concord (ὁμόνοιαν) above truth, but stand bravely even unto death...betray not the truth on any occasion.”<sup>2</sup> He, furthermore, emphatically counsels: “receive no spurious doctrine under the pretense of love.”<sup>3</sup> Ecumenism falls into dreadful sin, both because it denies the truth, for which many heterodox have struggled so hard to find, and because it attempts to close the door to all who seek the truth. In truth, the words of Christ to the Pharisees apply to the ecumenists as well: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”<sup>4</sup>

As far as the much sought-after “witness of the faith,” even if it constitutes a good hope and expectation, it has, in reality, been proven false. In any event, one cannot suppose that he will witness to, and preach the Orthodox Faith by beginning with a betrayal of the faith. The very act of participation in the “World Council of Churches” and the theological dialogues with the heretical Papists, Protestants and Monophysites, constitutes a denial of the uniqueness of the Church, an equalization which puts the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church in the same category with heresies and schisms. As has been said, it is the greatest ecclesiological heresy in the history of the Church. The ever-memorable Metropolitan of Samos, His Eminence Irenaios, expressing the position of many other hierarchs, asked the question: “How is it possible for Orthodox hierarchs to take part in an ecclesiastical organization in which the Holy Trinity is discarded, the participants believe that the Church of Christ has been shattered to pieces, that each heresy is part of the whole, and that the Orthodox Eastern Church is likewise but one of the fragments?”<sup>5</sup> Truly, there is not one among the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church, whose teaching, life and work could be used as an example that would justify our membership and further abiding in a *parasynagogue* (illicit assembly) of heretics, such as the “World Council of Churches”, and other such councils and gatherings.

As the root of ecumenism was, and is, evil, so too are the fruits: “for the tree is known by his fruit.”<sup>6</sup> Ecumenism has been in existence for nearly a century; it has clearly revealed its identity, and we can, with all sureness judge it. Indeed, even it’s most conscientious Orthodox champions and defenders are anxious about the course it is taking and the dead end to which it has been led; they are attempting to find various ways to prevent the departure of many Orthodox Churches – this exodus has already begun and which is set to intensify and spread. At the conference, quite a few speakers spoke of the devastating fruit of the theological dialogues and our participation in the “World Council of Churches.” Before we present in brief the outcome of the theological dialogues, it is important to mention the opinion expressed by conference speakers and attendees which is that from the birth and spread of the ecumenical movement with the presence of the Orthodox in the “World Council of Churches” for nearly sixty years, the ecumenists have not succeeded in converting even one heterodox to the Orthodox Faith. On the contrary, conversions have happened in spite of the predominant trend among ecumenists that all should remain in their confessions, in view of the expected union of the “churches.” Bishops in the Diaspora have refused to receive heterodox who wish to convert to the Orthodox Church. On what

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<sup>2</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *On the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, Homily 22, verse 18, PG 60, 611.

<sup>3</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *On the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians*, Homily 2, verse 10, PG 62, 191.

<sup>4</sup> Mathew 23:13.

<sup>5</sup> See P. Bratsiotos, *Irenaios of Samos and the World Council of Churches*, “Ekklesia” 40 (1963) 477.

<sup>6</sup> Mathew 12:33.

then, is based the much-touted witness to the Orthodox faith? On the contrary, instead of witnessing to the truth, we are co-witnesses to heresy and delusion. From this long term association with heretics, unique in our ecclesiastical history, there has occurred such an alienation from, and dulling of, the orthodox *phronema*, that clerics and theologians with ease sign texts which result from dialogues in which apostolic and patristic dogmas are trampled upon and violated, in which heresy is presented as truth, in which the heretics appear to be Orthodox, and their baptism and other mysteries recognized as authentic. Thus, step-by-step we are proceeding from joint prayer to communion in the mysteries (*intercommunio*).

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### **The Dialogue with the Roman Catholics is Disadvantageous and Detrimental**

To begin with Papism, it has been noted that the twenty year theological dialogue began by using an unprecedented methodology which worked from the issues that unite, rather than the issues that divide; this had the effect of putting the faithful of Rome at ease so that they would not seek the truth elsewhere. Since [it is asserted] there are no major differences and everyone belongs to the Church, papal clergy are able to justify meetings and joint prayers with the Orthodox in the mass media, and thereby promote the dishonorable and underhanded institution of the *Unia* among the Orthodox populace, who impoverished as they are and burdened by unfortunate political and social events, are taken advantage of in their very poverty and privation. Uniatism, despite being responsible for the breakdown of theological dialogue, continues to enjoy the support of the Vatican in a variety of ways. A significant number of papers in this conference focused on historical developments and the contemporary activity of Uniatism, with the conclusion that Rome has not abandoned its proselytizing and expansionist ambitions to the detriment of the Orthodox Church, which it hypocritically names and accepts as a “sister church.” At the same time that Rome discusses and dialogues, it greedily extends its hand upon Orthodox flocks and establishes bishoprics and jurisdictions for the purpose of proselytizing within Orthodox jurisdictions and makes no effort to hide its desire to acquire more rights over the All-holy Pilgrimage sites of the Holy Land. Furthermore, Rome would not accept the condemnation of Uniatism which was signed unanimously by a joint panel of Orthodox and Papist theologians, members of the “Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church” during the 6<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Plenary Session in Freising, Monaco (June 6-15, 1990); this is a clear demonstration of the degree to which it respects, and will heed the findings of any dialogue which infringes on its aspirations. In order to purge this condemnation entirely, Rome drew the Orthodox into new discussions on the matter at Balamand, Lebanon (June 17-24, 1993), in which the *Unia* was acquitted and legitimized with the signatures of representatives from nine autocephalous and autonomous churches (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Russia, Romania, Cyprus, Poland, Albania, Finland). Six churches rejected the methodology of this approach and did not participate (Jerusalem, Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, and Czechoslovakia).

However, the most important aspect of the Balamand agreement is not found in the vindication and legitimization of the *Unia*, but in the serious compromises in matters of faith by the Orthodox representatives. For the first time and in violation of not only centuries-old unchanging and hallowed patristic tradition, but also contemporary

“Statements” and “Declarations,” the Orthodox theologians denied that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and acknowledged that she constitutes the One Church together with the Roman Catholic Church with whom she is jointly responsible for the preservation of the Church in fidelity to divine economy. For this reason, then, Orthodox and Roman Catholic shepherds should mutually be recognized as true shepherds of the flock of Christ. The text, furthermore, contains mutual recognition of the mysteries, of apostolic succession and of the confession of apostolic faith. After the agreement at Balamand, where essentially a new type of *Unia* was signed, the visits of the pope to the “sister churches” of Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Greece become totally justified. Justified, likewise, is the acceptance of the so-called “Baptismal Theology” of the Second Vatican Council by many Orthodox theologians. According to this theory, baptism performed by heretics outside of the Church is valid *per se*. Moreover, baptism is that which defines the boundaries of the Church rather than the Church validating baptism. With baptism, all Christians, to whatever church they may belong, become members of the Church of Christ. It was for this reason that the ‘re-baptism’ of heterodox by the Orthodox was already forbidden in the text signed at Balamand. However, from the papers presented at the Conference, as well as from the discussions which followed, the view was substantiated that outside of the Church the salvific Grace of the Holy Spirit is not active, and thus the mysteries of the heterodox are invalid and non-existent. Judging with exactitude (“κατ’ ἀκρίβειαν”), those heterodox who come to the Orthodox Church must be baptized.

It was made plain, furthermore, that the “Liturgical Movement,” cultivated for years within the bosom of Papism and adopted by the Second Vatican Council (1963-65), has likewise influenced Orthodox clergy and theologians. Under the guise of “Liturgical Renewal” it aims at the union of the Orthodox under the pope according to the paradigm of the Uniates. After preparing the way psychologically for its acceptance, this movement has attempted progressively to impose a worship which is dogmatically “neutral” which is to say, without any reference to dogmas, heresies or confessor saints, such that the new *Unia* might be acceptable to everyone. It is in this light that one can explain the plan which has been proposed for a “cleansing” of the liturgical texts.

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#### **Participation in the “World Council of Churches” and the Dialogues with the Protestants**

In reference to the “World Council of Churches” and theological dialogues in general with various Protestant confessions, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Reformed, and so on, it was noted that the situation is equally dismal, if not more so. The One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church has been humiliated and trivialized by participating in the “World Council of Churches,” and the Church’s status reduced and abased to being but a portion, a part, of a many-member assembly of heresies and schisms. This “arithmetic reduction” has made Her practically non-existent in terms of voting and thus has eliminated the possibility of having Her having a decisive voice at the various assemblies. Even more, it has emboldened liberal Protestants to introduce and discuss issues which negate the very Gospel and the Tradition of the Church, and even Christianity itself. Such issues include the

ordination of women, the marriage of homosexuals and participation in various animistic pagan expressions of faith and worship.

This apostasy of the Protestants from Christian faith and life proves incontestably that the supposed witness to the Orthodox faith through our participation in theological dialogues is a myth and fantasy. The reaction to this apostasy of the Protestants was such that many Orthodox churches made definitive and irrevocable decisions to withdrawal from the “World Council of Churches” and from theological dialogues. The first church to take this step was the Mother of Churches, the ancient and venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and was followed in turn by the Church of Georgia and the Church of Bulgaria, and other Orthodox churches were poised to withdrawal as well. The Holy Synod of the Church of Serbia decided in June of 1997 to withdraw from the “World Council of Churches;” unfortunately, this decision was not implemented. The Church of Cyprus, likewise, in a meeting of its Holy Synod, was split in two as to whether or not to withdraw, and only the weight of the archbishop’s vote sealed the decision to remain with the “World Council of Churches” in hopes of avoiding negative political consequences for the island nation. Under its previous leadership the Church of Greece also experienced deep concern and unrest about continued participation, as did the Church of Russia, where it reached even the level of the faithful.

These developments among the Orthodox, which demonstrate (and would have shown even more clearly had they been brought to fulfillment) that the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church continues to be the faithful witness and guardian of orthodox faith and life, were disrupted by the thought, suggested by that ancient murmuring swindler of salvation [the Devil], that inter-orthodox unity [on this issue] must not be broken, that the decision should be made together, by all the churches, despite the well-known fact that the decision to participate had never been made in unison; each church had made its own decision. God forbid if the Holy Fathers and Orthodox councils had waited to make decisions together with heretics or with friends of heretics or the heretically minded.

Thus, at the request of the churches of Serbia and Russia, the “Inter-Orthodox Meeting in Thessaloniki” was called on the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (April 29-May 2, 1998) which froze all of the developments relative to this issue. To be sure, it recognized the [churches’] right of opposition and to make decisions but made an appeal that they remain in the World Council of Churches in hopes that things would improve. The announcement recognizes that “after an entire century of Orthodox involvement in the Ecumenical Movement and half a century of participation in the World Council of Churches, satisfactory progress in the multilateral dialogues between Christian theologians cannot be claimed. On the contrary, the chasm between the Orthodox and Protestants has become greater on account of an increase of certain trends [*inclusive language, the ordination of women, the rights of “sexual minorities,” religious syncretism*] in the bosom of certain Protestant Confessions.”

In order to give this mistaken decision theological justification and provide arguments for the ecumenists and ecumenizers, as well as placate the uneasiness of the Orthodox Churches, an “International Academic Symposium” was called convened in Thessaloniki in June of 2003, with His Eminence, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Christodoulos, in attendance. Although officially held under the aegis of the Theological School, the symposium was sponsored in reality by only certain ecumenist professors of that School and

by the "World Council of Churches," which sent its representatives. Once again the myth that the Orthodox Faith is being witnessed was confirmed. In the conclusions of this ecumenist symposium, Orthodox theology is impugned and its position regarding the ordination of women is trampled upon, while the canonical liturgical tradition of the Church concerning joint prayer [with heretics] is overturned. The conference findings speak of the "weakness of Orthodox theological arguments against the ordination of women." On the issue of joint prayer they opine that "the only common prayer explicitly forbidden is Eucharistic prayer." Indeed, the conclusion drawn from these positions is that, since we are bereft of arguments on the issue of the ordination of women, and that joint prayer is permissible - with the noted exception - the withdrawal of certain Orthodox Churches from the "World Council of Churches" was wrong and theologically untenable. On this basis, the conference participants issued a call to the Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria to return "to the broad universal ecumenical family." This entirely unfounded and superficial theological argument was accepted, it would seem, by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, who was present during the sessions and who stated - without synodal backing - that he sees "the chances of our Church's (Church of Greece) withdrawal from the WCC to be dwindling."

With respect to these two very important issues - ordination of women and joint prayer with heterodox - the present "Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference" heard, in contrast, overwhelming argumentation in many relevant papers and discussions which solidified and fortified the impossibility of the ordination of women in the Orthodox Church and the prohibition by the holy canons of every kind of joint prayer, not only eucharistic. We pray *for* the heterodox, that they may return to the Church; we do not however, pray *with* the heterodox.

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### **The Dialogue with the Monophysites**

An identical picture of both total fruitlessness and serious compromises in matters of the faith, exists in theological dialogue with those who were until recently considered (and are) Monophysites, but who now, out of "love", are characterized as "anti-Chalcedonians," "pre-Chalcedonians", "Ancient Eastern Churches," or, finally just "Orthodox." At the conference it was established that the dialogue conducted has yielded no positive results. The three joint "Statements" of the Orthodox and anti-Chalcedonians are unacceptable from an orthodox standpoint. Among the most grievous errors are the sacramental intercommunion with the Monophysites [of Syria] accepted by the Patriarchate of Antioch [1991]<sup>7</sup>, the partial recognition by the Patriarchate of Alexandria of the mysteries of the Monophysites and the proposals for a revision of liturgical texts and determination of a typikon for the celebration of Orthodox and Monophysites. On the level of theological research, some have sunk to the point of arguing for the Department of Theology in the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki to approve two doctoral dissertations which assert that the Monophysites Dioscorus and Severios weren't heretics at all, but were rather were condemned for non-theological reasons - this would be totally inconceivable and blasphemous for the holy Councils and holy Fathers.

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<sup>7</sup> See: <http://sor.cua.edu/Ecumenism/19911112SOCRumOrthStmnt.html> for the full text in English.

## The Dialogue with the Old Catholics

The only theological dialogue which has resulted in the signing of Orthodox positions by heterodox is the dialogue with the Old Catholics. The signed documents condemn all the basic delusions of Papism, from which the so-called “Old Catholics” withdrew after the Vatican Council of 1870 in protest of the declaration as dogma of the teaching regarding the infallibility of the pope. Evidently unable to tolerate this development, which was deemed most unfavorable and beyond its control, Rome did everything possible to see that this successfully concluded dialogue would not move ahead to the union of the Old Catholics with the Orthodox Church. It would have been the first time that a part of western Christianity had returned to the body of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church; in this way, they would have set an example which could point the way back for the entire West, Papist and Protestant. The Old Catholics however, also erred in their dialogue with the Anglicans by siding in favor of the ordination of women, thereby negating all that they had accepted with the Orthodox; serious obstacles have been raised for any further positive development.

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### True Dialogue and its Presuppositions

In conclusion, with regards to theological dialogues, it was confirmed that the Church does not avoid dialogue. The Church is open to all and calls all to come to Her and be saved. This is the necessary presupposition and inviolable condition of every dialogue: the salvific truth of the Church is not up for discussion and disputation. In the event that the heterodox are unable to understand this salvific framework, or deny it, the duration of the dialogue should not be extended, but rather by keeping within the limits of time which are necessary, as did the Holy Fathers at the councils, dialogue should be cut off. This follows the example of the Lord Himself with those who would not apprehend His teaching and were becoming resentful: “Ye do not also wish to go away, do ye?”<sup>8</sup> This is the only hope that the heterodox will become conscious of their delusion, so that they might respond similarly today to the Church - which is Christ, extended throughout the ages: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”<sup>9</sup> This exemplary and memorable stance was kept by Patriarch Jeremiah II (Tranos) in his third “Answer” (1581) of the dialogue with Protestant theologians from Tübingen. When he soon perceived that they were persisting in their delusion and refused to accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers - “the luminaries and theologians of the Church” - he ceased correspondence with them and left them to go their own way: “Thus, for your part, please release us from these cares. Therefore, go about your own ways; write no longer concerning dogmas; but if you do, write only for friendship's sake.”<sup>10</sup>

At the conference it was stressed that the methodology of conducting dialogues based, not on the differences - on that which divides but rather on the similarities - on that which unites - is unsound, unjustified and unique in the entire history of the Church. What sense

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<sup>8</sup> Jn. 6:67.

<sup>9</sup> Jn. 6:69.

<sup>10</sup> I. Karmiri, *The Dogmatic and Symbolic Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church* [in Greek], Graz, 1968, vol. 2, pg. 489.

is there to discuss that which we accept and upon which we agree? We merely disguise the differences and serve other interests; we conceal the chasm and put well-intentioned heterodox at ease, as well as facilitate proselytizing efforts to the detriment of the Orthodox. It is, likewise, necessary that any and all decisions made concerning relations with the heterodox have a synodical sanction - that the entire body of the Church be informed - since there is a serious lack of true conciliarity.

Lastly, conference participants applauded and praised the thinking of those Orthodox Churches which have withdrawn or intend to withdraw from the "World Council of Churches" as well as from theological dialogues. This is most clearly worded in the historic and most orthodox letter sent by the Church of Jerusalem on June 22, 1992 to the rest of the autocephalous Churches, in which it announced that it was ceasing theological dialogue "with the heterodox in general, convinced that dialogue is not only unbeneficial, but in fact, is detrimental for the Orthodox Church as a whole, and for the Most Holy Church of Jerusalem in particular."

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### **From Inter-Christian to Inter-Religious Syncretism**

It was furthermore established that Ecumenism, after the success it has realized in inter-christian dialogues with the production of ideas such as the "branch theory," "sister churches," and "baptismal theology," has already moved on to the next objective of the "New Age": inter-religious unity. Here one encounters promotion of the truly demonic idea that Christ is not the only path of salvation, the life, light and truth; that other religions are paths of salvation, such that in the end the united religion of the Antichrist might be imposed within the framework of globalization and the New World Order. Inter-religious gatherings and dialogues, more frequently and widely supported by Christian leaders, including some Orthodox, have lead to an intolerable syncretism; they constitute a negation of the Gospel and an insult to the Holy Martyrs and Confessors of the faith, whose martyrdom and confession of the one and only truth is robbed of all meaning, with the martyrs themselves being transformed into witless "fundamentalists."

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### **Proposals**

After these conclusions and assessments the "Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference" issued the following propositions:

1. In so far as it is now universally confessed, after more than a century of participation of the Church in the "World Council of Churches" and inter-christian and inter-religious dialogues, on terms which level inter-confessional differences and make all religions equal, that such participation is unbeneficial and detrimental, it is proposed that the remaining autocephalous churches also withdraw from the "World Council of Churches" and bring an end to these kinds of dialogues. Toward this end, a Pan-Orthodox decision is not necessary, since the original decision to participate was made separately. The only dialogue which can be justified on the basis of the Gospel and the Patristic Tradition is to answer the question asked by those heterodox and persons of other religions who

voluntarily approach in order to find salvation: “What must I do to be saved?”<sup>11</sup> or “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”<sup>12</sup>

2. The Orthodox Churches, and above all the Church of Constantinople - which is first in honor and initiative - review and revise their relations with Papism, which all of the Holy Fathers, from St. Photios the Great, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Mark of Ephesus, the *Kollyvades* Fathers (St. Nikodemos the Athonite, St. Athanasios of Paros, St. Makarios of Corinth) up to, and including, St. Nektarios of Aegina and Elder Justin Popovich, have considered to be heretical and not a “sister church.”
3. The holy canons of the Church be observed which forbid joint prayer with the heterodox in general, in every circumstance, and not only in eucharistic prayer, as has been suggested as of late.
4. An appeal be sent to the Orthodox Churches which have not, to date, agreed to allow the pope to visit their countries, to remain firm in this decision. Can one imagine one of the Holy Fathers organizing receptions in order to honor and embrace Arius, Nestorius, Eutichius, etc.? Likewise, let the unacceptable entry in the Calendar of the Church of Greece be erased which records the visit of the pope as a great historic event; let every attempt at reciprocation or repetition of such a visit in the future be prevented.
5. The issue of sacramental inter-communion of the Patriarchate of Antioch with the Monophysites [Syrian Jacobites] be investigated, as well as the recognition of certain mysteries of these heretics [Coptic Monophysites] by the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Let the canonical principle be enforced in this case which says: “he who communes with the excommunicated is likewise excommunicated.”
6. Let inner-ecclesial dialogue (among the Orthodox) be strengthened and encouraged in the spirit of conciliarity (*συνοδικότητα*), and not be limited only to the bishops. It is, at the very least, lamentable that dialogue with various heretics and non-Christians is pursued while the differing views of brothers in the faith, who are slandered as fanatics, are rejected.
7. That liturgical changes and innovations be discouraged and terminated, since they constitute an application of the principles of Ecumenism whose aims are the creation of non-dogmatic worship, so as to facilitate the acceptance of heresy. Furthermore, the liturgical wealth of the Orthodox Church does not belong to any one local church. It expresses the life of the Church through the ages, and must be guarded as the apple of one’s eye.
8. That it be made manifest to church leaders everywhere that, in the event that they continue to participate in, and lend support to, the pan-heresy of Ecumenism - both inter-christian and inter-religious - the obligatory salvific, canonical and patristic course for the faithful, clergy and laity, is excommunication: in other words, ceasing to commemorate bishops, who are co-responsible for, and co-communicants with, heresy and delusion. This is not a recourse to schism but rather to a God-pleasing confession, just as the ancient Fathers, and bishop-confessors in our own day have done, such as the esteemed

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 16:30.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 10:25 and 18:18.

and respected former Metropolitan of Florina, Augustinos, and the Fathers of the Holy Mountain (Athos).

9. It be declared with the sound of the trumpet that Ecumenism and unconditional dialogue with heterodox and non-Christians are not beneficial, but injurious, and thus not the work of love, but merely of a worldly way of thinking; these are conventional relationships, which aim not at spiritual ends but self-serving interests. They wear down and taint the Orthodox *phronema* through intermingling and obfuscation, and as a result bring harm to the faithful, since without purity of dogma, even in lesser matters, no one can be saved. To non-Christians and to the heterodox they close the gate of salvation, obstructing the former's view of Christ as being the only path of salvation, and hindering the latter from seeing the Orthodox Church as the ark of salvation, as the only Church. God, in His infinite love for mankind and the world, desires the salvation of every man. On the contrary, the Devil, who is the enemy of salvation, wars against man in a diversity of ways out of envy and hatred

Consequently, out of love we reject Ecumenism, for we wish to offer to the heterodox and to non-Christians that which the Lord has so richly granted to all of us within His Holy Orthodox Church: namely, the possibility of becoming and of being members of His Body.

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