

The Orthodox Informer



“For it is a commandment of the Lord not to be silent at a time when the Faith is in jeopardy. Speak, Scripture says, and hold not thy peace.... For this reason, I, the wretched one, fearing the Tribunal, also speak.”

(St. Theodore the Studite, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xcix, col. 1321)

**Eighteenth Gathering for Orthodox Awareness
Sunday of Orthodoxy, February 8/21, 2010**

The Censure of Error and the Confession of Orthodox Truth in Relation to Contemporary Ecumenism*

*† Bishop Klemes of Gardikion
Secretary of the Holy Synod in Resistance*

Your Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of our Holy Synod;
Right Reverend Brother Hierarchs;
Reverend Fathers and Mothers;
beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:
May the blessing of our Most Reverend Father, who is ailing, be with us!

Part I

1. An example: St. Nicodemos and the Latins

St. **Nicodemos the Hagiorite**, the bicentennial of whose holy repose (July 14, 1809) we celebrated last year, was distinguished for his pro-

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found knowledge of the sacred Canons and dogmas, and also for his uncompromising defense of the authority of the Holy Fathers and the preëminence of the Holy Tradition of our Orthodox Faith. Aside from the multitude of his writings, which refute error and heresy, the oral tradition of the Holy Mountain preserves an otherwise unknown incident from his life.

On one occasion, some Latin emissaries came to the Holy Mountain for dialogue on matters of faith. The Holy Community then summoned Father Nicodemos, who was renowned for his holiness and erudition. He came out of obedience, clad in rags and disheveled. The eminent visitors were displeased by his unkempt appearance, but to set their minds at rest it was explained to them that the Saint lived ascetically in solitude and the utmost poverty, and did not have any better clothing available. However, when the dialogue commenced, to their astonishment the Latin interlocutors discerned his shining intellect and his invincible dialectical ingenuity. Without especial difficulty, the Saint disposed of the heretical beliefs of his opponents steadfastly and gently, decisively and courageously. The Papists, reduced to an embarrassed silence, were obliged to beat a disorderly retreat, particularly after being assured that there was an innumerable multitude like the Saint and that the Saint, as he himself told them, was the least of all! The confutation of Latin error and the confession of Orthodox Truth shone forth yet again.

a2. Censure in the Church

In Holy Scripture, and especially in the New Testament, there are repeated exhortations regarding the censure of deviations from the Law and the Will of God.¹ But who is to do the censuring, and how is it to be done?

Censure may be undertaken by any member of the Church who is distinguished for his conscientiousness, for his practical observance of God's commandments, for his purity and sincerity, and for his objectiv-

¹ See, for example, St. Matthew 18:15; 1 St. Timothy 5:20; 11 St. Timothy 4:2; St. Titus 2:5.

ity and dispassion. It is, of course, first and foremost a duty of the clergy of the Church, those who have been appointed “watchmen”² and who, in addition to the “oil” of compassion and love, also with discretion and charity use the “wine”³ of severity and strictness, when necessary. In particular, those who deviate publicly are to be publicly rebuked. For this reason, St. John Chrysostomos, that bold and indomitable struggler, scourges and rebukes errant clergy, rulers, rich people, and in general all of the faithful who sin persistently and unrepentantly. At the same time, laypeople are not permitted to judge or rebuke clergy⁴ for their personal sins. Yet, even a severe rebuke ought to be administered with understanding, sadness, and love, without fanaticism or bitterness, and to the end of correcting the sinner and not of harshly judging or condemning him.⁵

As we can appreciate, censure cannot be exercised by everyone with forcefulness and ease. But when it is a matter of heretics and those of wrong belief, then things change. All who adulterate the salvific teaching of the Church pose the greatest danger for the faithful, as subtle and, initially, internal enemies. Those who are right-minded ought to be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [them] a reason of the hope that is in [them]”⁶ and convince those who gainsay “sound doctrine.”⁷ This is to be regarded as a bounden duty especially for clergy. Silence is reprehensible, culpable, and carries with it a very grave responsibility. One of the chief tasks of Shepherds of the Church is to refute heresy.⁸

² Ezekiel 3:17.

³ See the Parable of the Good Samaritan, St. Luke 10:34.

⁴ A. Korakides, *Ὁ ἔλεγχος ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ κατὰ τὴν Ἁγίαν Γραφήν καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν καὶ ἐφαρμογὴν αὐτῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἱ. Χρυσοστόμου* [Censure in the Church according to Holy Scripture and according to the interpretation and application thereof by St. John Chrysostomos] (Athens: 1965), pp. 63-87.

⁵ St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily xxiii on St. Matthew,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVII, cols. 308-310.

⁶ 1 St. Peter 3:15.

⁷ St. Titus 1:9.

⁸ Korakides, *Ὁ ἔλεγχος ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ*, pp. 87ff.

For this reason, the Divine Chrysostomos exhorts: “Let us not be silent, let us not bear meekly” with heretical teachings, but “let us confess the Faith with boldness.”⁹

All of us bear a joint responsibility for the Faith of the Church; God has entrusted to all of us the treasure of the Truth, and no one is exempt from the resolute defense of Orthodoxy. No one can plead incompetence, ignorance, or unworthiness. When the Faith is at issue, as the great Confessor St. Theodore the Studite very explicitly emphasizes, it is not possible for anyone to put forward the justification: And who am I? I am a Priest, a ruler, a soldier, a farmer, or a pauper, and so I have no part or concern in this matter. “Alas, the stones cry out, and you are silent and unconcerned?”¹⁰

In a period of heretical upheaval, not only those who are eminent in rank and knowledge, but also those who occupy the “rank of disciple”¹¹ are obligated to struggle for the true Faith.

One might ask: How does the phrase from the Holy Gospel, “judge not, that ye be not judged,”¹² relate to the foregoing? The Divine Chrysostomos has a ready answer: This commandment of the Lord holds good when the question is one of “life, not of faith”¹³ (concerns personal sins, not matters of faith).

It should be emphasized, here, that the struggle against heresy is directed against falsehood and error, not against the heretic as a man. Again, the Divine Chrysostomos is very clear: “By my discourse I pursue not the heretic, but the heresy; the man I do not abhor, but I detest the error.”¹⁴ “[W]e must anathematize heretical doctrines and refute im-

⁹ “Encomiastic Homily on the Holy Martyr Loukianos,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. L, col. 526.

¹⁰ “Epistle II.81, ‘To Pantoleon,’” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1321AB.

¹¹ St. Theodore the Studite, “Epistle II.2, ‘To the Monks,’” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1120B.

¹² St. Matthew 7:1.

¹³ “Homily xxxiv on Hebrews,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXIII, col. 232.

¹⁴ “On the Holy Hieromartyr Phocas and Against Heresies,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. L, col. 701.

pious teachings, from whomsoever we have received them, but show all mercy to the men who advocate them and pray for their salvation.”¹⁵

This is the healthy attitude towards heresy and heretics and the sound way of dealing with them, without a trace of religious bigotry, fanaticism, or misanthropy. No one desires the death of a sinner or his violent bodily punishment! These have been from of old, and are, unfortunately, even today, methods and practices favored by heretics and their sympathizers against Orthodox strugglers!

Likewise, we ought to stress that, in the understanding of the Apostles and the Fathers, the endeavor to convert an unrepentant heretic ceases “after the first and second admonition.”¹⁶ If we have ascertained that the heretic is incurably ill, we give up the endeavor in order to avoid fruitless verbiage, since he is henceforth “self-condemned.”

In any case, discussion with heretics ought to be conducted with an uncontentious spirit of gentleness and peace and be accompanied by prayer and good deeds.¹⁷

A refutation in defense of the Truth is sure to stir up opposition, especially when those of wrong belief have worldly means and might at their disposal. In the face of the possibility even of martyrdom, unshakable faith in the power of truth and a spirit of self-sacrifice are required. In difficulties, when human resources prove ineffective, we seek refuge in God through prayer that He will act on behalf of His Church and His servants.¹⁸

¹⁵ “That We Should Not Anathematize the Living or the Dead,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XLVIII, col. 952.

¹⁶ St. Titus 3:10.

¹⁷ Father Demetrios Bathrellos, *Σχεδιάσμα Δογματικής Θεολογίας Με βάση τὸ συγγραφικὸ ἔργο τοῦ Ἁγίου Συμεὼν Θεσσαλονίκης (†1429)* [An outline of dogmatic theology based on the writings of St. Symeon of Thessalonica (†1429)] (Athens: Ekdoseis En plo, 2008), p. 396.

¹⁸ Korakides, *Ὁ ἔλεγχος ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ*, pp. 106-110.

a3. Confession of the Truth

In confronting heresies, aside from refuting error and false belief, we need to make a good and saving confession of the truth of the Faith. Moreover, only in the context of confession can a true refutation be undertaken.

At a time of “ecumenical disorder,” when even the leaders of the local Churches do not express faith in the Truth, but agree among themselves in wrong belief, the Catholicity of the Church is preserved only by those who uphold the “correct and saving confession.” For this reason, St. Maximos the Confessor affirms emphatically that “every man is sanctified through the exact confession of the Faith.”¹⁹

Confession of the Truth cannot be suppressed in the interest of achieving peace and harmony with the majority. When those in the right during controversies over dogmatic issues keep silent out of inertia, cowardice, or intimidation, they are complicit with those in error. “The suppression of speech is the abolition of speech,” declares St. Maximos, for “speech that is not uttered is not speech at all.”²⁰ Confession of the Truth cannot be confined solely within the heart of a man; it must without fail be given outward expression. “God did not restrict salvation entirely to the heart, for He said, ‘Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven’ [St. Matthew 10:32]. And the Divine Apostle teaches: ‘For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [Romans 10:10].’”²¹

But what if our confession grieves most people? St. Maximos is again disarming: “I cannot grieve God by keeping silent about those matters of which He has enjoined us to speak and confess.”²² “St. Maximos nev-

¹⁹ “Second Tome of Our Father Among the Saints Maximos the Confessor, Concerning What Occurred in His First Exile, in Bizya; the Disputation Between Bishop Theodosios of Cæsarea in Bithynia and Himself,” §28, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xc, col. 165A.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xc, col. 165AB.

²¹ *Ibid.*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xc, col. 165B.

²² “Account of the Proceedings that Took Place Between Abba Maximos and His Com-

er consented to such (supposed) economy [*oikonomia*]. Economy at the expense of Church dogma is inconceivable; or rather, it is worthy of condemnation.”²³

a4. The excision of the Latins

This unwavering stand pervades all of the glorious and, at the same time, martyric historical life of the Holy Orthodox Church, which has been tried, is being tried, and will be tried by heresies, so that “those who are genuine may become manifest.”²⁴

In the year 807-808 two Benedictine monks from the West chanted in Jerusalem the Symbol of Faith with the addition of the *Filioque*, that is, the false teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally not only from the Father, but also from the Son. In so doing, they immediately provoked reactions on the part of the monks of the Monastery of St. Savvas the Sanctified. The Orthodox monks hastened to characterize as heretics those who had dared to introduce the impious addition. This reaction, in the form of censure and confession, had a twofold result in the West: on the one hand, a council in support of the *Filioque* was convoked by King Charlemagne of the Franks, while on the other hand, Pope Leo III quite correctly condemned the *Filioque* and, as a reminder and a precaution, hung two silver plaques in the Church of St. Peter in Rome. These plaques contained the Symbol of Faith without the innovation, that is, without the addition of the *Filioque*.²⁵

We are familiar with the events that led up to the convocation of the celebrated Great Synod of 879-880 in Constantinople, under St. Photios

panions and the Officials in the Council Chamber,” §9, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. xc, col. 124A.

²³ Charalambos G. Soteropoulos, *Θέματα δογματικής θεολογίας και πνευματικής ζωής κατά την διδασκαλίαν Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ* [Issues of dogmatic theology and spiritual life according to the teaching of Maximos the Confessor] (Athens: 2003), p. 20.

²⁴ Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:19.

²⁵ Archimandrite Spyridon Bilales, *Ἡ Αἵρεσις τοῦ Filioque* [The Heresy of the *Filioque*] (Athens: Ekdoseis Orthodoxou Typou, 1972), Vol. 1, pp. 119-120.

the Great, which is regarded by the conscience of the Orthodox Church as the Eighth Œcumenical Synod. At this Synod, the Latin cacodoxy of the *Filioque* was condemned, as also was the so-called Primacy of jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome over the entire Church.²⁶

However, the falling away of the Westerners, with the adoption of the foregoing cacodoxies condemned by the Undivided Church, became complete in the eleventh century through well-known anathemas. Thereafter, the attitude of the Orthodox towards the Westerners, especially following the tragic events of the Crusades, became entrenched: they were considered heterodox and heretics.

The monks of the Holy Mountain wrote as follows to the Latin-minded Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos during the second half of the thirteenth century: “They [the Latins]...have not left untouched or undistorted any of the main points of the Faith. For this reason, not only are they cut off from the Body of Christ, but they are consigned to Satan, according to the saying of the Apostle Paul: ‘If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed [*anathema*]’ [Galatians 1:9]... How, therefore, is it lawful...for us to unite with them...as long as they remain in their heresies? If we accept this, we overturn everything at a stroke and abolish Orthodoxy.”²⁷

St. Meletios of Galesion, the Confessor, whose tongue was cut off by the Latin-minded, writes aptly and with poetic rhythm:

...For even if some of our Shepherds say, out of ignorance of the Scriptures or on other grounds, that the errors of the Italians are very slight, that they are not heretics and have not been cut off from the assembly of the faithful by any of the Saints, and that to commune with them is not a sin and brings no harm to the soul, they speak falsely, they speak evilly, they are far from the truth.... The whole choir of the Fathers condemns them and class-

²⁶ *Idem*, *Ὄρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμὸς* [Orthodoxy and Papism] (Athens: Ekdoseis Adelphotetos “Evnikes,” 1988), Vol. 1, pp. 216-217.

²⁷ *Cf.* Panagiotes Semates, “Εἶναι Αἵρεση ὁ Παπισμὸς; Τί λένε Οἰκουμενικὲς Σύνοδοι καὶ Πατέρες” [Is Papism a heresy? What do the Œcumenical Synods and the Fathers say?], *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. ix, No. 2 (April-June 2007), p. 267.

es them with the heretics, and he who communes with them is separated from Christ and the Saints.²⁸

a5. St. Symeon of Thessalonica concerning the heresy of the Latins

Since we have dealt on a different occasion with the stand of St. Gregory Palamas towards the Latins,²⁹ in tonight's presentation we will turn to another great Patristic figure, St. Symeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica (†1429), a disciple of St. Gregory, a Hesychast, and an expounder of dogmatic, liturgical, and mysteriological (sacramental) theology, in order to observe in brief his attitude towards the Latin heresy, and also towards the monotheistic religions of Judaism and Islam, and to draw guidance from it.

St. Symeon fully believes that the Orthodox Church “preserves, expresses, and lives the truth of the ancient, undivided Church. The fundamental criterion that determines this truth is (Holy) Scripture and the decisions of the Œcumenical Synods. These Synods composed and confirmed the Symbol [of Faith], which the Latin Church distorted in adding the *Filioque*.”³⁰

And what was the cause of the deviation on the part of the Latins? Arrogance and conceit, St. Symeon says without qualification.³¹ The Latins coveted secular wisdom and considered themselves wiser than their Eastern brethren. Herein lies the root of all falls and cacodoxies: faith and confidence in human knowledge, pride, and a dearth of humility and love.

The false beliefs of the Papists can be summarized, according to St.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

²⁹ See Hieromonk Klemes, “Ἡ Αἵρεσις τοῦ Παπισμοῦ καὶ ἡ σύγχρονη Οἰκουμενιστικὴ Προσέγγισις Ὁρθοδόξων καὶ Παπικῶν” [The Heresy of Papism and the Contemporary Ecumenist Rapprochement Between Orthodox and Papists] (Sunday of Orthodoxy 2003): <http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_el/3a2031aAiresisPapismou.pdf>; <http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_el/3a2031bAiresisPapismou.pdf>; <http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_el/3a2031cAiresisPapismou.pdf>.

³⁰ Bathrellos, *Σχέδιασμα Δογματικῆς Θεολογίας*, p. 373.

³¹ *Dialogue in Christ Against All Heresies*, ch. 17, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 89A-D.

Symeon, in three main categories: (1) dogmatic, (2) liturgical, and (3) moral.³²

- Their dogmatic errors include: the *Filioque* and the arbitrary addition thereof to the Symbol of Faith; the Primacy of the Pope; the so-called Purgatorial Fire; the denial of a distinction between the Essence and the Energies of God; and also the idea of created Energies in God with regard to His relationship with the world and with man.

- The liturgical errors include: the performance of the Mystery of Baptism not through three full immersions, but through affusion; the separate celebration of Chrismation; not administering Divine Communion to infants; the use of unleavened bread at the Divine Eucharist; the Consecration of the Holy Gifts at the Divine Liturgy not through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, but solely through the exclamation of the Dominical Words of Institution; withholding the Holy Blood from the faithful; Ordination through anointing; the provision of Unction only to those at the point of death; the fragmentation of the monastic *schema* into many religious orders; and the abrogation of the Wednesday and Friday fast and the establishment of a Saturday fast.

- The moral errors include: widespread sexual promiscuity among clergy, monastics, and laity, which they consider almost inculpable and do not reckon among the impediments to the Priesthood;³³ clergy shaving their beards; eating the flesh of strangled animals; boasting about their prosperity and worldly progress and dominance as a putative indication of God's favor for their correctness and piety.

- As well, in the sacred arts of the Church (iconography, architecture, music, etc.) they have developed a different perspective and practice, one that is naturalistic, secular, and unspiritual.

³² Bathrellos, *Σχεδιασμα Δογματικῆς Θεολογίας*, pp. 375-377.

³³ St. Symeon, it should be noted, does admit, in this context, that sexual profligacy is not unknown among Greek Orthodox clergy, but points out that such conduct is considered sinful and in need of correction by repentance (*Dialogue*, ch. 20, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLV, col. 105A). [*Trans.*]

a6. St. Symeon of Thessalonica on Papal Primacy

From a purely practical standpoint, owing to lack of time, we will focus our attention on the burning issue, then as today, of Papal Primacy.

St. Symeon clearly states that “it is not necessary to contradict the assertion of the Latins that the Bishop of Rome is first [among Bishops³⁴], since this is not harmful to the Church. Let them merely show us that he follows the Faith of Peter and the successors of Peter, and then let him have all of the prerogatives of Peter and let him be first and leader and head of all and supreme Hierarch.”³⁵ If the Pope were to embrace the Faith of his Orthodox predecessors, “he would be an Apostolic Hierarch and first among all of the others, and we would submit to him.... But if he is not a successor of those Saints in the Faith, he is not successor to their throne. And not only is he neither Apostolic nor first nor Father, but he is at odds with them, a corrupter [of the Faith], and an adversary of the Apostles.”³⁶

By contrast, St. Symeon praises the Church of Constantinople, because her Traditions were ordained not by a single Hierarch, but by a Synod of Hierarchs from all over the world. This constitutes the true Apostolic practice, for neither the Apostle Peter nor anyone else made decisions on his own, as is clearly evident in the New Testament, but in concert with the others.³⁷ The Saint also rejects the Latin principle that “the First See is judged by no one,” since even the Patriarch is judged “by a major Synod.”³⁸ Supreme authority in the Church belongs to the Synod, to which even the Patriarch is subject.

The Western dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope, and not simply of the Roman Church, is a product of the Latin Middle Ages and not of the

³⁴ That is, “*primus inter pares*” (first among equals). [*Trans.*]

³⁵ *Dialogue*, ch. 23, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLV, col. 120B.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLV, col. 120CD.

³⁷ *Ibid.* (“Concerning the Sacred Liturgy”), ch. 93, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLV, cols. 277C-280C.

³⁸ *Responses to Certain Questions Posed to Him by a Hierarch*, Qu. 35, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLV, col. 884D.

Undivided Church of the first millennium.³⁹ St. Symeon emphatically affirms that the Popes not only are not infallible, but are, in fact, heretics.⁴⁰

St. Symeon, therefore, as an outstanding exponent of Orthodoxy, accepts one form of Papal Primacy (under no circumstances his Infallibility!), though interpreted on the basis of Orthodox ecclesiology, that is, *not a primacy of universal jurisdiction, nor one that undermines the Synodal nature of the Church.*⁴¹

The confutation and confession of St. Symeon have something very important and sacred in view: the repentance of the Latins! If the Latins, like Peter, who denied Christ and rectified his denial, repent and return to the Orthodox Faith, then and only then will they become capable of strengthening their brethren, first-enthroned thenceforth in honor and love.⁴²

In Patristic thought there is no room for any kind of ecumenist amalgamation, communion, or œconomy. The salvation of heretics depends upon their return, in repentance, to the Truth of Orthodoxy from which they have fallen.

a7. St. Symeon of Thessalonica on Judaism and Islam

Now, how does St. Symeon, as an authentic exponent of the spirit of Orthodoxy, view the two monotheistic religions of Judaism and Islam?

Judaism rejects faith in the Triune God, whereas the Trinity of God is foreheralded,⁴³ albeit in a somewhat shadowy form,⁴⁴ in the Old Testament. Herein are prefigured the miracles, the sinlessness, and the Pas-

³⁹ Bathrellos, *Σχεδιασμα Δογματικῆς Θεολογίας*, p. 411, n.

⁴⁰ Moreover, as is well known, the “Rock” (St. Matthew 16:18) on which the Church is built is the confession of the Apostle Peter and not his person (see *Dialogue*, ch. 25, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 133CD; *Explanation of the Divine and Sacred Symbol of Faith*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 796D).

⁴¹ Bathrellos, *Σχεδιασμα Δογματικῆς Θεολογίας*, p. 412.

⁴² *Dialogue*, ch. 19, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 100CD.

⁴³ *Dialogue*, ch. 9, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, cols. 52C-57A.

⁴⁴ *Explanation of the Symbol of Faith*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 793CD.

sion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also all that has occurred in the era of Grace.⁴⁵ In the life, the worship, and the Mysteries of the Church everything is done in a spiritual way; miracles are performed in the Name of Christ for the deliverance of men from the domination of sin, the Devil, and death, and the virtues are practiced by faithful Christians.⁴⁶

St. Symeon distinguishes between Judaism and the Old Testament. The latter is the Bible of the Church and points towards the New Testament, the dogma of the Holy Trinity, to the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. Judaism is not the religion of the Old Testament, but a quasi-religion founded on an erroneous interpretation of the Old Testament.⁴⁷ As for Islam, St. Symeon deals with it at some length.⁴⁸ He portrays Mohammed, who is regarded as the great prophet of Islam, in the darkest hues. Islam, too, denies the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Denial of the Son entails denial of the Father, while denial of the Holy Trinity entails denial of the only true God. Furthermore, in Islam our Lord Jesus Christ is considered a great prophet, but not God. For this reason, the followers of Islam are characterized as atheists and “pagans” and are deemed akin to the Jews in terms of unbelief and theomachy.⁴⁹

To the crass and flimsy argument of the Muslims against Christianity, that if God has a Son He must also have a wife, the Saint replies that it is invalid, since both the Father and Son are immaterial and incorporeal.⁵⁰

The Saint strongly condemns Islamic morality, calling it iniquity and the “height of lechery.”⁵¹ He censures polygamy and other lascivious practices, and to these he juxtaposes the virginity and monogamy of

⁴⁵ *Dialogue* (“Concerning the Holy Church and its Consecration”), ch. 129, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, cols. 337AB.

⁴⁶ St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Ἔργα Θεολογικά*, “Ἐπιστολή πρὸς Παῦλον” [Theological Works, Epistle to Paul], ed. David Balfour (Analekta Blatadon, Vol. xxxiv; Thessalonica: Patriarchikon Hidryma Paterikon Meleton, 1981), pp. 140-156.

⁴⁷ Bathrellos, *Σχεδιάσμα Δογματικῆς Θεολογίας*, p. 338.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 339ff.

⁴⁹ *Dialogue*, ch. 14, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 80D.

⁵⁰ *Ἔργα Θεολογικά*, p. 116.

⁵¹ *Dialogue*, ch. 14, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 77D.

Christians as proof of the superiority of Christianity. He considers it especially abhorrent that Islam even imagines Paradise to be a place where carnal passions will hold sway.⁵²

He likewise censures the aggressive and bellicose tactics of the followers of Islam and accuses them of murder, robbery, and abduction, without a trace of pity for their victims or even for their relatives.⁵³ Two of the most negative aspects of Islam, according to the Saint are the notion of “holy war” (*Jihad*) and, related to this, the fact that it sanctions the institution of slavery.

In the face of all this, Christians are called by the Saint not only to maintain their Faith at all costs and to adhere unswervingly to it, but also to confess it with boldness, even to the point of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, if need be.

a8. The religious experiences of others and the evaluation thereof

St. Symeon deals also with the question of the experiences of believers among other religions. These not only do not appertain to the true and real Divine experiences in Christianity, but are, in fact, opposed to them.⁵⁴ *There are no experiences common to Christianity and other religions.* In Islam, in particular, Mohammed was in thrall to demons, while prayers within Islam constitute defilement and blasphemy, for in reality its adherents “are not praying, but are at war with God.”⁵⁵ Between Christianity and other religions, including the monotheistic ones (Judaism and Islam), there lies a great chasm, even if we can find in them elements that may be positive.

For this reason, the opinions of the ecumenist Archbishop Anastasios (Giannoulatos) of Albania and of certain other like-minded Churchmen, that the question of the attitude of Christianity towards other religions

⁵² Bathrellos, *Σχέδιασμα Δογματικής Θεολογίας*, p. 343.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁵⁵ *Dialogue*, ch. 10, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLV, col. 65c.

is a “matter open to theological debate” or that religions are “‘batteries’ charged by rays of the divine truth of the ‘Sun of Righteousness,’ with experience about life...[which] have helped many on their course, providing them with an imperfect light, or some reflections of light,”⁵⁶ must be deemed anti-Patristic and anti-Orthodox. The religions of the world, however strange this may seem in our days, are expressions and forms of “atheism.” According to St. Symeon, even the monotheistic religions, which reject God *qua* Holy Trinity, are “completely atheistic.”⁵⁷ Indeed, “he who does not believe in Christ does not believe in God,”⁵⁸ as Emperor John Cantacouzenos pithily expresses it.

However, none of these disagreeable discoveries should lead us into any kind of misanthropy, religious bigotry, or xenophobia. St. Symeon devoutly exhorts his flock: “As for those of other religions, you should commiserate them; you should, of course, show mercy to them and pray to God for their conversion; for it is the duty of the pious to pray for those who persecute and harass them.”⁵⁹ In another context, he stresses our obligation to pray for them and to treat them with understanding and love.⁶⁰

a9. Contemporary anti-Patristic and anti-Orthodox activities

But how far removed this attitude is from the most recent statements and activities of the ecumenist Patriarch Bartholomew in relation to Jews and Muslims!

At the end of last October, during an official visit to a Jewish synagogue in New York, Patriarch Bartholomew concluded his address as

⁵⁶ Bathrellos, *Σχεδιάσμα Δογματικής Θεολογίας*, p. 348, n. 61; cf. “Facing People of Other Faiths from an Orthodox Point of View,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. xxxviii, Nos. 1-4 (1993), p. 151.

⁵⁷ *Dialogue*, ch. 10, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. clv, col. 65c.

⁵⁸ “Third Apology Against the Mohammedans,” §8, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. cliv, col. 516c.

⁵⁹ *Ἔργα Θεολογικά*, p. 131.

⁶⁰ *Dialogue*, ch. 1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. clv, col. 37b.

follows: “Let us hold our hands not only in prayer, but also in solidarity with one another. We owe it to our God, to our common patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to each other, and to the world.”⁶¹ On the following day, in a speech at the headquarters of the Coca-Cola Company, addressing its Muslim President and his wife, he concluded as follows: “I have a small souvenir—small and great. A souvenir for Defne and Muhtar. This is the Holy Qur’an, the sacred book of our Muslim brothers and sisters.”⁶²

Was this a matter of simple private politesse, or of public declarations before the entire world, which have absolutely nothing to do with the Faith and Tradition of the Holy Fathers, and are completely contrary thereto? In truth, the chasm into which the ecumenists are falling is bottomless!

a10. The Latins are more dangerous than the non-Christians.

Finally, however, to return to St. Symeon, we should be aware that the Latins, who are regarded as Christian “brethren,” are much more dangerous than the “atheistic” non-Christians. This is because they give the illusion that they are very close to us, that they constitute another, legitimate version of the Christian Faith, or one that, though different, is nonetheless similar to ours, just as valid, and equivalent to it. For this reason, the Saint correctly observes that, of all those who have acted against the Church, the Latins have caused her the greatest harm.⁶³ The Saint’s words may seem harsh and extreme, but they have grave ecclesiological and soteriological import. For he knew well the desire and purpose of the Latins and wished to safeguard and protect, and also to

⁶¹ “Meeting with the Members Religious and Lay Leaders of the Jewish Community,” <<http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/2009-parkeastsynagogue>>.

⁶² <<http://www.youtube.com/user/Patriarchate#p/u/19/boPSYG3oBRY>>. For the text of the Patriarch’s speech, see: “At the Dinner In Honor of His All Holiness [*sic*] at World of Coca Cola hosted by Muhtar Kent,” <<http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/coca-cola-2009>>.

⁶³ *Dialogue*, ch. 19, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLV, col. 100D.

forewarn, the Orthodox, who are usually submissive when they find themselves in a difficult external situation.

The Latins remain voluntarily in their error, being incurable as a whole, and their goal is set: they aimed, and aim, at our Uniatization—of old through violence and deception, but now through a particularly refined form of deception!

Part II

bl. The first-fruits of Protestant ecumenism

Exactly a century ago, in 1910, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the foundations for the inauguration of the ecumenical movement, which so characterized the twentieth century, were laid. The nineteenth century was the century of missionary awakening, during which various Protestant groups, products of the Reformation and the illegitimate offspring of Papism, which was itself outside the Church, spread to many parts of the world in order to Christianize it. However, many problems emerged as a result of the fragmentation of Christianity and the mutual antagonism between these groups in the mission field, such that the Gospel that they were preaching came to lack credibility.

Thus, these Protestant groups recognized the need to find ways of coöperating with each other and of restoring their unity, which they viewed as the restoration of the unity of the Church. Such an idea was mooted at this first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. However, at this conference discussions of theological and dogmatic differences were avoided and appeals were made for the “urgent Christian mission” of “world-wide evangelism.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Stylianos Tsompanides, “Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν. Μία «κοινωνία» ἀμοιβαίου ἐμπλουτισμοῦ στὸ δρόμο τῶν ἀναζητήσεων” [The Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches: A “fellowship” of mutual enrichment on the path of searching], in *Ἱστορία τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας* [History of Orthodoxy], Vol. VIII (n.p.: Ekdoseis ROAD, n.d. [actual place and date of publication: Athens, 2009]), p. 234.

John Mott, one of the most prominent figures in the nascent ecumenical movement, gave classic expression to this idea in the title of one of his most famous books,

b2. The entry of the Orthodox into ecumenism

Amid the deliberations of the Protestant world, in the especially confused period of history following the end of the First World War, certain audacious representatives of Orthodoxy intervened decisively in the pan-Christian scene in an unprecedented move. Nearly ninety years ago, in January of 1920, the Patriarchate of Constantinople issued a controversial Encyclical, which from its title alone betrayed its blatantly anti-Orthodox nature: “To the Churches of Christ Everywhere.” It asked the so-called “Churches,” which it regarded explicitly, and without any Orthodox justification, “as relatives and as being a part of the household of Christ, and fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise of God in Christ,”⁶⁵ “to overcome the spirit of distrust and to show the power of love, by creating a ‘League of Churches’ on the model of the ‘League of Nations.’”⁶⁶ It observed that “in spite of the existing dogmatic differences, it is possible for there to be rapprochement and fellowship between the Churches, and particularly on social and moral issues, ‘in preparation and advancement of that blessed union which will be completed in the future in accordance with the will of God.’”⁶⁷⁶⁸

In this way, the Patriarchate, according to a leading light in the ecumenical movement (W.A. Visser ’t Hooft), “formulated an important principle when it said that coöperation between churches on practical issues should not be postponed until full dogmatic agreement is reached, but that this coöperation would prepare the way for such a reunion. This

The Evangelization of the World in This Generation (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1900). [Trans.]

⁶⁵ “Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920,” in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975*, ed. Constantine G. Patelos (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), p. 40.

⁶⁶ Tsompanides, “Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν,” p. 246.

⁶⁷ “Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920,” in Patelos, *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement*, p. 40.

⁶⁸ Tsompanides, “Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν,” p. 246.

principle constituted one of the fundamental presuppositions of the ecumenical movement.”⁶⁹

The Orthodox ecumenists, totally devoid of any grounding in Orthodoxy, believed that this Encyclical was issued from an awareness of the necessity of “a testimony of faith and love before the world and of pastoral concern for the needs of suffering humanity.”⁷⁰ To this end a new “beginning” was laid, which inter alia, according to Germanos Strenopoulos,⁷¹ “widens the notion of the relationships between the members of a single church—as members of one body—so as to apply it to the relationships between several churches.”⁷² How Orthodoxy, the one and singular Body of Christ, the only True Church, is now proclaimed by the ecumenists as one and the same “Body” with heretics of many kinds, remains a fact difficult, if not impossible to explain. No explanation can be provided, as one might expect, on the basis of Holy Tradition, for such an explanation is non-existent!

It would not be superfluous to remind you that one of the proposals of this anti-Orthodox Encyclical of 1920 was the adoption of a “uniform calendar” by Orthodox and heterodox, the so-called “New Calendar,” so that they might celebrate Feasts together as a decisive measure towards mutual rapprochement. Thus, the causal relationship between the calen-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁷¹ Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateira (1872-1951), who served as Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Western and Central Europe, his see being based in London. One of the chief pioneers and architects of the ecumenical movement, he served as Vice-President of the first and second world conferences on Faith and Order (Lausanne 1927 and Edinburgh 1937, respectively) and subsequently as a member of the provisional committee of the World Council of Churches (*Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* [Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991], s.v. “Germanos [Strenopoulos]”). According to Protopresbyter George Tsetses, Metropolitan Germanos played a pivotal rôle in the composition of the 1920 Encyclical (*Οικουμενικός Θρόνος και Οικουμένη: Έπίσημα Πατριαρχικά Κείμενα* [The Ecumenical Throne and the Ecumene: official Patriarchal documents] [Katerine: Ekdoseis “Tertios,” 1989], pp. 56-57); cf. W.A. Visser ’t Hooft, *Memoirs* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 255. [Trans.]

⁷² W.A. Visser ’t Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), p. 2.

dar innovation and the heresy of ecumenism is so obvious that one is astonished by the way in which it has hitherto been treated, even by “experts” and those intensely opposed to ecumenism, as an issue entirely peripheral to the Faith and Tradition of the Orthodox Church. Is it possible, after 1920, for the calendar question to be examined independently of the ecumenical movement? Is it possible for the issue of the calendar innovation to be examined outside, and in abstraction from, the historical and spiritual context of its appearance and imposition?

This manifest mania for novelty, which is founded on erroneous and newfangled clichés, on the basis of which a new course is being plotted, demonstrates very clearly the violent rupture of the ecumenists with the Patristic Tradition of Orthodoxy. Tradition is certainly not a nostalgia for the past, but the *renewal* of all things through their immersion in and restoration by “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,”⁷³ as this Faith has been handed down, confessed, and lived in the Orthodox Church from ancient times. Protestantism, like its patron, Roman Catholicism, if it is to “live” in Christ and the Church, must “die.” It must repent, return to the House of the Father, and receive existence and form in God.

Even today, the advocates of pan-heretical ecumenism fail to understand this point. A simple “recognition of the existential identity of the other churches” was sufficient for them to trigger the participation of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement.⁷⁴ The “recognition that there is such a thing as ecclesiological pluralism,” as well as “other churches” “parallel to and independent of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church,” was sufficient to lead to a “situation of contact and relations” with them.⁷⁵

⁷³ St. Jude 3.

⁷⁴ Tsompanides, “Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν,” p. 310 (with reference to Metropolitan Chrysostomos [Konstantinides] of Ephesus).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

b3. The World Council of Churches

We arrive thus at the foundation of the World Council of Churches (wcc) in 1948, in Amsterdam, Holland: “The newly-established Council was something unprecedented,” we are informed by a contemporary champion thereof, “and differed from previous ecumenical bodies in that it was by statute and in practice a Council of Churches.”⁷⁶ The nature of the Council was defined as a “fellowship of Churches of Christ,” in line with the proposal of the 1920 Encyclical, albeit without *communio in sacris*.⁷⁷

The wcc “exists to serve as a sign and instrument of God’s mission and activity in the world.”⁷⁸ However, to this day there is still unclarity and disagreement about what exactly this Council is and about the meaning of its “nature” and its “basis.”

The Orthodox ecumenists have admitted the incompatibility between our Orthodox self-understanding and the goals pursued by the wcc,⁷⁹ since its basic goal is, in the end, the principle of “unity in

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Cf. the Constitution of the wcc: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (§1), <<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/constitution-and-rules-as-adopted.html>>.

⁷⁸ “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches,” ch. 3.5.3, <<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/common-understanding-and-vision-of-the-wcc-cuv.html>>. This document, better known by its acronym “cuv,” is a “policy statement adopted by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and commended to member churches and ecumenical partners for study and action in September 1997.” [*Trans.*]

⁷⁹ One such ecumenist from the Orthodox side was the late Father John Meyendorff, who expressed this point in an uncharacteristically forthright manner in an address to the Faith and Order meeting held in Louvain, Belgium, in 1971 (“Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind,” reprinted in Patelos, *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement*, pp. 308-324). [*Trans.*]

diversity.”⁸⁰ Moreover, their discussions concerning the priorities of the Council, its *modus operandi*, its activities, and its generally alien spirit and ethos, are well known, longstanding, and endless. In spite of this, they have become so corroded ecclesialogically by their many years of hobnobbing with their heterodox colleagues as to state that “no Christian church can any longer act or speak, or even reflect and discuss, or—I also venture to say—make decisions, in isolation,”⁸¹ or that “the one-way street syndrome should be abandoned.”⁸²

b4. Defense of the wcc by the Orthodox ecumenists

It is clear that the problem does not lie with the heterodox members of the wcc, who are in any case unpredictable. The problem lies with those regarded as its Orthodox members.

Two years ago, in his address in Geneva on the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the wcc, the ecumenist Patriarch Bartholomew extolled the “ecumenical vineyard” and the “ecumenical space” of the Council. He characterized it as a “bridge” for linking together divided “churches” and as an “inter-church forum”; he referred at length to the heretical 1920 Encyclical, issued by his see, regarding the creation of a “League of Churches”; he avowed that “[t]his fellowship remains to this day indis-

⁸⁰ See, for example, the following comments in the official report on the Sixth General Assembly of the wcc, held in 1983 in Vancouver: “Peace and justice, on the one hand, baptism, eucharist and ministry, on the other, have claimed our attention. They belong together. Indeed the aspect of Christian unity which has been most striking to us here in Vancouver is that of a eucharistic vision. Christ—the life of the world—unites heaven and earth, God and world, spiritual and secular. His body and blood, given in the elements of bread and wine, integrate liturgy and diaconate, proclamation and acts of healing.... Our eucharistic vision thus encompasses the whole reality of Christian worship, life and witness, and tends—when truly discovered—to shed new light on Christian unity in its full richness of diversity” (David Gill [ed.], *Gathered for Life: Official Report of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* [Geneva: wcc Publications, 1983], pp. 44ff). [*Trans.*]

⁸¹ Tsompanides, “Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν,” p. 306 (with reference to Metropolitan John [Zizioulas] of Pergamon).

⁸² *Ibid.* (with reference to Prof. Ioannes Petrou).

putably the most representative institutional expression of the ecumenical movement, now on its way to its centenary”; he posed the question of “reaffirming the role of the Council...and renewing confidence in it”; he affirmed that “churches witness to the Gospel in different contexts” and that for this reason their divergent views on moral issues “are not necessarily insurmountable”(!); and finally, he asked his audience not to be discouraged “when obstacles stand in our way.”⁸³

In the “Response of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the ‘Memorandum of the Sacred Community of the Holy Mountain Concerning the Participation of the Orthodox Church in the World Council of Churches,’”⁸⁴ dated January 15, 2009, there is, strangely enough, complete silence about the 1920 Encyclical, about which the Patriarch boasts so much in every other circumstance, as though it did not exist and were not the ground for Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement! Instead of a persuasive defense of the terms of Orthodox participation in the WCC, there are citations of older and more recent texts from Orthodox consultations, declarations, and position papers, with objections to the Council and replies to such objections. However, in the face of the actual reality of participation in the WCC and of its consequences, these texts prove either to be simply theoretical statements of wishful thinking or deplorable in their falsehood. Notwithstanding, they provide a strong alibi when there is a need to confront criticism from within Orthodoxy. There is also an explicit statement that non-participation in the WCC is “a preposterous idea.” How the Athonites replied to such obdurate derision is unknown.

With regard to these points, we humbly submit the following: The opinions of any Patriarch, Bishop, clergyman, theologian, or anyone else on these matters are subject to the test of Holy Scripture, of the teach-

⁸³ “Homily by the Ecumenical Patriarch H.A.H. Bartholomew at the 60th anniversary of the World Council of Churches,” <<http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2008/reports-and-documents/homily-by-the-ecumenical-patriarch-hah-bartholomew.html>>.

⁸⁴ *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (January-March 2009), pp. 63-74. For the “Memorandum of the Sacred Community,” see *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. X, No. 2 (April-June 2008), pp. 207-272.

ing of the Fathers, and of the Œcumenical Synods in general. Any completely novel view or practice which is not based on the express teaching of the Holy Fathers, or which is not, at the very least, in conformity with their spirit and their principles, is unacceptable. As St. Maximos the Confessor brilliantly summarizes the issue, a statement that is not Patristic is heretical.⁸⁵ In this sense, the newfangled neologies and inanities of the Patriarchal ecumenists, which have, presumably, been aired at contemporary pan-Orthodox consultations, are completely untenable in terms of the Fathers and of Tradition. Thus, they can be refuted as heretical, while those who uphold them should be proclaimed cacodox.

b5. A critique of the alleged Orthodox witness to the wcc

On the basis of all the lengthy disquisitions put forth by the innovationist Orthodox apologists for the wcc in order to prove that the Orthodox representatives in the Council bear witness in a substantial and demonstrable way and contribute in like manner to its functioning and deliberations by exercising a conspicuous influence on its various departments in terms of theology, liturgy, and practical service, we have the following critical observations to offer.

In truth, there is a process going on in the wcc—at times self-congratulatory, and both tedious and arduous for those involved in it—to promote an Orthodox orientation in certain areas. However, these efforts are insubstantial, if not hopeless, in the face of the spiritual reality of the wcc as a tool in the hands of its heterodox members.

Insofar as there is no common Faith—something that is not going to be achieved institutionally within the Council—and insofar as there is likewise no common Eucharistic or liturgical life, the Orthodox ecumenists not being ontologically one spiritual body with the Council or with the heterodox, joint exploration with them of Catholicity, conciliarity, liturgy, the Eucharist, service, ecology, etc., in order to provide them with helpful material for instruction and enrichment and to influence

⁸⁵ Soteropoulos, *Θέματα δογματικῆς θεολογίας καὶ πνευματικῆς ζωῆς*, pp. 15-16 (in which there are references to texts of St. Maximos).

them in either a minor or a major way, is groundless and doomed to failure. For it creates the false impression that progress is taking place at a theological and at a practical level, whereas the wcc is, in and of itself, *not* the Divinely-revealed and God-given context for the cultivation and realization of any the foregoing Orthodox principles and tenets.

All of these efforts are offered and addressed to the heterodox in the Council as a whole, and not to confessions or persons in isolation. But the Council sets itself above everyone, even though it rejects this in theory, expressing itself and acting *de facto* as a self-existent ecclesiastical entity. This being the case, to whom, in the end, is the Orthodox contribution addressed and for whom is it intended? To the Council as a whole, which supposedly does not consider itself to be a super-Church, or to individual confessions and their members?

While the heterodox in the wcc are open, both collectively and individually, to the possibility of being enriched by the Orthodox, they are plainly not disposed to convert to Orthodoxy as the fullness of faith, truth, and life.⁸⁶ This has been abundantly evident for sixty years. The wcc, or its heterodox members, might perhaps eclectically adopt certain ideas or forms of the Truth. However, these cannot be efficacious or functional when cut off from their organic totality, within a man-made framework containing an admixture of so many errors and falsehoods!

Even if, hypothetically, the Orthodox ecumenists had not suffered any other baneful consequence from their long years of participation in the wcc, they are in essence toiling in vain in a foreign land, in the “ecumenical vineyard” and “ecumenical space”—except, perhaps, for their generation of the superficial revenue of Christian solidarity, joint service, mutual aid, joint exploration of issues, common prayer, and, in general, coöperation. But all of this already constitutes the heresy of “common service” and of a totally syncretistic enterprise.

⁸⁶ Cf. the following remarks by Konrad Raiser, the then General Secretary of the wcc, in the wake of the Eighth General Assembly in Harare: “The Protestants need to accept, and many have not, that the Orthodox are a legitimate influence on the wcc. But the Orthodox have to understand [that] the Protestants will never become Orthodox” (cited in *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. xvi, No. 2 [1999], p. 17). [*Trans.*]

The Orthodox ecumenists have injudiciously committed themselves to a precarious and hazardous venture, replete with unprecedented pitfalls; and they have become so embroiled in it that they cannot conceive of themselves without it. This is because, from the outset, they have made the basis of their endeavor the conviction that they are “members of the same body”⁸⁷ with the entire company of the heterodox and that belonging to the wcc is “more inclusive” than belonging to their local Church.⁸⁸ This idea is arbitrary, groundless, and perfidious, and also a blind alley, for it has no validity either in reality or in experience. It is a lie!

b6. Continuation of the foregoing critique: the “salt” loses its “saltiness”

There is, however, a deeper issue at stake. The Orthodox ecumenists who take part in the work of the wcc have stated that they do not do so in a spirit of criticism,⁸⁹ but in order to help their colleagues to see the full truth, which they possess. But this raises two serious problems:

First, the Orthodox ecumenists are exposed to influence on the part of the heterodox, since their relationship is reciprocal. The heterodox, moreover, are continuing their modernizing course without let or hindrance and are moving still further away from the somewhat traditional forms of faith and morality that perhaps prevailed hitherto. The process of their apostasy and alienation is so rapid and blatant (the syncretistic mixing of Christianity with primitive forms of culture and religion, the

⁸⁷ See note 64.

⁸⁸ See the “Toronto Statement,” iv.3: “the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body” <<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>>.

⁸⁹ Tsompanides, “Ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν,” pp. 273-274. Cf. p. 309: “The Orthodox believe that they constitute the one true Church, but they do not present the Orthodox Church as a judge of the ecclesiality or non-ecclesiality of the other Christian communities. This is expressed in the following principle of the Orthodox Church: “We know where the Church is, but we do not have the authority to pass judgment or to say where the Church is not.”

use of gender-neutral language, uncritical acceptance of new members, politically-oriented Third-World theologies, feminism, women priests, moral laxity, the blessing of deviant [“alternative”] sexual partnerships, the justification or toleration of abortion, etc.) and the metastasis of this alienation within the wcc is so acute that the Orthodox are in a state of constant disquietude, bewilderment, protest, and disenchantment as they observe that even what they consider their meager success in certain areas is evaporating through the activities of their colleagues.⁹⁰

At this point the second problem becomes quite acute. The Church, as “the pillar and ground of the truth,”⁹¹ acts in the world evangelically and redemptively, that is, not only charitably, but also reprovably, confessionally, and critically, with the result that she either brings about conversion or suffers persecution. Her prophetic presence and dynamic in the world puts her in a state of irreconcilability and incompatibility with it. If this is lost, it means that the Church has forfeited her capacity to function as a missionary force and that her members and her representatives have become secularized. Consequently, the presence of Orthodox ecumenists in the wcc, judged by its results, proves that this much-vaunted “witness” is inconsonant with the Church’s life and mission.

Furthermore, insofar as the nature of the wcc has not to this day been sufficiently clarified (from its own side), the nature of the presence and activity of the Orthodox in it is inherently obscure. It is clearly questionable how Orthodoxy can successfully accomplish its saving mission within an inter-confessional organization, which is neither the world nor the Church. Can the meager results of its putative witness in the heterodox world possibly be regarded as examples of truly Apostolic, prophetic, and charismatic presence and activity? Certainly not! If we also take

⁹⁰ See the recent statement by the ecumenist Patriarch Kirill of Moscow that the appointment of a woman “bishop” as leader of the Evangelical Church in Germany very clearly proved that the fifty-year bilateral dialogue between them has, in essence, yielded absolutely no results (“Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church: Many Protestant communities do not even try to really preach Christian values in secular society but rather prefer to adapt to its standards,” <<http://www.mospat.ru/en/2010/02/02/news12456>>).

⁹¹ 1 St. Timothy 3:15.

into account the corrosion of these same Orthodox ecumenists by their many years of hobnobbing with the heterodox in an institutional framework, which guarantees the Church anything but the capacity to function unimpeded and unfettered, then we are bound to accept the bitter truth that the “salt” has become, or at least is becoming, “saltless.”⁹² But for how long?

b7. The Roman Catholic view of Christian unity

We will now move on to another important topic in contemporary ecumenism. I have already discussed in an earlier presentation⁹³ the dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholics that has been going on since 1980 and, in particular, the Tenth Meeting of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue held in Ravenna, Italy, in October of 2007. My basic contention was that the Latins are deliberately promoting their agenda of “Roman ecumenism” for the sake of achieving a Uniate-style union with the Orthodox.

The Second Vatican Council and the Encyclical of the previous Pope, John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, clearly proclaim that the Church of Christ, one and unique, subsists in their own “Catholic Church,” in the sense that it is present and manifested therein. To the extent that elements of sanctity and truth are to be found in other Christian communities, the singular Church of Christ is present and operative in them.⁹⁴ The “new understanding of the Church,” according to the Roman Catholics, consists in a “Communion of Churches,” to which all “Christian Churches” in some way belong, relations between them being defined as relations between “Sister Churches.” This applies especially to the Eastern Churches, and above all to the Orthodox Church. This greater or lesser

⁹² Cf. St. Mark 9:50.

⁹³ “The Dialogue With the Vatican and Expressions of Opposition to Papism,” Sunday of Orthodoxy 2008, in *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνοστιαίς καὶ Μαρτυρία*, Vol. III, No. 2 (April-June 2008), pp. 17-39.

⁹⁴ *Dominus Iesus*, §17, <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html>.

“mutual communion of Churches” gives them the capacity to traverse the path of searching for their unity, while the idea of “annexation,” on the model of the “Uniate Churches” is ostensibly being abandoned—though without the abolition of the “Uniate Churches,” which are called to continue existing freely, caring for their flocks.⁹⁵

The ecumenical movement, according to the Catholics, aims at common growth and development in faith, although they also advert to legitimate and justifiable differences that are not contrary to the unity of the Church.⁹⁶ An important hermeneutical principle for them is that of the distinction between the deposit of faith and the way in which the Faith has been proclaimed.⁹⁷ Understanding of the deposit of faith admits, according to them, of progress by the Grace of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸ Thus, different formulations are not necessarily contradictory, but often complementary.⁹⁹ However, polemical disputes transformed into irreconcilable outlooks what in practice were views aimed at investigating the same reality, but from differing perspectives.¹⁰⁰ The ecumenical movement aspires to the “enrichment of the Churches,” since their progressive estrangement has “deprived them of a wealth of mutual gifts and assistance.”¹⁰¹

The issue of the so-called Primacy of the Bishop of Rome must be put in this context. That which, according to the Latins, was the cause

⁹⁵ Giannes Spiteres (Yannis Spiteris), “Η Καθολική Ἐκκλησία καὶ οἱ ἄλλες Χριστιανικὲς Ἐκκλησίες” [The Catholic Church and the Other Christian Churches], in *Ὁ Καθολικισμός* [Catholicism], ed. Theodoros Kontides (Athens: Ekdoseis Hellenika Grammata, 2000), pp. 245-247.

Giannes Spiteres, a Capuchin theologian of Greek nationality and for some years special advisor to the late Pope John Paul II on Greek Orthodox affairs, is now the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kerkyra (Corfu). [*Trans.*]

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁹⁷ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §6, <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html>.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, §4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, §17.

¹⁰⁰ Spiteres, “Η Καθολική Ἐκκλησία καὶ οἱ ἄλλες Χριστιανικὲς Ἐκκλησίες,” pp. 249-250.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

of separation can now constitute “the special charism that the Catholic Church offers to the other Churches: the visible ministry of unity.” This ministry corresponds, according to them, to the will of Christ for the structure of the Church. For this reason, the other “Churches” cannot deny this reality, but can examine together the extent to which it is based on the New Testament or at least is not antithetical thereto. The Catholics emphatically stress that it should be “understood by all that this is not an arbitrary lust for power, but a profound conviction of faith.” This ministry has assumed different forms over the centuries and may “in the future assume a new aspect which would take into account the demands, the values, and the traditions of the other Churches. However, this does not mean that the Catholic Church can deny the essence of the teaching of the First and Second Vatican Councils”!¹⁰²

8. The response of the Orthodox ecumenists to Roman Catholic ecumenism

We have expounded at some length on these Catholic ideas in order to understand and demonstrate that the contemporary Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue quite clearly operates within the spirit and framework of such ideas and is evolving towards their desired goal. At the same time,

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 251. The Papists are assuredly unshaken in their heretical adherence to Papal Primacy, in spite of their ecumenical overtures. This has, moreover, been expressed relatively recently in a document by Pope Benedict XVI concerning the doctrine of the Church (June 29, 2007). In this document, the Pope affirms that the “one Church of Christ, which we confess in the Creed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic...subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him.” The “Oriental Churches” (Orthodox), which are not in communion with the “Catholic Church,” “the visible head of which is the Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Peter,” “lack something,” that is, are “defective” (“Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church,” <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html>). Quite evidently, according to the Catholics, the goal of the dialogue with the Orthodox is to render them “non-defective” through their recognition of a form of Primacy acceptable to them. In this sense, the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue has been correctly denounced as a “Theater of the Absurd” (Prof. Ioannes Kornarakes).

we have done so in order to show that this dialogue bears no relation to the traditional, Patristic standpoint of Orthodoxy that we observed when setting forth the views of St. Symeon of Thessalonica.

Hence, the polarization discernible in our days between advocates and adversaries of this dialogue is entirely comprehensible and to be expected.

The Roman Catholics declare unequivocally at every opportunity, through Cardinal Walter Kasper, co-chairman of the Commission for Dialogue, that “a new type of Primacy must be found for the Orthodox Churches,”¹⁰³ or that *unity means preservation of difference, restoration of communion, spiritual enrichment, and sharing of the Holy Gifts.*¹⁰⁴

Likewise, the ecumenists, in the realm of innovationist Orthodoxy, openly proclaim their broad ecumenist ecclesiology, which goes hand in glove with Catholic thinking.

The ecumenist Patriarch Bartholomew, to cite a typical example, delivered an address to some Catholic bishops in Constantinople a year ago, referring to the “Sister Churches” of Old and New Rome, to “brother hierarchs,” to “unique encounters,” which are “more than merely historical,” being “sacred, inasmuch as they restore healing to a broken Church,” and to “joint declarations” on burning issues, which “the Body of Christ demands...of us as Bishops of the Church.”¹⁰⁵

This speech of the Patriarch, with its completely novel and anti-Orthodox ideas, is so clear and transparent as to render superfluous any ex-

¹⁰³ See Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of the Great Meteora, “Η πορεία τοῦ οἰκουμενικοῦ διαλόγου με βάση τὴν ὀρθόδοξη πατερικὴ διδασκαλία καὶ τὴν δογματικὴ ἐκκλησιολογικὴ συνείδηση” [The course of ecumenical dialogue on the basis of Orthodox Patristic doctrine and dogmatic ecclesiological conscience], in *Ἐν Συνειδήσει* (June 2009), p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26. A few months ago, this past November, Cardinal Kasper stated in a similar vein during his trip to Belarus: “We do not want to write off our differences, and we cannot, but for us Christians love is the ultimate commandment” <http://aktines.blogspot.com/2009/11/walter-kasper_975.html>.

¹⁰⁵ “Greeting by His All Holiness [*sic*] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Participants of the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Southeastern Europe” (7 March 2009), <<http://www.patriarchate.org/greek/docdisplay.php?lang=en&id=1043&tla=en>>.

planation of its true meaning!

The Bulgarian Bishop of Central Europe, Tikhon, recently declared, in the presence of Pope Benedict XVI in Rome, his desire for unity, communion, and concelebration with the Roman Catholics: “People don’t understand our divisions and our discussions,” he said; “the theological dialogue...is certainly important, but we should not be afraid to say that we must find as soon as possible the way to celebrate together... A Catholic will not become an Orthodox and vice versa, but we must approach the altar together”!¹⁰⁶

Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and Poland stated a month ago in Germany before a heterodox audience that our dogmatic differences “are a gift of God, so that we might discover the diversity of the world.”¹⁰⁷ The Metropolitan of Poland, it appears, has outdone even the Catholics in avant-gardism and liberalism!

The Moscow Patriarchate published several months ago “a book with writings by Pope Benedict XVI, an initiative without precedent in history,” which “will soon be reciprocated by Rome, with writings by Patriarch Kirill collected in a volume published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.”¹⁰⁸

Relatively recently, high-ranking officials of the Moscow Patriarchate have publicly confirmed that their Patriarchate—despite the rupture of ecclesiastical communion—regards Roman Catholicism as a true and valid “Sister Church,” with Sacramental Grace, and believes that it belongs, together with the Latins, to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ”!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ “Bulgarian Orthodox Leader Affirms Desire For Unity” (22.10.2009), <<http://www.zenit.org/article-27299?l=english>>.

¹⁰⁷ *Παρακαταθήκη*, No. 69 (November-December 2009), p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ “‘The Pope Is the First Among the Patriarchs.’ Just How Remains to Be Seen,” <<http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1341841?eng=y>>.

¹⁰⁹ “The primacy: a help, not a weight: interview with Metropolitan Philarete of Minsk by Gianni Valente,” <<http://www.30giorni.it/us/articolo.asp?id=9356>>; cf. “A member of the Holy Synod of the MP states that his Church recognizes Roman Catholic Mysteries,” *Vertograd*, Newsletter No. 76 (October 21, 2009). The statement about the recognition by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Mysteries of the Papists was made by the then Archbishop [now Metropolitan] Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Volokolamsk during a broadcast

News items along the same lines are frequently broadcast from other parts of the Orthodox world: Romania, Serbia, Alexandria, Antioch, Italy, Belgium, Germany, the USA, etc.

This concurrence with the Catholic view of ecumenism is revealing and startling. Anti-Orthodox pro-Papal fever has skyrocketed! But what is going on in our country?

b9. Ravenna causes division

Archbishop Hieronimos of the New Calendar Church stated in a Roman Catholic newspaper¹¹⁰ that the controversial Ravenna document, which essentially expresses a view of unity characteristic of Papist ecclesiology, represents “a positive step, which awaits further developments,” while asserting that “isolated views or extreme reactions do not express the official position of the Church.” Archbishop Hieronimos hastened to dissociate the views of his Church administration from the views of those in opposition, jumping the gun, as it were, at a time when there is no synodal endorsement either of the Ravenna document or of any other document by the Joint Commission for Dialogue.

Of course, His Beatitude also hastened to pacify public opinion here in Greece last year, following the storm provoked by the incredible statements of a clergyman from the Archdiocese of Athens in Thessalonike regarding the union of Orthodox and Roman Catholics by saying that they did not express his views. To be precise, at an academic meeting on the subject of “The Theological Dialogue Between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches,” held at the School of Theology of the University of Thessalonike on May 20, 2009, Father Pavlos Koumarios posed the following question: “Might it not perhaps [be prudent] for the

of “The Church and the World” on the television channel “Russia,” October 17, 2009 (<<http://vera.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=237432>>): “To all intents and purposes, mutual recognition of each other’s Mysteries already exists between us. We do not have communion in the Mysteries, but we do recognize each other’s Mysteries.”

¹¹⁰ Archimandrite Athanasios, “Ἡ πορεία τοῦ οἰκουµενικοῦ διαλόγου,” p. 26 (*Avvenire*, April 15, 2009).

two Churches [to] recognize...that they constitute two wrongly separated pieces of the Body of Christ, and for us to restore unity and continue the dialogue afterwards? It would be more fruitful. Besides, we Orthodox have differences among ourselves.”¹¹¹

Another Orthodox professor said that “we must transcend the Fathers, so that we can move towards union with the Roman Catholics.”¹¹² This admission demonstrates the magnitude of the blasphemy: The Holy Fathers, as “obstacles,” have to be transcended! But is this how they hope to “succeed”? Whoever is separated from the Holy Fathers is separated from God and His Church, no matter how many alleged Church unions might be achieved here on earth.

It was Demetrios Tselengides, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Thessalonike, as an exponent of the Patristic spirit and mind of Orthodoxy, who divided aright the word of Truth at this ecumenist meeting. In a critical analysis of the Ravenna document, he drew, *inter alia*, the following important and extremely striking and interesting conclusions:

In this joint text, Orthodox ecclesiology is extended and applied in an inadmissible way to the heterodox. This is done without any qualification, that is, without taking into account the existing dogmatic differences, something which ecclesialogically legitimates heterodoxy and places it on the same level with Orthodoxy. This ecclesiological innovation pervades the entire joint statement and gives rise to distinct ecclesiological absurdities, which alter the heretofore self-understanding of the Church.... The joint statement appears clearly to presuppose that Orthodox and Roman Catholics belong to the ‘One Church’ and that Roman Catholics have a common Apostolic Faith with us, despite their identification of essence and energy in God, despite the *Filioque*, despite their erroneous dogmatic teaching concerning the created character of uncreated and deifying Grace. All of the foregoing doctrines, to which Roman Catholics adhere steadfastly to this day, in practice invalidate the nature of the Church as a ‘communion of de-

¹¹¹ Nikolaos Basileiades, “Ο Θεολογικός Διάλογος Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ Παπισμοῦ” [The theological dialogue between Orthodoxy and Papism], *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (June-September 2009), p. 408. <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/E35CF340.print.el.aspx>>.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 409.

ification,' in the ontological sense of the term, that is, man's actual, and not symbolic, participation in the Divine life.... The ecclesiological chasm between the two sides is at present unbridgeable. This is due to the erroneous methodology of the theological dialogue, that is, to the adoption of dialogue 'on equal terms,' with the present dogmatic differences.... The basis of our dialogue, judged from a theological standpoint, is, unfortunately, entirely flawed, because fundamental Biblical and Patristic prescriptions and presuppositions have been set aside. Hence, the inherent failure of the current theological dialogue is a foregone conclusion.... Since the beginning of the twentieth century, with the famous Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920, the advice of St. Gregory Palamas to the Roman Catholics¹¹³ began, in essence, to be disregarded, and other preconditions for theological dialogue with the heterodox began to be adopted. Thus, a different, non-Patristic course was undertaken, with the inevitable consequence that 'we are now going in a different direction, without (perhaps) realizing it.'¹¹⁴

110. The Confession of Faith against ecumenism

Amid this tense atmosphere, in April of 2009 an ad hoc "Convention of Orthodox Clergy and Monks" drew up a "Confession of Faith Against Ecumenism."¹¹⁵ It seems that Protopresbyter Theodoros Zeses, who was Professor of Patrology in the School of Theology at the University of Thessalonike and also an esteemed and beloved teacher of the present writer at the school in question some twenty years ago, played a

¹¹³ That they remove the *Filioque* from the Symbol of Faith before any serious dialogue can be undertaken. "It would be entirely proper for us [the Orthodox] not to ask you [the Latins] even to discuss the issue, unless you desist from adding to the Holy Symbol [of Faith]. Once you have removed the phrase that you added, then we can enquire whether or not the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son and confirm whether what comes to light is in agreement with the God-bearing Fathers" (St. Gregory Palamas, *Concerning the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, Discourse 1.4, in *Συγγράμματα* [Writings], ed. Panagiotes Chrestou (Thessalonica: 1962), Vol. 1, p. 31, ll. 27-31. [*Trans.*])

¹¹⁴ "Ορθόδοξοι προβληματισμοί με άφορμή τὸ κείμενο τῆς Ραβέννας" [Orthodox Problematics Arising from the Ravenna Document], in *Ἐν Συνειδήσει* (June 2009), pp. 110, 107.

¹¹⁵ *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 2 (April-June 2009), pp. 176-202; <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/FA9AF77F.en.aspx>>.

leading rôle in this endeavor.

This succinct document is comprised of nine short paragraphs and operates within the Patristic framework of Orthodox Faith and Tradition. Accordingly, clergy, monastics, and laity belonging to the so-called official Churches within the innovationist sphere—whether they were in Greece (including the Holy Mountain), Cyprus, or abroad—hastened to sign it, as the ideas contained in the document concerned them. The result is that the signatures to date (February 2010) have reached 19,000, with new signatures continually being added.

In its preamble, the editorial committee states that it drew up this text “as an expression of their legitimate anxiety and agony over all that is going on in the realm of ecumenism, which has rightly been characterized as a panheresy, indeed, as the worst heresy of all ages.” Thus, those who drew up the Confession and have signed, or are going to sign it “are participating, as is proper, in the formation of the conscience of the Church regarding the panheresy of ecumenism, and it is their hope that the Bishops will, as a body, assume their responsibilities and issue a formal synodal condemnation of it.”¹¹⁶

In a paragraph concerning Roman Catholicism, the authors of the “Confession” denounce both the ancient and the more recent errors and heresies of the Latins and make special mention of the heretical character of the Papacy and of the lack of Grace in the Mysteries of the Roman Catholics, with references to the writings of St. Symeon of Thessalonica.

In a paragraph concerning the critical attitude of the Church towards heresies up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the authors refer specifically to the newfangled Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920, which recognized heresies as “churches.” Thereafter, the path was opened for the heresy of ecumenism to develop in the domain of the Orthodox Church. This false teaching “legitimizes all heresies as ‘churches’ and assaults the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. A novel doctrine of the Church, a novel ecclesiology, has now been devel-

¹¹⁶ “Μερικὲς διευκρινήσεις περὶ τῆς «Ὁμολογίας Πίστεως»” [Some clarifications regarding the “Confession of Faith”], <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/>>.

oped and is being taught and imposed by Patriarchs and Bishops.” It is also admitted that “[w]e are now embedded in the ‘World Council of Churches’ and have, merely by our incorporation therein, essentially betrayed our ecclesiological self-understanding.”

Subsequently, in the eighth paragraph, it is stated that ecumenical activists in the realm of Orthodoxy are placing themselves “outside the Church.” Someone who is evidently a member of the editorial committee of the “Confession” wrote a detailed article¹¹⁷ specifically on this expression, in view of diverse comments thereon. We sense that it comes significantly close to our own ecclesiological viewpoint, as this is set forth in our position paper “On the Status of Uncondemned Heretics in the Church.”¹¹⁸

We, who by God’s Grace are Orthodox in resistance against ecumenism and follow the traditional Church Calendar, are especially joyful over this hopeful development, which arose albeit after a long delay. Among other things, it confirmed our humble struggle, which has lasted for some decades, and our steadfast and consistent confession. To the extent that it is recognized by the text of the recently published “Confession” that the 1920 Encyclical is the cause of the proclamation of ecumenism in the Orthodox world, we think that there is also an awareness that the same Encyclical is the underlying cause of the calendar innovation, as a symptom of the imposition of ecumenism on the Orthodox world. This being so, we hope, with good reason, and sincerely pray that these our brethren, confessors against ecumenism, to whom we extend the hand of love and solidarity, will not shun rapprochement among those who are truly Orthodox.

With regard to certain expressions employed by the editors in the preamble to the “Confession,” concerning the avoidance of “schismat-

¹¹⁷ Melenikiotes, “Οἱ Οἰκουμενιστὲς θέτουν ὄντως ἑαυτοὺς ἐκτὸς Ἐκκλησίας — Διευκρινίσεις ἐπὶ τῆς «Ὁμολογίας Πίστεως κατὰ τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ»” [The ecumenists truly place themselves outside the Church: Clarifications concerning the “Confession of Faith Against Ecumenism”], *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July-September 2009), pp. 373-392.

¹¹⁸ *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (2001), pp. 2-15; <http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_en/E3a3boo3TheisAkritonAiretikonOEM1.pdf>.

ic tendencies” and submission to “canonical ecclesiastical jurisdictions,” if they were not written for obvious reasons of expediency, but evince a deeper aversion from, and condemnation of, their anti-innovationist Orthodox brethren who are walled off, then the authors sully their witness and make themselves captive to pusillanimity and prejudice, something which we sincerely hope is not the case.

Furthermore, the editors are well aware that a struggle to confess the Faith and conscious Eucharistic communion with Shepherds who have been denounced for wrong belief, is an oxymoron. The Holy Fathers were not content simply to denounce, in a confessional spirit, those who were essentially pseudo-shepherds and pseudo-teachers, collecting signatures from clergy and laity, so as to “persuade” (?) the Bishops to condemn heresy! As soon as they detected any false teaching, they immediately broke communion with those individuals who were transmitting it, without pseudo-arguments and pseudo-dilemmas about the potential or non-potential nature of breaking communion or solely “coördinated” walling-off, etc.

11. The aftermath of the “Confession”

The “Confession” was signed by certain Bishops in Greece and abroad—fewer than ten, one of whom backed down and withdrew his signature. The official Church authorities were evidently not impressed by it, and, in fact, found it irritating. The large number of signatures led to a harsh reaction on the part of the ecumenists.

The first reaction against the “neo-resisters,” as he called them, was the veteran ecumenist Father George Tsetses of Geneva, who wrote a scathing critique of the “Confession” in his typically condemnatory and sarcastic style.¹¹⁹ Suitable responses were issued by several supporters of the “Confession,” although in some of the responses there was obvious

¹¹⁹ Great Protopresbyter George Tsetses, “Ενισταμένων «Όμολογία Πίστεως»” [The “Confession of Faith” of the Resisters], *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. xi, No. 2 (April-June 2009), pp. 223-227; <<http://www.amen.gr/index.php?mod=news&op=article&aid=169>>.

confusion about the identity and views of us Orthodox in resistance.¹²⁰

For his part, the ecumenist Patriarch Bartholomew hastened, by way of a stern letter to Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens, to censure those who had composed and signed the “Confession” as being motivated by zealot and schismatic tendencies and as showing contempt for unanimous pan-Orthodox synodal decisions regarding dialogue with the herodox.¹²¹ He requested Archbishop Hieronymos to take appropriate measures!

However, the Patriarch, in appealing to unanimous synodal decisions, did not take into account the well-known ecclesiological principle concerning whether and when the plenitude of the Church declared its acceptance of these decisions and concerning whether and when the conscience of the Church ratified what was decided. Synodal decisions express truth and righteousness and are therefore mandatory and binding to the degree to which they are identical to the Truth, which flows from the Spirit of Truth.¹²² For this to happen, the Bishops who make

¹²⁰ A series of responses to the views put forth by Father George Tsetses was published in the same issue of *Θεοδρομία* (pp. 228-274).

A typical example of confusion regarding the identity of the Old Calendarist Orthodox in resistance, that is, ourselves, is a reference in an article by the theologian Alexandros Philippou, “The ‘Confession of Faith’: Clarifications and Misunderstandings” (p. 252), in which, more out of obvious, though certainly inadmissible, ignorance, he characterizes us as “schismatics” who do not accept “the Mysteries of the Church of Christ.” Perhaps before they write and publish such crude inaccuracies, they ought to scrutinize and check the truth of these assertions?

Articles were also published in the same issue of *Θεοδρομία* in which the authors explain why they refuse to sign the “Confession.” Thus, Ioannes Kornarakes, in his “Letter” (pp. 280-284), opines, *inter alia*, that the “Confession” is “a war of words and nothing else—only for show” (<http://apotixisi.blogspot.com/2009/06/blog-post_14.html#links>), while the St. Theodore the Studite Orthodox Christian Association in its “Letter” (p. 285), regards the “Confession” as a text that is “Orthodox indeed, but, to put it very mildly, lukewarm, defective, and ineffectual.”

¹²¹ “Επιστολή Βαρθολομαίου σὲ Ἱερώνυμο γιὰ τὴν «Ὁμολογία Πίστεως»” [Epistle of [Patriarch] Bartholomew to [Archbishop] Hieronymos regarding the “Confession of Faith”], *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July-September 2009), pp. 330-334; <<http://www.amen.gr/index.php?mod=news&op=article&aid=694>>.

¹²² Nikolaos G. Xenakes, *Ὁρθόδοξος Δογματική* [Orthodox Dogmatics] (Athens: Ekdo-seis Ennoia, 2006), Vol. I, pp. 159-161.

the decisions must be recipients of Grace. Any synodal decisions that are manifestly innovative and modernist or are understood in one way and implemented in another way by the same Bishops are assuredly not infallible or binding and do not constitute an exact and unerring standard for Church policy.

The “Convention of Orthodox Clergy and Monks,” which was directly responsible for the “Confession,” also sent a letter to Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens,¹²³ in which they make it clear that their opposition to ecumenism does not call any pan-Orthodox decisions into question, even though these “do not override the decisions of Ecumenical Synods or the dogmatic teaching and conscience of the Church.” They explain that the critique which they have mounted pertains to the “implementation and acceptance in practice of the panheresy of ecumenism.”

There follows a series of crushing questions directed to the Patriarch himself, concerning what synodal decisions endorsed his participation in Papal Masses at the Vatican, his exchange of the kiss of peace with the Pope at the Phanar, his participation in joint prayers and acts of worship with the heterodox, the heretical notion of “Sister Churches” and of the “two lungs,” acceptance of heterodox baptism and of the Vatican as a Church and the Pope as a canonical Bishop who shares responsibility for the shepherding of Christians.... Finally, they note, quite correctly, the habitual doublespeak of the ecumenists according to circumstance and also emphasize the “disparagement” of synodal decisions on the issue of the Unia; for while the Unia has been condemned, the condemnation has itself been bypassed and followed by recognition of the Unia and the placing of Orthodox, Catholics, and Uniates on the same ecclesiological level, since from the outset of the dialogue Uniates have taken part as interlocutors.

¹²³ “Επιστολή κληρικών πρὸς τὴν Ἱεραρχία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος» [A letter of the clergy to the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece], *Θεοδρομια*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July-September 2009), p. 349; <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/1CBDB870.el.aspx>>; for an English version (albeit not entirely satisfactory), see <http://www.oodegr.com/english/koinwnia/koinwnika/letter_clergy2Hierarchy.htm>.

b12. In anticipation of the meeting of Orthodox and Catholics in Cyprus

The Athonite Fathers (the Doctrinal Commission of the Holy Community), in anticipation of the meeting of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Cyprus, in October of 2009, drew up a “A Preliminary Report on the Prospects of the Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, With Reference to the Rôle of the Bishop of Rome During the First Millennium.”¹²⁴

In this report they state unequivocally that “this Dialogue is designed to lead to a Uni-ate-type union of Orthodox and Roman Catholics through the recognition of a form of Papal Primacy without the removal of dogmatic differences, that is, without Papism relinquishing its heretical teachings.”

In anticipation of the meeting in Cyprus, Prof. Demetrios Tselengides sent a letter to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece with a very important and noteworthy statement of the problems raised by this meeting. Among other things, he writes:

The planned theological discussion of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome ‘in greater depth’...is methodologically inopportune and essentially a hysteron proteron. This is because, in accordance with theological and Patristic protocol, it would have to be preceded without fail by a theological discussion of our fundamental difference with the Roman Catholics in dogma, and especially the *Filioque*, Papal Infallibility, and created Grace, which they erroneously continue to uphold.... Only when our doctrines are completely identical can there be any discussion of the administration of the Church. These differences in dogma...place the Roman Catholics outside the Church.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July-September 2009), pp. 427-435.

¹²⁵ “Διάλογος Ὁρθόδοξων καὶ Ρωμαιοκαθολικῶν” [Dialogue Between Orthodox and Roman Catholics], *ibid.*, pp. 410-412; <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/404D398F.print.el.aspx>>. It is striking that the anti-ecumenist Bishop Artemije of Raska and Prizren poses the same set of problems in his letter (May 19, 2008) “To the Holy Synod” of the Serbian Church: “How can there be any talk of the ‘place of the Bishop of Rome in the Church,’ when the ‘Bishop-Pope’ of Rome is not in the Church but in heresy, outside

The content of this letter annoyed the co-chairman of the Commission for Dialogue, Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, who hastened, through his letter “To All the Metropolitans,”¹²⁶ to seek refuge in the familiar method of invoking decisions by Primates of local Churches regarding continuation of the Dialogue and its agenda, that is, its focus on the Primacy of the Pope, and posed the question: “Are we to obey synodal decisions, as we are already doing—and being attacked for so doing—or the ‘zealots’ of Orthodoxy?”

Prof. Tselengides responded appropriately,¹²⁷ explaining that he was asking that, in approaching the Dialogue, the Church express herself in a truly synodal way.

In the wake of so much turmoil, the Holy Synod of the New Calendar Church of Greece dealt, at the beginning of last October, with the issue of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue and with the “Confession of Faith” of those opposed to the Dialogue, which it regarded as “redundant,” that is, simply uncalled-for and unnecessary.¹²⁸

After all of this, and in a climate of intense reaction by clergy and laity who had become aware of the issues at stake and who were expressing their protests publicly and even being mistreated for this, the Eleventh Meeting of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church convened in Paphos, Cyprus from October 16-23, 2009. The Commission studied the draft of a document on the subject of

the Church? Would his return to the Church not be the indispensable precondition for any discussion about his place in the Church? Has the union of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches not been achieved in advance through the Ravenna document?” (*ibid.*, p. 421; <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/7FB52234.el.aspx>>).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 442-444; <<http://www.amen.gr/index.php?mod=news&op=article&aid=693>>.

¹²⁷ “Απάντηση Τσελεγγίδη στον Μητροπολίτη Περγάμου” [Reply of Tselengides to the Metropolitan of Pergamon], *ibid.*, pp. 445-448; <<http://www.impantokratoros.gr/6F38AF29.el.aspx>>.

¹²⁸ “Ανακοινωθὲν τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος” [Communiqué of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece], *ibid.*, pp. 449-451; <<http://www.amen.gr/index.php?mod=news&op=article&aid=770>>.

“The Rôle of the Bishop of Rome in the Communion of the Church in the First Millennium,” which had been composed by a joint editorial committee in Hagios Nikolaos, Crete, in 2008. It did not, however, complete its proceedings, and decided to continue them at the next plenary meeting in Vienna, Austria, in September of 2010.¹²⁹

b13. Epilogue

The conclusions to be drawn from this lengthy survey of the most recent—and rapid—developments in matters of Faith are a mixture of the pleasant and the unpleasant.

The especially lively awakening of Orthodox anti-ecumenism in days of truly great indifference, relativism, and apostasy from the Orthodox Faith and ethos discernible both in our country and throughout the world is an event that affords both consolation and hope. The Grace of God is working wondrously to breed and bring forth new Confessors. We pray for the fulfillment of their Confession and the rapprochement of divided Orthodox.

If Orthodoxy has anything to offer to the heterodox and, in general, to our globalized society, it is assuredly not interminable dialogues, be they inter-Christian, interfaith, or inter-cultural, within an erroneous framework, at that, and with an erroneous agenda, an erroneous trajectory, and erroneous results. Neither is it ecological activities within the same welter of confusion.

What Orthodoxy does have to offer and reveal, now and always, is the spirit of the *Philokalia*: Love for the beauty of the most sweet Bridegroom Christ, the true Lover of mankind and of every man, and also of the whole of creation, Who restores “every man” to His true beauty in accordance with His image and likeness, only on one condition: repentance and incorporation into His one and singular Body,

¹²⁹ *Θεοδρομία*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July-September 2009), pp. 469-472; “Communique of Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of the 11th Plenary Session,” <<http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/11th-plenary-session-communique-2009>>; “Orthodox-Catholic Commission Studies Primacy of Peter,” <<http://www.zenit.org/article-27320?l=english>>.

since the Lord is One, His Faith is One, Baptism is One, and the Un-created and transformative Grace of His Mysteries is One. It is within the Body of the Church that we experience true communion with God, with the members of the Body, and with creation, through a purely ascetical, Eucharistic, and eschatological orientation. If it were not a matter of the sole hope of the world, the Saints from ages past, the Fathers and Mothers of our Holy Orthodox Faith, would not have labored unto death, nor would they have eagerly shed their blood!

Our responsibility, as Orthodox anti-ecumenists struggling for the unity of the Faith, to witness to the Truth, and, in essence, to the deification of man, is very great. Let us transform it into prayer, vigilance, steadfastness, missionary activity, and practical service, so that we might prove ourselves good and faithful servants. Our true ecumenical vocation, at once both Evangelical and Orthodox, is to be holy and to impart light with all of our being and in every detail of our life: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”¹³⁰ In this way we shall be signs of God’s presence in the world, beckoning those who are well-disposed to the Truth and, at the same time, reproving those who are ill-disposed and wicked: “for all men have not faith.”¹³¹

If the path and witness of Orthodoxy in the floundering modern world were of a Patristic, traditional, confessional, spiritual, and missionary nature, Orthodoxy would be making a preëminently vital, valuable, and beneficial contribution to the world. A rejection of ecumenism does not turn Orthodoxy into a ghetto, as the “cosmopolitan” ecumenists aver, nor does it relegate it to the margins of history, to isolation, inferiority, and an inability to confront contemporary reality. On the contrary, such a rejection purifies Orthodoxy of the pernicious “elemental spirits of the world”¹³² and liberates it from the influence of the Evil One, so that it might fulfill its saving mission unimpeded.

¹³⁰ St. Matthew 5:16.

¹³¹ II Thessalonians 3:2.

¹³² Colossians 2:8.

The present impenitence of the ecumenists, who are, in fact, hardening their attitude towards reactions against their apostasy, is a cause of grief and sorrow. May the Lord grant them repentance and sobriety, so that they might understand their true obligation before God, the Church, and the world.

Until this comes to pass, let us be characterized, in a steadfast and responsible way, by our circumspect censure of error and our confession of Orthodox truth and life. The struggle, it appears, will be a long one, and the tribulations many and immeasurable.

We close with an encouraging exhortation from our instructor and guide tonight, St. Symeon of Thessalonica, who addresses us in a timely manner:

Guard the Faith and struggle in its defense, so that, with God's help, you might be crowned together with Paul, who says: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day' [11 St. Timothy 4:7-8]. And he goes on to say, 'and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' ...Hence, not only Paul, but also all who have believed in Christ and have kept His confession and Faith will be crowned. Wherefore, I beseech you, guard the legacy of the Faith.¹³³

¹³³ *Έργα Θεολογικά*, “Επιστολή στηρικτική” [Epistle of support], p. 115.