

GUIDELINES FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Published by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America and commended to the clergy for guidance.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

FORWARD

PART ONE

ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL GUIDELINES

GENERAL ECUMENICAL PRINCIPLES

ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL WITNESS

DIALOGUES AND BILATERAL CONVERSATIONS

ORTHODOXY AND OTHER CHURCHES 9

COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 10

SECULAR ECUMENISM 11

OTHER TYPES OF ECUMENICAL ACTIVITY 12

WORSHIP WITH NON-ORTHODOX 12

SPECIAL COMMON PRAYER PRACTICES 13

PREACHING ON ECUMENICAL OCCASIONS 15

SACRAMENTS AND 15

OTHER LITURGICAL SERVICES 15

I. Holy Eucharist 15

II. Baptism 16

III. Chrismation 16

IV. Marriage 17

V. Ordinations 18

VI. Confession and Holy Unction	18
BLESSINGS, HOSPITAL MINISTRATIONS AND CHAPLAINCIES	19
FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES	19
PART TWO	20
ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL DOCUMENTS	20
FROM THE PATRIARCHAL AND SYNODAL ENCYCLICAL OF 1902	20
THE PATRIARCHAL AND SYNODAL ENCYCLICAL OF 1920	21
DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH	23
DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH	25
THE PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL OF 1952	28
A STATEMENT OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX DELEGATES	30
CONCERNING THE MAIN THEME OF THE ASSEMBLY AT EVANSTON, ILLINOIS, 1954, READ BY ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA, DELEGATE OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE	30
THE DECLARATION OF THE ORTHODOX DELEGATES CONCERNING FAITH AND ORDER	32
STATEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE U. S. A.	33
A CONTRIBUTION OF THE ORTHODOX DELEGATES	34
THE DISCIPLINE OF HOLY COMMUNION	35
MESSAGE OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE	36
THE CHURCH, THE CHURCHES AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES TORONTO, 1950	41
FOR FURTHER ECUMENICAL READING	43

INTRODUCTION

Christianity is the religion of love. The God of love has not abandoned His creation: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” As Christians we must testify to God’s love for us.

The ‘ecumenical movement’ is an expression of love and hope in an otherwise bewildered and tired world order. When the disciples of our Lord sought a principle of unity and identification, they recalled the words of their Master: “In this shall they know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” Through love and faith and hope the earnest search for renewal, for unity, common witness and joint action among Christians and, indeed, for all persons of good will can be attained.

The constancy of the Holy Spirit and His abiding presence among us does not permit us to believe anything other than that, whatever the appearance of things, the Church cannot be divided. It is united in the one Apostolic Faith, in the same sacraments of divine grace, and in the unbroken Tradition.

It is the purpose of this ecumenical movement to bring all people to a realization of this truth and a desire to know God’s will for mankind. The holy Orthodox Churches have attempted to respond to this lofty ideal, following the initiatives of the Great Church of Constantinople begun over half a century ago. A consistent ecumenical policy, based upon the ecclesiological and evangelical doctrines of the Orthodox faith, has been achieved. This policy has remained constant in the flux of the evolving ecumenical movement.

The general aims and purposes of the ecumenical movement and of our Church’s role in it have been achieved in various ways, through a host of diverse organizations and activities. The conditions and terms of procedure are different in each locality. For this reason, it was considered proper to review our previous ecumenical directives in the light of changing circumstances and demands.

The Standing Conference has undertaken to publish a new set of ecumenical guidelines for the clergy. These guidelines have been prepared with the greatest care, after considerable discussion and exchange of views. The fundamental principles of Orthodox ecumenical theology have been applied to the conditions and problems experienced by our faithful in America. These are intended as a guide for the clergy as they face daily ecumenical questions. We are pleased to commend the guidelines to our faithful as a summary and as convenient directives for their correct and proper involvement in the ecumenical movement, to the glory of God and the preservation of His Holy Church.

November 1, 1973

ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS Chairman, The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox
Bishops in America

FORWARD

The original ecumenical guidelines for Orthodox clergy were published in 1966 under the auspices of the Standing Conference. They were written by the Rev. Dr. Leonidas Contos, at that time Director of the Interchurch Office of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. The evolving nature of the general ecumenical movement and the rise of new agencies have made it necessary to revise the first guidelines.

In response to this need, Archbishop Iakovos, Chairman of the Standing Conference, requested the Ecumenical Commission to prepare a revision. A procedure was adopted to prepare a new set of guidelines which would remain faithful to the ecumenical policy of the Orthodox Church and which would respond particularly to the situation in America. I was assigned the task of preparing a draft and supervising its eventual publication.

The general principles of Orthodox ecumenism and their practical application were discussed in a series of sessions of the Orthodox Theological Society in America. Thereafter, the draft was reviewed by the Ecumenical Commission. Only then was it forwarded to the members of the Standing Conference for their consideration. At its XXXIXth Meeting on March 20, 1973, the SCOBA approved unanimously the present set of Ecumenical Guidelines for Orthodox Christians. The General Secretary was directed to have these published and distributed.

These directives are intended for the use and guidance of the Orthodox clergy in ecumenical affairs. Careful attention was given to the articulation of the doctrinal and ecclesiological principles of Orthodox teaching. Information about specific ecumenical organizations and other agencies is provided. Suggestions about the degree and the manner of involvement in the various expressions of ecumenism are offered. The intention is purely advisory in nature. In any case, these directives are to be used with the advice of one's ecclesiastical superior.

Part Two contains a series of declarations and statements made by Orthodox churchmen in this century. Although occasioned by specific circumstances, these documents reflect the traditional teaching of the Orthodox Church on the issues raised. In a real sense these provide a basis for a consistent and relevant Orthodox ecumenical policy.

A final section contains a few titles for additional reading and study.

Deep appreciation is expressed to the members of the Ecumenical Commission of the Standing Conference and to my colleagues in the Orthodox Theological Society in America for their assistance and cooperation in preparing these guidelines.

Father Robert G. Stephanopoulos General Secretary, Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America

PART ONE

ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL GUIDELINES

GENERAL ECUMENICAL PRINCIPLES

1. “We begin with a clear conception of the Church’s unity which we believe has been embodied and realized in the age long history of the Orthodox Church, without any change or break since the times when the visible unity of Christendom was an obvious fact and was attested and witnessed to by an ecumenical unanimity, in the age of the Ecumenical Councils.” This is the Orthodox conviction as expressed in one ecumenical gathering. The Church is one and remains one and visible in the historic Orthodox communion. However, it is painfully obvious that there is a difference between the faith-affirmation of the unity of the Church and the empirical fractured appearance of Christendom. Christian disunity is a real problem. Over the centuries there has been deep concern and agony over this problem. In every period there were those who worked mightily to reconcile separated brethren with the one Church.

2. In recent decades there is a movement, expressed in a wide variety of activities and programs and institutions, aiming at the unity and reconciliation of Christians which our Lord wills for all persons. In general, the concerns of this movement range over the areas of unity, service, mission and renewal. The resurgence of ecumenical activity can only be characterized as a movement, ebbing and flowing in a variety of directions and expressing itself in diverse ways.

3. Although the inspiration and initial impulse for the modern ecumenical movement came from Protestant sources, the Orthodox Church has been a participant in this movement from its beginnings. The Orthodox Church was oftentimes an unwilling and reluctant partner in the ecumenical enterprise, because the latter was based on presuppositions that were alien to its theological position. A great part of our difficulty with ecumenism in general is precisely its preoccupation with the questions and problems of the European mentality, as well as by methods, techniques and structures expressive of western rather than universal considerations. Since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church has become massively involved in the ecumenical movement, thus more firmly reinforcing this basic western mentality.

4. Even up to the present time, although the situation is markedly improved, the Orthodox have neither the technical means nor a sufficient number of people available for ecumenical work. The socio-psychological climate in Orthodoxy is still reserved about ecumenism and great patience and care must be used to discern the mind of the Church.

5. It is a fact, however, that certain basic principles of Orthodox ecumenical policy have been developed over the years of limited participation in the ecumenical movement.

These are outlined in a series of outstanding documents, beginning already in 1902. The Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical of 1920 has been generally acknowledged as the formal basis of Orthodox ecumenism. On that firm foundation, the various autocephalous Orthodox Churches have been more or less active in ecumenical structures, notably the World Council of Churches, up to the present day. In a very real sense, therefore, the Orthodox Church has officially and solemnly committed itself to participating with other Christian communions in pursuing the aims of the ecumenical movement, which correspond to those of the Orthodox Church.

6. Orthodoxy is understood by us in a dynamic sense. Orthodoxy is the wholeness of the people of God sharing the true Apostolic Faith, proclaiming the mighty works of God in history as fully revealed in the person and the work of Jesus Christ and as confirmed by the abiding and sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit Who calls us into unity in the one Body of Christ. If the Orthodox Church has preserved that charismatic divine/human unity and holiness even in its weakest and least attractive moments – and we must admit that there have been many such moments – it is precisely because this unity is given and preserved by the grace of God. That unity of faith and life has been established by God and freely accepted by men. It is in terms of this free acceptance and abiding loyalty to the authentic Christian Tradition that local congregations are recognized as the one Church of Christ. Their identity with the faith of the Apostles and the Fathers and their continuity with the sacramental, canonical and historical life of the Church throughout all time and space unites them with one another and with the communion of saints and constitutes the basis of Orthodoxy's truth.

7. This unity in faith, worship and life is the foundation of the Church's unity and continuity. Unity in doctrine is absolutely essential to the constitution of the Church and presupposes any sharing at the Lord's Table and all the sacramental life of the Church. Therefore, the ecumenical problem for Orthodoxy is not the unity of the Church, which is given and preserved essentially by God in the historical Orthodox communion. The ecumenical problem for us is the problem of the disunity of Christendom and the necessity of the recovery of the biblical-patristic synthesis of faith which is constitutive of the one Church. For Orthodoxy, theology and worship do not express the thought and life of one particular denomination, but of the Church of Christ.

8. Therefore, our involvement in the ecumenical movement cannot be regarded in terms of doctrinal reductionism, nor by the acceptance of some manifold denominationalism which would relativise the Tradition with the varying historical traditions. While it is quite true to say that all denominations may hold some part of the truth, as revealed by the Holy Spirit "Who is everywhere and fills all things," the fullness of saving truth is revealed in the holy Church alone. It is the acceptance of God's revelation as found and lived in the reality of the one historical and visible Church of Christ that delimits the beginning and the end of the ecumenical movement for us.

9. In the Orthodox tradition there is absolute acknowledgement of the holiness and apostolicity of the Church which is a living and dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling salvation in Christ and which cannot be affected ultimately by the sin of man. The organizational aspect of the Church, limited by human weakness, cannot be separated by the nature of the Church as given by God and revealed by the Holy Spirit.

10. The ecclesiology and doctrine of the Orthodox Church can be summarized in two basic ecumenical principles, which are crucial to our involvement and collaboration with the ecumenical movement. On the other hand, there is the Confessional principle, and on the other, the Ecclesiological principle.

11. The Confessional principle stresses that Christian unity is grounded and expressed in the unity of the Apostolic Tradition, and that the divisions among Christians, complicated as they might be by “non-theological” (cultural, historical, socio-psychological, etc.) factors, are ultimately rooted in deviations from the one faith. These divisions cannot be healed by compromise or doctrinal minimalism. Differences should be overcome through reference to the very sources of Revelation in patient and honest study of each particular controversial issue.

12. The Ecclesiological principle affirms that the ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is the unity of mankind in the one Church which is the manifestation in this world of the Kingdom of God. The Orthodox Church is the visible, historical realization of the one Church. Accordingly, any attempt to substitute this goal of reconciliation in the one Church with other concerns is to destroy the basis for cooperation in the ecumenical movement. There can be no confusion between the earthly city with the heavenly city or a radical departure from the ecclesial for purely social, political or secular concerns. True humanity and true community are rooted in the Church and must be seen from this theocentric perspective rather than that of other ideologies.

13. In connection with these two basic principles, it would be well if we enumerated several others which would be important to a right understanding of our role in the ecumenical movement. The following are not intended to be a resume of all problems relative to the ecumenical movement. Rather, as fundamental affirmations which form Orthodox policy and practice, they underlie and hopefully illuminate the practical suggestions contained in these Guidelines. In light of our common task, we would make the following fundamental affirmations about our ecumenical mission:

a) Jesus Christ founded the one true Church on the firm foundation of the Apostolic testimony, not many churches. That Church is visibly present in the historic Orthodox community.

b) The mission of the Church is to draw mankind into the unity of faith and love and an acceptance of God’s salvation in Christ under the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit.

c) Disunity among Christians is a sin before God, a scandal to the people and an obstacle to the acceptance of the Gospel. Christian division hinders the mission of the Church.

d) The Church members pray continuously for the union of all, but this prayer must be made conscious and applicable in every particular circumstance. Every activity, program or institution which works toward true unity should be encouraged in thought, word and deed.

e) Personal repentance and renewal must accompany our prayer and action for the restoration of full unity among Christians: unity in faith, sacramental life and the wholeness of truth.

f) Listening to one another in a spirit of love and toleration and with a sense of common mission and destiny is paramount. This process must be understood as both a personal spiritual renewal of individuals and as a collective renewal of communions.

g) True ecumenism must speak the truth in love, never compromising the integrity and purity of Orthodox teachings, but always respecting the sincerity of the religious convictions and spiritual sensibilities of others. This constant effort at communication in love and truth is basic to the ecumenical task.

h) In general, the most serious consideration should be given to the Lund principle: “to do together everything except what irreconcilable differences or sincere conviction compels us to do separately.”

i) The beginning of ecumenical work is in one’s own tradition. Learning and living the authentic tradition of the Orthodox Church is an essential witness of the faithful to true ecumenism.

j) Orthodox Christians, whether directly involved or not in ecumenical work, must be aware of the rapidly spreading dangers of relativism, secularism, radical anti-institutionalism and ideological utopias which are sometimes present and active in current ecumenism. They must realize that it is their orthodox and ecumenical duty to oppose and fight these false teachings and tendencies.

14. It must be understood that these Guidelines are not a final statement on the matter of Orthodox ecumenical relations. They seek to provide a basic uniformity of practice among the Orthodox in America. When the interpretation of these Guidelines is in question, reference must always be made to the Bishop. To assist the Bishop in his task of providing information, stimulating interest, and coordinating ecumenical activities, the Orthodox priest is requested to keep in frequent communication with his office and to file a report periodically, describing the various ecumenical endeavours of his ministry.

ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL WITNESS

1. Ecumenical witness begins with the very household of God itself, which is the Orthodox Communion of autocephalous Churches. The principle of autocephaly is fundamental to Orthodox ecclesiology and an essential part of the structure of the Church. The living tradition of the Church and the principles of concord and harmony are expressed through the common mind of action of the universal episcopate, and in certain cases solemnly promulgated in ecumenical and local councils. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, as *primus inter pares*, has the responsibility for preserving the unity and harmony within the family of Orthodox Churches, chiefly in the area of internal relations between the sister autocephalous Churches and in external relations with non-Orthodox communions.

2. Intra-Orthodox jurisdictional relations must be maintained and strongly reinforced. Whatever differences there may be among individual jurisdictions, every effort should be made not to cause offense either to the faithful, or even to those who stand outside. Every support should be given to the efforts of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America and its various commissions. Examples of cooperative ventures and activities among the Orthodox should include the following: pan-Orthodox services; joint youth and clergy retreats; pan-Orthodox ministries; educational programs, and the like.

3. The true spirit of ecumenism, compatible with Orthodox principles and particulars, should be developed through education in the home, the Church and the schools. Orthodox parents should try to develop in their children toleration and a genuine spirit of Christian love. Religious education programs at all levels should do the same.

4. Priests are encouraged to participate in programs for the education of the clergy in ecumenism. Apart from the basic courses in ecumenism in the theological school curriculum, the following are of particular interest:

a) Official clergy conferences, where ecumenical developments could be presented and discussed;

b) Periodic retreats or study-days sponsored for and by clergy;

c) Institutes, workshops and special courses in ecumenical theology and programs.

5. Under his direction and supervision, the Orthodox pastor is encouraged to prepare programs of education in ecumenism for adults and youth in the parish. Discussions, lectures, films, visitations, guest speakers and the like are ways whereby the theology and practice of ecumenism can be made known as widely as possible and sound knowledge increased. The parish library, an indispensable part of every Orthodox parish complex, should contain a good cross-section of ecumenical and interreligious books and

publications.

6. Orthodox Chaplains in colleges and universities are in a special position to make real contributions to ecumenism.

7. Wherever possible, the Orthodox Pastor is encouraged to accept invitations to explain the Orthodox faith. No opportunity should be avoided to contribute to the knowledge of the precious heritage of Orthodoxy. Furthermore, invitations and opportunities should be provided for others to know and appreciate Orthodox teaching, worship, and practice through "open houses," lectures and ecumenical gatherings in Orthodox parishes.

DIALOGUES AND BILATERAL CONVERSATIONS

1. The term dialogue means nothing less than Christian conversation, at least in the local and informal context. Love grows out of knowing one another. Essential to dialogue is the fullest possible knowledge and understanding of those with whom we are engaged in conversation. The Orthodox priest bears a large responsibility in providing proper guidance and enlightenment for the laity.

2. A careful distinction is made between various kinds of dialogue. Informal conversations between clergy of the various traditions or supervised conversations between laity are not to be considered official. Certainly the obligation is there to speak the mind of the Orthodox Church, but, unless one is delegated to represent his or her Church in any official way, these conversations are purely in the realm of friendly informative exchange.

3. No priest or layman may undertake to represent the Church officially without prior appointment or approval by his ecclesiastical superior. Formal dialogues or bilateral theological conversations are conducted only at the official level by competent and approved representatives of the communions or faiths involved. Their purposes may vary, depending upon the conditions agreed to beforehand.

ORTHODOXY AND OTHER CHURCHES

1. Theologically, for the Orthodox Church, there is no essential difference between the various communions which have been separated from it by historical circumstances over the ages. Culturally, liturgically and dogmatically, however, these bodies are more or less proximate to the Orthodox Church, as the means used to reconcile individual members of these demonstrates. Among communions which resemble the Orthodox Church are the ancient and venerable pre Chalcedonian Churches (Coptic and Jacobite), the Assyrian Church of the East, the Roman Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Church and the Anglo-Catholic portions of the Anglican Communion. The communions and denominations of the Protestant Reformation form a grouping less similar to the Orthodox Church, particularly in ethos, ecclesiology and life style.

2. In recent years relations between the Orthodox Church and individual non-Orthodox Churches and communions have improved greatly. Ecumenical cooperation and understanding has been advanced considerably through inter-Church aid, theological conversations, collaboration in areas of common concern, and the like. It is hoped that in the coming years official steps will be taken between the authorities of the various Churches for complete reconciliation and full communion in the one Church. For the present, however, the regulations governing the relations of the Orthodox Church with other communions are elaborated herein.

3. Because of our basic orientation and common background with those Churches proximate to the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox clergy are encouraged to establish and maintain better relations with the clergy and faithful of these Churches. Common understanding and bonds of friendship will definitely further the cause of eventual total reconciliation and unification.

COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

1. Although it is certainly not the only form of ecumenism, conciliar ecumenism is the best known. The Orthodox Churches have been instrumental in founding the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches and various State, Regional and Local Council of Churches. Conciliar ecumenism is an acceptable form of ecumenical collaboration, particularly since the terms and limits of Orthodox cooperation have been worked out over the years. It is a matter of principle with us that Councils of Churches be ecclesologically neutral and functionally instrumental. This understanding of the nature, purpose and role of the councils is satisfactorily elaborated in a definitive statement known as the Toronto Statement of the World Council of Churches. (See appendix).

2. In order to safeguard the nature and purposes of Councils of Churches, two principles which are fully in accord with basic Orthodox ecumenical principles, are usually explicit or at least implicitly contained in their constitutions:

a) The Evangelical Principle means that official relationships with inter church agencies will be established only with such agencies as are composed exclusively of churches which confess Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Saviour. This 'Basis' does not in any sense represent a credal statement, but is simply the agreed formula upon which a fellowship of churches can enter into a working relationship.

b) The Representative Principle means that in inter-church associations the official representatives of churches should never be expected to sit on a parity with individuals who represent only themselves or organizations which are less than churches.

3. Needless to say, in light of the already stated Orthodox ecumenical principles, our participation is understood as in no way compromising our ecclesiological self-awareness, nor does it violate the ecclesiological neutrality and purely functional instrumentality of Councils of Churches.

4. With full awareness of official Orthodox policy and practice, local Orthodox parishes, Dioceses and Archdioceses may, through their proper deliberative bodies, elect to participate in Councils of Churches at their respective levels and according to the predetermined conditions set by them. A thorough study should be made by the proper authorities of the Orthodox Church and the Council and a procedure adopted for the most effective and enriching cooperation. Full consideration should be given to the activities, funding, and representation in which the Orthodox Church may share.

5. Councils of Churches usually seek to fulfill the general purposes of the total ecumenical movement, that is, unity, service, mission and renewal. Each emphasis is an important and integral part of the entire effort. Cooperation with all the activities and programs of a Council of Churches is ideally to be sought. Particular attention should be given to Faith and Order and/or Theological Studies committees of Councils of Churches. Wherever possible, participation and support by Orthodox clergy of these activities should be considered as a positive and welcome action.

6. One of the primary benefits of the ecumenical movement, even without the final unity which is the will of Christ, is the freedom of all Christian bodies to labor together for the general improvement of society. Such cooperation can be very vital and real at the local level, where the common problems and concerns are many: education, social justice, racial tensions, unemployment, human development and moral issues like abortion, pornography, drugs and the like.

7. The Councils of Churches at the local level are an appropriate and desirable means for achieving such cooperation. Where membership is considered desirable by a local congregation or parish, the Orthodox priest should encourage his parish council to enter into a working relationship or full membership in the Council of Churches.

8. When invited, Orthodox Priests may accept leadership positions in a council. It is desirable to enlist the support and interest of capable laity also. Such elections or appointments must be brought to the attention of the Bishop.

9. Orthodox Women's groups may have formal relations with local knits of Church Women United as well as with counterpart groups of the Roman Catholic Church.

10. Consideration maybe given to the possibility of establishing special standing committees of the parish or sub-committees of the Parish Council for Ecumenical Affairs and Social Action. The success of these committees will be notably enhanced if they join forces with similar groups established by local congregations of other communions.

SECULAR ECUMENISM

1. A wide variety of associations, consortia, agencies, boards, committees and the like have been formed recently for interdenominational, interreligious and in some cases community-wide activities. These action organizations are usually established to meet the need for "immediate" confrontation of pressing social, moral and political problems in our society. By definition and purpose, they are almost always composed of a cross section of the community, both religious and secular. Very often, it is believed, the purposes of these groupings cannot be met quickly and decisively through the existing conciliar structures and organizations.

2. Concern for social change, peace, justice and human development are integral to conciliar ecumenism, as are unity, mission and renewal. Wherever possible, Orthodox participants in conciliar structures and instrumentalities should work to promote these concerns, especially those organized for uniquely Christian purposes, within the existing Councils of Churches rather than apart from them.

3. Apart from conciliar structures, where defined Orthodox policy together with the representative and evangelical principles may not necessarily apply, social action becomes increasingly ambiguous, vague and difficult. In such circumstances, it is best to associate with consortia and coalitions only occasionally and as the circumstances dictate. Naturally, the proper study, investigation and determination of purposes would ultimately rest with the duly constituted ecclesiastical authorities.

4. Individual Orthodox Christians, of course, are obliged to assist in every effort or activity which embodies justice, the principles of brotherhood, and which provides more favorable conditions for the spiritual development of both personality and community. While the Church cannot always endorse social systems, movements and programs, it is up to Christian enlightened by their conscience and the Christian ideal to commit themselves to social change in the morally acceptable ways available.

OTHER TYPES OF ECUMENICAL ACTIVITY

1. An Orthodox Priest should be encouraged to join local clergy or ministerial groups, if meaningful Orthodox participation is possible. These fellowships frequently afford clergy an opportunity to meet regularly in order to discuss common concerns, and to organize interfaith activities as agreed to mutually at the local level. If there is no such association, consideration might be given to its formation with the assistance and cooperation of the local Orthodox priest.

2. Orthodox parishes and institutions may make their educational and social facilities available to congregations and institutions of other faiths whenever possible. The Bishop should be consulted.

3. Orthodox priests are encouraged to participate in programs such as “Operation Understanding,” interfaith lectures and panels, joint film showings, art displays and other similar efforts to learn about one another as religious communities. “Operation Understanding” is a type of program in which several churches and religious communities schedule and sponsor visits to one another. On a Sunday or holiday afternoon, each holds an “open house” for all the others. The host community receives guests and conducts a tour in which members of the congregation explain the doctrine, polity, and practices of their faith. No denominational service is conducted. Ordinarily, a social hour follows the tour and talk.

WORSHIP WITH NON-ORTHODOX

1. The Orthodox Church makes a clear distinction between liturgical and non-liturgical prayer. Our liturgical prayer is the prayer and devotional action of the holy Orthodox Church. In this sense, liturgical prayer is the official prayer of the Orthodox Church and is to be conducted according to the forms, prescriptions and canons of our Church.

2. Non-liturgical prayer can be understood in two senses. In one sense, it is the private prayer or devotions of the faithful Orthodox. In this sense, it is also the prayer of the Church and has ecclesial character and significance, insofar as one prays within the context and life of the Church. In another sense, however, non-liturgical prayer may be

understood as that private or corporate prayer of divided Christians from diverse communions who come together, not as the Church, but as separated brethren seeking Christian unity. It is common prayer of non-ecclesial character. It is to be prudently used within the context of the ecumenical movement and the pluralistic setting of our society.

3. The basic Orthodox conviction has always been that unity at the altar, the unity of the members of the Orthodox Church, is a gift of God. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion in the Divine Liturgy is the final end and goal of the Christian life, the very fulfillment of unity. All of the services and prayers of the Church are intimately connected with the Liturgy and express that gift of unity which is given to us by God and preserved in the bonds of faith and love. Therefore, the services of the Church are restricted to the members of the Orthodox Church and must not be understood or implemented as means toward that unity. As a sacramental community of faith and grace, the Orthodox Church in its self-understanding and with full responsibility for the Apostolic Faith which has been entrusted to it, encourages liturgical worship and frequent participation in the sacraments for its own members. At the same time, it encourages non-liturgical prayer for the union of all people, for peace, reconciliation and the spirit of charity.

4. In the interests of sharing our spiritual heritage, non-Orthodox may be invited to attend Orthodox liturgical services. It should be made absolutely clear, however, that no *communicatio in sacris* is intended or implied by such attendance. The same is true for those Orthodox who for reasons of family unity, courtesy, the demands of public life, or a deeper appreciation of the worship of other communions might be invited to attend a non-Orthodox denominational service. In extending or accepting such invitations, care should be taken not to offend against the regulations or sensitivities of other communions.

5. Clergy of other communions attending Orthodox services may be welcome as guests of honor, and given some special place within the *solea*. High dignitaries of other Churches, when the formal occasion indicates, might be seated adjacent to the Bishop's throne when a Bishop is present. Civic authorities may be seated in the first rows or opposite the Bishop's throne on the *solea*.

SPECIAL COMMON PRAYER PRACTICES

1. A clergyman is free to accept invitations to observances of a civic, patriotic or general community nature. If invited to offer a prayer at such an observance, e.g., school commencement, Independence Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, banquets, United Nations observance, etc., conducted in a public place or a neutral hall, the participating priest may accept the invitation but should not wear any form of liturgical vestment. The prayer should be composed for the occasion by the priest, reflecting the Orthodox attitude toward the issue as found in our Service books, but also respecting the spiritual

sensibilities of all the participants who are inevitably of diverse backgrounds.

2. In services of an interfaith or interreligious nature, e.g., national feasts, public calamity and mourning, Brotherhood Week, the dignity of the family, expressions for peace, justice and the like, whether in a public building or a religious edifice, a form of dress which is neither liturgical nor merely civil, viz. the rason (cassock) may be considered appropriate, together with pectoral cross (if so entitled), or academic dress when indicated. No part of the liturgical vestments, such as stole, is proper.

3. “Ecumenical services” refer to forms of non-liturgical worship or devotion mutually acceptable to all participating parties in which Christians of various communions take part. Although such services are concerned particularly with the restoration of Christian unity they may be held for any common concern in which Christians can and should cooperate with one another.

4. “Ecumenical services” may be conducted in an Orthodox Church with the permission of the Bishop. Furthermore, Orthodox Christians may take part in such services in the churches of other communions, as well as in other appropriate locations.

a) In order to avoid any misunderstanding, however, these services should be publically acknowledged and identified as “ecumenical” in character, emphasizing the firm Orthodox position that these are prayers for unity, and not services of the one Church.

b) An Orthodox priest should not wear liturgical vestments at such services. The rason and pectoral cross (if so entitled), or academic dress are appropriate.

c) If invited to participate, the Orthodox priest should share in the preparation and planning for an “ecumenical service” and contribute to its proper form and content. Prayers and petitions from the Orthodox Service Books are recommended.

d) When “ecumenical services” are conducted in an Orthodox Church, the host Pastor may compose an appropriate service based on the prayers and forms of the Orthodox Service books. Clergy and laity of other communions may be invited to read the Scriptures, offer prayers and give invocations. Clergy of other communions may be invited to preach. All such services in an Orthodox church must take place outside the ikonostasion, in the area of the solea. Occasions for “ecumenical services” are usually provided during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18 25); the days from Ascension to Pentecost; and on the occasion of meetings or other events of ecumenical origin serving on ecumenical purpose. Although petitions and prayers for unity are a regular part of the Orthodox liturgical practice, “ecumenical services” may be encouraged as a means of sensitizing our faithful to the tragedy of Christian disunity and developing the spirit of charity, understanding and prayer for all persons.

e) Orthodox clergy and laity are free to read Scriptures, offer prayers, and give invocations at “ecumenical services.” Likewise, Orthodox clergy may preach on these occasions.

5. A special service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been prepared by an Orthodox Committee. It is as follows:

1. Blessed be our God . . .

2. Heavenly King, Comforter . . .

Trisaghion . . .

3. Come let us worship. . .

Psalm 102

4. Great Litany

5. Psalm 145

6. Only Begotten Son and Word of God . . .

7. Beatitudes

8. Prescribed Scriptural Readings

9. The heavenly choir praises Thee and sings: Holy, Holy, Holy . . .

10. Nicene Creed

11. Release, remit, and forgive . . .

12. Our Father . . .

13. Kontakion of the Elevation of the Cross

14. Kyrie eleison 12 times

15. May the name of the Lord be blessed . . .

Glory, and now . . .

16. Psalm 33

17. Dismissal

PREACHING ON ECUMENICAL OCCASIONS

1. It is evident that only a duly authorized Orthodox Christian may preach in the framework of the Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy is a closed eucharistic assembly being restricted to the active participation of Orthodox Christians alone. The sermon or homily is directed to the up-building of the congregation, and is intended to be a clear exposition of the Orthodox teaching. The preacher is entrusted to proclaim the Apostolic Faith in the name and under the authority of the Bishop.
2. Although non-Orthodox are welcome to attend a celebration of the Divine Liturgy and may even be given places of prominence in the congregation, they are not permitted to read the Scriptures or to preach during the celebration. For any exceptions to this regulation, the Bishop must be consulted.
3. Basic to correct relations with clergy of other communions is the principle of reciprocity. Stated plainly this means that in extending an invitation, a person is prepared to receive one, and conversely, accepting an invitation implies readiness to extend one. Generally speaking, if we are unable to reciprocate an invitation, we should not accept one. There are obvious exceptions to this, of course, but when in doubt it is best to consult one's ecclesiastical superior.
4. Opportunities are often provided at "ecumenical services" for preaching. Should an Orthodox clergyman be invited to preach a sermon, his acceptance must be conditioned by two considerations: first, that this ecumenical service be clearly identified as such and not be construed as an eucharistic celebration; and second, that he be free to reflect the mind and teaching of the Orthodox Church in his sermon.
5. An invitation to preach at a non Orthodox confessional service may be accepted by an Orthodox priest, provided he remains free to reflect the mind and teaching of the Orthodox Church in his sermon.

SACRAMENTS AND OTHER LITURGICAL SERVICES

I. Holy Eucharist

1. Unity in the faith and the active life of the community is a necessary precondition to sharing in the sacraments of the Orthodox Church. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America has expressed the clear position of the Orthodox Church throughout the ages:

"To the Holy Communion the Church admits only her baptized and chrismated children who confess the full Orthodox Faith, pure and entire, and by it she shows forth their oneness with her and with her Divine Spouse. Holy Communion is the sign and evidence

of right belief and of incorporation in the Israel of God. Further, the Church teaches that the Eucharist cannot be found, and must not be sought outside the covenanted mysteries. It is the achievement of unity.

“The Standing Conference would at this time remind the children of the Church as they pray, study and work for Christian reunion that the Eucharistic Mystery is the end of unity, not a means to that end, and that therefore, the decisions regarding Holy Communion reached by Christian bodies outside the Orthodox will have no significance or validity for the Orthodox Church or her members. Holy Communion will not be sought by Orthodox Christians outside of the Church, nor will it be offered to those who do not yet confess the Orthodox Church as their mother.”

2. This position must be made explicit by the Orthodox pastors whenever a question may arise of a disciplinary or ecumenical nature. It has been solemnly affirmed in the bilateral conversations of the Orthodox representatives with Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Reformed Christians, and has been officially promulgated in the findings and statements of these bilaterals.

II. Baptism

1. In the Sacrament of Baptism, a person is incorporated into the crucified, resurrected and glorified Christ and is reborn to participate in the divine life. Baptism is necessary for salvation and in accordance with Tradition must be performed by triple immersion in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to the form in the Service Book. It is conferred only once.

2. In the event of an unbaptised infant near death, an Orthodox priest must be called for a clinical baptism. Instructions for the performance of a clinical baptism may be obtained from the Bishop's office.

3. In the absence of an Orthodox clergyman, an Orthodox layman or any other Christian may baptize the infant by the sprinkling of water, repeating the formula “The servant of God, (N.) is baptised in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

4. When receiving into the Orthodox Church a person who comes voluntarily from another confession, the Orthodox priest will accept the candidate by means of whichever of the three modes prescribed by the Sixth Ecumenical Council is appropriate (Canon 95):

- a) Baptism by triune immersion;
- b) Chrismation;
- c) Confession of faith.

5. Proof of the fact of baptism must be established by an authentic document or by the testimony of a qualified witness. The priest must undertake to instruct the applicant in matters of the Faith and practice that govern the inner life and outward behavior of the Orthodox Christian. If the applicant has not been baptised in the Name of the Holy Trinity in a Christian church whose baptism could be accepted in the Orthodox Church by the principle of oikonomia, he or she must be baptised as prescribed in the Service books. In cases of doubt, reference to the Bishop is mandatory.

III. Chrismation

1. Chrismation is normally administered immediately after the Rite of Baptism as contained in the Service Book.
2. An applicant from another Christian community who has been baptised already in the Name of the Holy Trinity may be received into the Orthodox Church according to the order prescribed by the Bishop.
3. The name of the person received into full communion with the Orthodox Church by means of baptism, chrismation or a confession of faith is to be entered into the parish Baptismal Records under the day of the rite together with the date and place of the Baptism of the person.
4. Because the Sponsor or Godparent at a Baptism or Chrismation service participates liturgically and canonically in the sacrament and because he or she assumes the obligation to provide for the Christian formation of the baptized as a representative of the Orthodox community of faith, standing as a sponsor for the faith of the candidate, members of communions other than the Orthodox Church may not act as sponsors in an Orthodox baptismal or chrismation service. Conversely, Orthodox Christians may not act as sponsors in baptism or confirmation in non Orthodox communions. Orthodox priests should explain carefully to the faithful the evangelical and ecumenical reasons for this regulation so that all misunderstanding of it may be prevented. This regulation does not apply to friends or relatives who may wish merely to witness or to be present at such ceremonies.

IV. Marriage

1. Normally, the Sacrament of Marriage in the Orthodox Church takes place only between members of that Church. The Orthodox teaching emphasizes the positive aspects of marriage and family life, concentrating on the mutual spiritual growth and fulfillment of the partners and on their obligations to nurture their children in the Orthodox faith. To be in proper canonical and spiritual standing, an Orthodox Christian must be married in the Orthodox Church.

2. In our pluralistic society it is inevitable that an increasing number of persons will enter into marriage with a partner that is from a different religious tradition. Mixed marriages, for a variety of spiritual and socio psychological reasons, are not to be encouraged. Orthodox Pastors are obliged to explain the serious responsibilities and difficulties involved in mixed marriages.

3. By application of the principle of *oikonomia*, the Orthodox sacrament of marriage between an Orthodox and a Christian baptised in the Name of the Holy Trinity may be performed in the manner prescribed in the Service book. The Orthodox sacrament is not permitted in the case of two non-Orthodox Christians or in the case of an Orthodox and an unbaptised person. The Pastor must point out the spiritual peril in these cases to the engaged couple and urge that an acceptable solution be found.

4. Following proper pre-marital instruction and after having satisfied all the legal and canonical requirements, an Orthodox marriage must ordinarily take place in the Church according to the prescribed form of the Service book, the Orthodox priest being the sole celebrant. Permission to perform this sacrament in another church building or in some neutral place must be granted by the Bishop.

5. In the event of a mixed marriage, double performances in both the Orthodox Church and some other Church are not to be encouraged, except when it is required by the necessity of regularizing the proper canonical standing of the Orthodox spouse.

6. The intimate relation of the sacraments to the community of faith and grace precludes the participation of non-Orthodox in their celebration. We have already indicated that by *oikonomia* a mixed marriage may be performed for the sake of the Orthodox party. *Oikonomia* does not apply, however, to anyone other than the non-Orthodox Christian party in the marriage. This prohibition applies particularly to non-Orthodox clergymen and Sponsors in the strict sense.

7. Priests should endeavour to meet the clergy of other communions to explain the theological and pastoral reasons for the Orthodox Church's canonical regulations on marriage, and, at the same time, to become familiar with the marriage regulations of other communions. This assists in promoting mutual understanding, if not mutual agreement.

8. Should the parties in a mixed marriage request the presence of a non-Orthodox clergyman, the following should be made clear:

a) The Orthodox pastor will issue an invitation to the clergyman;

b) The Orthodox ceremony does not permit the active participation of non-Orthodox clergy, this being made explicit to all concerned;

c) At the conclusion of the Orthodox ceremony, the guest clergyman, advised as to appropriate vesture and as agreed previously, will be properly acknowledged. If he desires, he may give his benediction to the couple and address to them words of good wishes and exhortation;

d) Announcement and publication of the marriage should indicate clearly the distinction between the celebrant and the guest clergyman, avoiding such terms as “assisted” or “participated.”

9. If an Orthodox priest is invited, he may attend the marriage ceremony in a non-Orthodox Church as a guest.

10. As in the case of baptism and chrismation, the Sponsoring witness (Best Man) at an Orthodox marriage must be an Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox persons may act as witnesses, ushers or bridesmaids at the Orthodox ceremony. This applies to the Orthodox who may wish to act as attendants at marriages properly solemnized in other religious communions.

11. In the case of marriages involving Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians, it should be noted that the spirit of the Vatican Decree on the Eastern Churches recognizes the validity of the marriage of the Catholic party if performed in the Orthodox Church. Orthodox pastors are enjoined to call this to the attention of Roman Catholic officials in order that fewer misunderstandings arise and that proper dispensation be secured.

12. It is the obligation of the parents to nurture their children in all things. The religious education of children is the right and the responsibility of both parents. It cannot be totally limited to one or the other parent. Pastors should respect the conscience of both parties in their plans for the religious rearing of their children. No prior agreement which would exclude the possibility of raising the children in the Orthodox Faith should be entered into by the Orthodox party. Every reasonable effort should be made to raise the children as Orthodox Christians.

V. Ordinations

1. During Ordinations, Christians of other communions may be invited to attend for reasons of friendship, courtesy or ecumenical interest. They cannot be invited to take an active part in the Liturgy.
2. If they are clergymen, they could be given a special place of honor within the church (the exact place and mode of dress to be determined in advance, in each instance).
3. Although Orthodox Christians may not take an active role in the ordinating or installation ceremonies of other churchmen, they may accept for reasons of friendship, courtesy or ecumenical interest, invitations to be present for these ceremonies, although only with rason. An Orthodox clergyman should consult with his Bishop before accepting such an invitation.

VI. Confession and Holy Unction

1. The sacraments are a means of divine grace and a sacred activity of the community of faith, celebrated within the community and symbolizing the oneness in faith, worship and life of the community. Where this unity is incomplete, the participation of the non-Orthodox is not permitted. For the same reason, an Orthodox Christian may not participate in the sacraments or ordinances of other communions.
2. In the extreme case that a non-Orthodox person, being without access to the ministrations of his own faith-community, summons an Orthodox priest and declares his faith to be in harmony with that of the holy Orthodox Church, his or her confession may be heard and the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Unction and/or Holy Communion administered with the understanding that he or she is joining the Orthodox Church.

BLESSINGS, HOSPITAL MINISTRATIONS AND CHAPLAINCIES

1. When visiting a hospital, prison, home for the aged, or other similar institutions, an Orthodox priest should not hesitate to bless or pray with members of other faiths and communions who make such a request. It should be understood that visitations to hospitals and other such institutions, for the purpose of seeking out and ministering to the spiritual and other needs of the Orthodox patients, are a normal part of his routine duties.
2. Every effort should be made to inform the authorities of these institutions both administrative and chaplains, of the presence and availability of the nearest Orthodox clergyman for spiritual and sacramental ministrations.

3. Orthodox chaplains in the armed forces or on the staff of schools, colleges and medical and social services institutions are to be advised by the general guidelines contained herein. Particular problems should be directed to the Bishop's attention.

FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

1. Orthodox burial services are normally conducted for Orthodox Christians in regular canonical and spiritual standing with the Church.

2. There is precedent and provision in the Service book for burial of non-Orthodox persons under certain conditions. However, this dispensation is not a general one and ought not to be applied without consultation with the Bishop.

3. An infant of an Orthodox family who has not been baptised may be buried by an Orthodox priest with special prayers as follows:

Blessed be our God . . .

Holy God, Holy Mighty . . . (3)

Our Father . . .

God of spirits and of all flesh . . .

For thou art the resurrection . . .

Epistle and Gospel of the Burial service . . .

Dismissal and Internment

4. Memorial Services are offered normally according to the form of the Service Book for Orthodox Christians who have been buried in the Church. In doubtful cases, the Bishop should be consulted.

PART TWO

ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL DOCUMENTS

Our purpose in including the following ecumenical documents is informative. In the first place, all of the Orthodox statements speak directly to the problems of ecumenism, that is, unity and disunity, common witness, collaboration in social action, renewal, allegiance to the ancient undivided Church and her teaching, and rapprochement. Therefore it is important to read them for their instructional value and as a guide in our continuing relations with other Christians. A careful study of these statements will show that there has been no fundamental alteration in the ecumenical and ecclesiological principles of Orthodox teaching throughout this present ecumenical era. Furthermore, the encounter with the non-Orthodox Churches and ecumenical organizations has helped to clarify and refine the Orthodox position on ecumenism. The encyclicals and the statements at ecumenical assemblies have articulated more fully and satisfactorily the Orthodox understanding of the essential terms and conditions of the ecumenical engagement.

The inspiration and leadership shown by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople is evidenced by the four outstanding Encyclical Letters of 1902, 1920, 1952 and 1973. Each of these Encyclicals breaths an open and genuinely evangelical spirit of love and spiritual vision which marks the true Church of Christ. They are timely and authoritative plans of policy and action.

The Orthodox declarations at various ecumenical assemblies were offered in response to deliberations over ecumenical themes which were framed in basically Western categories. It was considered necessary to prepare a separate Orthodox position on the issues under discussion. As a result, some excellent statements were made on specific problems. Two of these statements, the Orthodox Declaration at Oberlin, 1957, and the SCOBA Statement on Eucharistic Discipline, 1966, were made by Orthodox churchmen of America.

A final document is from the Statement entitled "The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches" adopted by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at Toronto, Canada, in 1950. It is a clear and careful exposition of what the World Council is and is not. It has helped greatly in avoiding the obvious pitfalls and dangers of membership in ecumenical organizations.

FROM THE PATRIARCHAL AND SYNODAL ENCYCLICAL OF 1902

Again, it is of evangelical import and pleasing to God to seek out the opinions of the most-holy Autocephalous Churches concerning our present and future relations with the

two great offshoots of Christianity, that is, the Western (Papal) church and the Protestant churches. Indeed, it is well known that the subject of continuous prayer and petition in our Church, and of every true Christian -- guided by the gospel teaching of unity, is the pious and heartfelt yearning for union of those in the Orthodox Faith with all who believe in Christ. Yet again, we do not ignore the fact that this God-loved yearning is frustrated by the formidable insistence of these Churches on opinions which, rooted in deep differences frozen by long periods of time, appear to be entirely unwilling to proceed along the road to union as demonstrated by the Gospel and historical truth; or, while these Churches may manifest some willingness toward union, they do so with conditions and bases contrary to the desired doctrinal unanimity and communion and are unacceptable to us.

Moreover, it is scarcely necessary to mention to those well-informed that the holy, catholic and Apostolic Church, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and strengthened by the most-holy and God-bearing Fathers in Ecumenical Councils, having as her head Christ Himself, the Archpastor who cared for her with his own blood; being "the pillar and the ground of truth" and "the body of Christ", according to the divinely-inspired and heavenly Apostle; the holy Church, we say, is truly one in the identical Faith and in the same morals and customs, to which the decisions of the seven Ecumenical Councils conform, and indeed she must be one, not many and contrary churches differing from one another in dogmas and the fundamental institutions of ecclesiastical order.

If this should be impossible with men, as is the case in every thing, it is nevertheless possible with God. Thus, the union of all as a possibility in time, of course with the assistance of divine grace which cooperates with persons who walk in the paths of evangelical love and peace, can surely be hoped for and tended to in a manner which would smooth out the present difficult road, finding similarities and points of contact, or even mutual controverted points previously overlooked, up to the moment when the entire task is completed and the prayer of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ is fulfilled for the common joy and benefit of the one flock and the one shepherd. Indeed, trusting that our most-holy brethren will receive this pr kindly, we are encouraged to put the fraternal question, whether or not now is considered a propitious time for a preliminary meeting to prepare the field for an open and friendly rapprochement and to clarify in unanimous agreement among the members of our entire Orthodox Church the bases, the ways and the means most adequate to the task.

In Constantinople

June 12, 1902

Joachim III, Ecumenical

Patriarch of Constantinople

THE PATRIARCHAL AND SYNODAL ENCYCLICAL OF 1920

Unto All the Churches of Christ Wheresoever They Be

“See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

(I Peter 1:22)

Our Church is persuaded that a closer relationship and a mutual understanding among the several Christian Churches is not hindered by their doctrinal differences; that such understanding is both desirable and necessary, indeed in the best interests of the Churches, both individually and as the whole Body of Christ; that it will prepare and facilitate that perfect blessed union which, with God’s help, may one day be realized.

Our Church regards the present time as a most propitious to bring this important question forward for common study. For while ancient prejudices, traditions, pretensions even, which have in the past frustrated the work of unity may even now raise difficulties, nevertheless it is better to face those difficulties; if there be good will and good intent, they neither can nor ought to prove insuperable obstacles.

Thus, with the establishment of the League of Nations, holding such high promise, we consider the question of unity even more feasible and timely; and so, filled with hope, we beg leave to make this summary statement of our thoughts and conviction, addressing it both to our brothers in the East and the venerable Christian Churches of the West wheresoever they may be.

It is our view that two things can best contribute to bring us into such desirable and beneficial intercourse, to achieve it and publicly manifest it:

First of all we deem it necessary and indispensable to remove all mutual distrust and friction between the various Churches, resulting from the tendency, unfortunately common with some, to entice and convert followers of other confessions. For one cannot ignore what is taking place even now, disturbing the internal peace of the Churches, especially those of the East, to whose trials and afflictions their own brethren thus add. And when measured against the trifling results of such proselytizing, how great the resentment and hostility that it produces!

With sincerity and mutual confidence thus restored among the Churches, we believe that charity, too, must be revived and deepened, so that they will no longer regard one another as strangers, enemies even, but as relatives and friends in Christ, “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” (Eph. 3:6) And when the several Churches are inspired by love, placing it above all else in their judgment of one another and in their relations to one another, they will increase and widen the differences that divide them. By promoting a constant brotherly concern for the conditions, the stability and the wellbeing of the other Churches; by their eagerness to

know what is happening in those Churches and by acquiring a more accurate knowledge of them; by their readiness, whenever the occasion arises, to offer the helping hand; they will accomplish much good, to their own credit and profit and that of the whole Christian body, and to the furtherance of the cause of unity.

This friendship and charitable intent toward one another can, in our view, be demonstrated and articulated in certain specific ways: 1.) By the acceptance of a uniform calendar for the simultaneous celebration of the great Christian festivals by all the Churches; 2.) by the exchange of fraternal letters, when it is customary, on the great feasts of the ecclesiastical year and other special occasions; 3.) by more cordial relations between representatives of the various Churches wherever they may be; 4.) by exchanges between theological schools and prominent theologians, as well as the students of various denominational seminaries; 5.) by convening Pan Christian conferences to examine questions of common interest to all the Churches; 6.) by the impartial investigation, historically valid, of doctrinal differences, both from the professorial chair and in scholarly writings; 7.) by mutual respect of the customs and usages common to each Church; 8.) by allowing to one another the use of chapels and cemeteries for funerals and internment of persons of other confessions dying in foreign lands; 9.) by settling the question of inter confessional marriages, and finally, 10.) by mutual support of one another in the work of undergirding religious faith, the work of charity, and every such common task.

Such open and vital intercourse between the Churches will the more greatly benefit the whole body of the Church; for today's dangers no longer threaten a particular Church but all of them together, attacking as they do the very foundations of Christian faith and the very composition of Christian life and society. The terrible war that has just ended has thrown light onto the inner life of the

Christian nations and disclosed many unhealthy signs, a profound disrespect for the basic principles of justice and humanity; it has not only aggravated old wounds, but opened new ones of more pressing nature to which the Churches need to give great attention and care.

Alcoholism, daily gaining ground; superfluous luxury on the increase, under the pretext of making life more beautiful and pleasurable; voluptuousness and lust thinly veiled under the cloak of freedom and emancipation of the body; gross license and indecency in literature, painting, the theatre, and in music, posing respectably as good taste and sophistication in the fine arts; the deification of wealth with a corollary contempt for the higher ideals -- all these things present the gravest danger to the constitution of Christian society. These are the questions of the day, and they call for common study and cooperation on the part of the Christian Churches.

Finally, it is the duty of the Churches, graced with the sacred name of Christ, no longer to forget and neglect His "new commandment," the great mandate of love; no longer to trail

piteously behind the political leaders who, in the true spirit of the Gospel of Christ and the justice of Christ, have already instituted with auspicious beginnings the League of Nations, for the defense of right and for the cultivation of love and harmony among the nations.

For all these reasons, and in the hope that the other Churches will share the thoughts and convictions we have here set forth on the urgency of promoting, at least as a beginning, such cooperation and intercourse among the Christians, we request each one to make known to us in reply its own thoughts and beliefs concerning this matter. Once we have by consensus and agreement defined the objective, we may safely proceed together toward its realization, and thus, “speaking the truth in love, we [may] grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.” (Eph. 4:15)

At the Patriarchate of Constantinople,

in the month of January, the year of grace

one thousand nine hundred and twenty.

The Locum Tenens of the Ecumenical Throne:

Metropolitan of Brussa

DOROTHEUS

DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH

At the First Faith and Order Conference, Lausanne, 1927, and read by Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateria, delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

Brethren, on receiving the invitation of the Organizing Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order seven years ago, the Orthodox Church answered readily by sending representatives from her particular Orthodox Churches to the preliminary Conference in 1920 at Geneva. That delegation of the Orthodox Church put before the Conference a united declaration in general terms of the teaching of their Church in the matter of faith and order, and at its conclusion recommended that before any discussion of the reunion of the Churches in faith and order, a League of Churches should be established for their mutual cooperation in regard to the social and moral principles of Christendom. Further, when the Orthodox Church was invited a short time ago to take part through her representatives in the present Conference, although many of her particular Churches are in distress so grave as to threaten their very existence, she has hastened to send her delegation to it.

Accordingly, we, the undersigned, delegates of the Orthodox Church, being inspired by a sincere feeling of love and by a desire to achieve an understanding, have taken part in every meeting held here for to purpose of promulgating closer brotherhood and fellowship between the representatives of the different Churches and for the general good and welfare of the whole body of Christians. But while sharing the general labours of the Conference both in delivering addresses as arranged in the programme and in taking part in the open debates, as also in the work of the Sections, we have concluded with regret that the bases assumed for the foundation of the Reports, which are to be submitted to the vote of the Conference, are inconsistent with the principles of the Orthodox Church we represent.

Therefore, we judge it to be a matter of conscience that with the exception of the first we must abstain from voting in favour of the two Reports which are now ready. Although both in papers read, in speeches, in debate and in statements made in the three Sections, we Orthodox have already made plain and clear what are the points of view and the conceptions of the Orthodox Church in regard to the subjects under discussion, we hold it to be of importance that we should specify here certain points in order to make manifest the differences which separate us from other members of the Conference. For example, while the Report on the Message of the Church, since it is drafted on the basis of the teaching of the Holy Scripture, is in accordance with the Orthodox conception and can be accepted by us, it is otherwise with the two other Reports, on the Nature of the Church and upon the Common Confession of the Faith of the Church. The drafting of these two latter was carried out on a basis of compromise between what in our understanding are conflicting ideas and meanings, in order to arrive at an external agreement in the letter alone: whereas, as has often at other times been emphasized in statement by

representatives of the Orthodox Church, in matters of faith and conscience there is no room for compromise. For us, two different meanings cannot be covered by, and two different concepts cannot be deduced from, the same word of a generally agreed statement. Nor can we Orthodox hope that an agreement reached upon such statements would remain lasting.

That the drafting committees have realized the existence of this disagreement is apparent from many of the notes which they have placed in the Reports and which leave full liberty upon matters which at least we Orthodox hold to be fundamental. Thus, for example, we Orthodox cannot conceive of a united Church in which some of its members would hold that there is only one source of divine revelation, namely Holy Scripture alone; but others would affirm that apostolic tradition is the necessary completion of Holy Scripture. While the full freedom so accorded in the Report to each Church to use its own confession of faith would make these confessions of indifferent value in themselves, on the other hand, nothing but confusion as to the one common conception of the Faith of the so united single Church could arise.

The Orthodox Church adheres fixedly to the principle that the limits of individual liberty of belief are determined by the definitions made by the whole Church, which definitions we maintain to be obligatory on each individual. This principle holds good for us not only as to the present members of the Orthodox Church, but also as to those who, in the future, may become united with it in faith and order. Moreover, the symbols which would be accepted by the united Church acquire their importance (in our conception as Orthodox) not only from the fact of their being historical witnesses of the faith of the primitive Church, but above all because the Church has affirmed their validity in her ecumenical Councils. It should be unnecessary for us to add that the Orthodox Church recognizes and accepts as an ecumenical Symbol only the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople.

That which holds good for us in regard to the ecumenical Symbol holds good also in regard to the dogmatic definitions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, the authority of which no Orthodox would be justified in shaking.

Therefore the mind of the Orthodox Church is that reunion can take place only on the basis of the common faith and confession of the ancient, undivided Church of the seven ecumenical Councils and of the first eight centuries.

Although the Reports of the other three Sections are not yet to hand, the process of debate on them makes it evident that agreement on them can be reached only by vague phrases, or by a compromise of antithetical opinions. Thus, for example, we cannot conceive how agreement can be made possible between two conceptions which agree that the existence of the ministry of the Church is by the will of Christ, but differ as to whether that ministry was instituted by Christ Himself in its three degrees of bishop, priest, and deacon. In the same way we judge there to be no practical value in an agreed formula as to the necessity of the sacraments in the Church, when there is a fundamental difference

between the Churches not only in regard to their number but also as to their particular efforts.

This being so, we cannot entertain the idea of a reunion which is confined to a few common points of verbal statement; for according to the Orthodox Church where the totality of faith is absent there can be no communion in sacris.

Nor can we here apply that principle of economy which in the past the Orthodox Church has applied under quite other circumstances in the case of those who came to her with a view to union with her.

In consequence, while we, the undersigned Orthodox representatives, must refrain from agreeing to any Reports other than that upon the Message of the Church, which we accept and are ready to vote upon, we desire to declare that in our own judgment the most which we can now do is to enter into co operation with other Churches in the social and moral sphere on a basis of Christian love. Further, we desire to add that as Orthodox Delegates we should view a partial reunion of those Churches which share the same principles with satisfaction as a precedent to general union, inasmuch as it would thus be easier for our Orthodox Church to discuss reunion with the Churches which had so united into a single Church and had a single faith, than with many Churches with different faiths.

In making it plain that we have arrived at our decision only in obedience to the dictates of our conscience we beg to assure the Conference that we have derived much comfort here from the experience that, although divided by dogmatic differences, we are one with our brethren here in faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Declaring that in the future we shall not cease to devote ourselves to labour for the closer approach of the Churches, we add that we shall pray to God without ceasing that by the operation of His Holy Spirit He will take away all existing hindrances and will guide us to that unity for which the Founder and Ruler of the Church prayed to His Heavenly Father: 'that they all may be one as we are one.'

We close with the intercession that our Lord will richly give His blessing to one and all who labour in sincerity and in His fear for the establishment of His kingdom among men.

DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH

At the Second Faith and Order Conference, Oxford, 1937 and read by Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateria, Delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

On behalf of the Orthodox representatives here present I have the honour to make the following declaration:

I. The Orthodox representatives who have been appointed by their respective autocephalous Churches to take part in the Second World Conference on Faith and Order desire to begin by expressing their satisfaction and joy at coming together in Conference for the time with you their brethren, who represent other Churches of Christ.

The Orthodox delegates are present here in comparatively small numbers. This is due not only to geographic distance, but also to the distressed situation in which some of the Orthodox Churches, first among them the martyred Church of Russia -- find themselves. In spite of this the Orthodox not only have shown much activity in the general and sectional discussions here, but have also taken an active part in the preparatory work for this Conference.

We desire to make grateful acknowledgement of the fact that we have had every opportunity to give expression to our religious convictions in statements and discussions. But we ask pardon for saying quite frankly that sometimes, indeed often, the form in which the final statements of the Reports came to be cast was not congenial to us. Generalising and the use of somewhat abstract language does not appeal to the Orthodox mind.

We hold firmly that in religious discussions the truth is better served by making points of difference clear. When an agreement is achieved on such a basis its value is very great.

II. A careful study of the Reports which are now before the Conference will show that they express many fundamental agreements which exist between us and our Christian brethren on many important points. On the other hand, they contain a long series of statements in regard to which significant differences exist of such weight that we found it necessary to formulate the Orthodox standpoint upon them in a series of short footnotes. I now proceed to offer you our comments on the four Reports and to specify some of the most outstanding divergencies from the Orthodox position.

In Report 1, on the Grace of Jesus Christ, fundamental agreement has been reached as to the meaning of Grace and as to its primary importance in the work of our salvation.

While being in agreement with this report on the whole, we desire to draw your attention

to the term “cooperation” (synergia), by which term the theology of the Fathers is accustomed to designate the active participation of man’s will in the process of his sanctification. We wish that the Report had dealt with this term.

Report II expresses a satisfactory agreement as to the inspired character of the Holy Scriptures, but with regard to the importance of tradition the Orthodox doctrine has been formulated according to what the Orthodox supported at Lausanne and elsewhere.

On the other hand, there are most important points on which we cannot agree with Part II of this Report. We consider the Church and not the “Word” (i.e. the written and preached Word) as primary in the work of our salvation. It is by the Church that the Scriptures are given to us. They are God’s gift to her; they are the means of grace which she uses in the work of our salvation. Further, we must point out with reference to the discussions about an “invisible” Church that the Orthodox Church believes that by its essential characteristic, the Church on earth is visible and that only one true Church can be visible and exist on earth.

In Report II the agreement achieved is much more limited than in the two former Reports. This will be evident from the great number of footnotes provided by the Orthodox members of the Section. Moreover, disagreement on points of capital and fundamental importance is very plain, for example, upon the nature of the Sacred Ministry and of Holy Orders, upon the Apostolic Succession, upon the nature and the number of the Sacraments, upon the problem of validity and lastly upon some points touching the doctrine of Baptism and of the Eucharist, which are the only Sacraments that have received detailed consideration. It being impossible to enter into details here, we desire to emphasize the great importance which the Orthodox Church has from the very beginning attached to the Sacrament of Orders upon which, from the Orthodox point of view, depends, of necessity, the valid rendering of all the other Sacraments, Baptism only being excepted. We would remind you that this conception of the Orthodox Church is shared by all those who, calling themselves Catholics, insist on faithfulness to the doctrine and practice of the undivided Church.

Passing to Report IV we desire to state here once more that we hold that intercommunion must be considered as the crowning act of a real and true Reunion which has already been fully achieved by fundamental agreement in the realm of Faith and Order and is not to be regarded as an instrument for Reunion. As to the other and extremely important subject of this Report, i.e. the Communion of the Saints, we recognize that in discussion of the veneration of the Holy Virgin, the Theotokos, and of the saints, a very valuable advance has been achieved. None the less essential differences remain, and we Orthodox have felt obliged to mention our divergent points of view in separate footnotes.

IV. We Orthodox delegates, faithful to the tradition of the ancient undivided Church of

the seven oecumenical Synods and of the first eight centuries, cherish the conviction that only the dogmatic teaching of the ancient Church as it is found in the Holy Scriptures, the Creed, the decisions of the oecumenical Synods and the teaching of the Fathers and in the worship and whole life of the undivided Church, can form a solid basis for dealing successfully and rightly with the new problems of doctrine and theology which have arisen in recent times. We Orthodox delegates further stress the necessity of accuracy and concreteness in the formulation of the faith and are convinced that ambiguous expressions and comprehensive expressions of the faith are of no real value. We are opposed to vague and abstract terms which are used to identify conceptions and tenets that are really different from one another. We Orthodox therefore consider it our duty both to our Church and to our conscience, to declare in all sincerity and humility that while the reports in which such vague and abstract language is used may perhaps contribute to the advancement of reunion between churches of the same essential characteristics, they are altogether profitless for the larger end for which they have been used, especially in regard to the Orthodox Church.

It is inevitable therefore that in this matter we Orthodox should remember what was said by the Orthodox delegates to the World Conference in Lausanne, namely, that the general reunion of Christian Churches may possibly be hastened if union is first achieved between those Churches which present features of great similarity with one another. In such a way the gradual drawing together of the Christian Churches may be helped and promoted. The happy results which have now been reached in different parts of Christendom, namely, that Churches akin to one another have recovered or are on the way to recovering their union and that others by friendly intercourse are drawing nearer together, fills us with hope and gives us encouragement to continue our efforts in the direction of an ultimate reunion of all Christians.

Brethren! After having made this declaration in order to satisfy our consciences, we are constrained and rejoice to utter a few words by which to emphasize the great spiritual profit which we have drawn from our daily intercourse with you, the representatives of other Christian Churches. With you we bewail the rending asunder of the seamless robe of Christ. We desire, as you, that the members of the one Body of Christ may again be reunited, and we pray, as you, day by day in our congregations for the union of all mankind.

It is a spiritual solace and a spiritual edification which have been granted to us in and through the intercourse with you and therein we have been strengthened in our faith; inasmuch as we have known with you the inspiration of "looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." We have felt here with renewed strength the great importance which our Church attaches to mutual love as the presupposition which enables us to look to a common confession of faith: "Let us love one another in order that we may with one mind confess the Father, the Son

and the Holy Ghost.”

With you we realise that to be uplifted into participation in the Cross and the death and the risen life of our Lord Jesus Christ is the true way to union. For in spite of all our differences, our common Master and Lord is One Jesus Christ who will lead us to a more and more close collaboration for the edifying of the body of Christ: “Till all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. iv, 12 13).

THE PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL OF 1952

Subsequent to the amalgamation in one single organization (the present World Council of Churches) of the great Christian organizations “Life and Work” and “Faith and Order,” which formerly existed and operated separately and independently, the question arose whether our Most Holy Orthodox Church should or should not participate in the work and conferences of the World Council. Upon this question the opinion of the revered Presiding Hierarchs of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, our sister Churches, was sought in encyclical letters dated February 4th, 1945; with the Protocol No. 45.

We have submitted to the consideration of the Holy and Sacred Synod from time to time the replies of our sister Churches and the declarations concerning the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches called together at Amsterdam in 1948 which were afterwards made by them, as well as by the delegates of the Orthodox Church who participated. We have made this matter the subject of a special study in the framework of the aims and activities of the whole pan-Christian movement up to the present time, in order to clarify our future attitude to the World Council of Churches and the appropriate mode of our participation in its work and its Assemblies. We are, therefore, now writing to you on the occasion of the impending third World Conference of Faith and Order at Lund, Sweden making known to your revered and well-beloved Beatitude the views on this most important question of our Most Holy Ecumenical Throne, asking you also to be good enough to communicate to us, in due course, your views and those of your Most Holy Church.

In an epoch in which the peoples of the world are working intensely for some kind of rapprochement in order to confront the great problems which face humanity today, and when the need for some manifestation of the unity of the Christian world in opposition to the anti Christian tendencies in the world has acquired particular importance, the task of rapprochement and cooperation between all the Christian confessions and organizations is a sacred obligation and a holy duty, derived from their own function and mission. According to the Constitution of the World Council of Churches, it is its function to facilitate common action by the churches, to promote cooperation in the study of the Christian spirit, to promote the growth of the ecumenical consciousness in the members

of all the churches, to support the distribution of the sacred Gospel, and to preserve, uplift and cause to prevail the spiritual values of man, in the most general Christian context. It is, therefore, quite clear that the principal aim of the Council is a practical one and that its task is pleasing to God as an attempt and a manifestation of a noble desire, that the churches of Christ should face together the great problems of humanity.

Because this is the aim of the World Council of Churches, and also because the Orthodox Church, in her past participation in the pan-Christian movement, has sought to make known and to impart to the heterodox the riches of her faith, worship and order and her religious and ascetic experience, as well as to inform herself about their new methods and their conceptions of church life and activity (things of great value that the Orthodox Church could not possess, and foster, on account of the particular conditions in which she lived) we consider that, in many ways, the future participation and cooperation of the Orthodox Church with the World Council of Churches is necessary.

However, in the light of the experience of the Orthodox Church in her past participation in the pan-Christian Movement, and having regard to what was ascertained in this participation, we think that future participation should be carried out with the following limitations:

a) Although the principal aim of the World Council of Churches continues to be the cooperation of the Churches on the plane of social and practical issues, nevertheless the "Faith and Order" organization still exists as a special Commission of the Council which is occupied exclusively with dogmatic questions. It is meet that any participation by the Orthodox Church in the discussions and operations of this Commission should be avoided, inasmuch as this Commission has for its aim the union (of Churches) by means of dogmatic discussions between delegates of Churches separated from one another by "the deepest issues; this should be plainly and categorically stated to the Central Committee of the Council. But it is also necessary that our Orthodox Church should also inform the heterodox about the content of her faith and teaching and it is meet that this should be done through books written for this special purpose, inasmuch as the Handbooks of Dogmatics and Symbolics used among us, not having been compiled with this object in view, cannot serve the Church in this particular task.

b) Because the participation of our Orthodox Church in the operations of the World Council of Churches is an event of great importance in her life, it is meet that she should be represented by delegates of all the local Orthodox Autocephalous Churches; this would give the proper authority and prestige to her participation. The individual sister Churches should cooperate appropriately in the common study and preparation of the subjects to be considered in the Assemblies of the World Council of Churches so that our Church should not appear in pan Christian conferences in an inferior position, but with the strength and authority appropriate to her position and to her historic mission in the world of inter-Christian relationships. For this purpose it is necessary that permanent Synodical Commission on the Ecumenical Movement should be formed in the Orthodox

Churches, in order to study, in cooperation with the professors of the Theological Schools, the different problems involved, and in order to clarify beforehand the point of view of the Orthodox Church about them and the attitude she should adopt.

c) It is meet that Orthodox Clerics who are Delegates (of their Church) should be as careful as possible about services of worship in which they join with the heterodox, as these are contrary to the sacred canons and make less acute the confessional sensitiveness of the Orthodox. They should aim at celebrating, if possible, purely Orthodox liturgical services and rites, that they may thereby manifest, before the eyes of the heterodox, the splendour and majesty of Orthodox adoration.

We shall now await the definite opinion of your venerable Beatitude and of your Most Holy Church about the above, that we may give a timely reply to the invitation extended to us by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, to the Assembly gathered together in Lund. We greet your Beatitude with an embrace and again with a holy kiss we are with brotherly love the beloved brother in Christ of your revered Beatitude,

January 31st, 1952

Athenagoras I, Ecumenical

Patriarch of Constantinople

A STATEMENT OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX DELEGATES

Concerning the Main Theme of the Assembly at Evanston, Illinois, 1954, read by Archbishop Michael of North and South America, delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

Being entrusted with the responsibility of representing the Orthodox member churches at this Assembly of the World Council of Churches, we are in duty bound to present the following comments on the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme: "Christ, the Hope of the World."

(1) We are happy to express our general agreement with the Report of the Advisory Committee. Ever since Pentecost, the Orthodox Church has been proclaiming to the world that Christ is the Hope and especially in our time she is persistently re-affirming that all human hopes must be interpreted and judged, condemned, or amended, in the light of this hope. That at this decisive moment in its life the World Council of Churches unanimously felt that Christians should proclaim this hope to the world, and should alert themselves of their responsibilities in a world full of distress and suffering, makes us rejoice exceedingly.

(2) But this general statement makes it even more necessary to state clearly, on the one hand, what we regard as not fully acceptable from the standpoint of the Orthodox Church, and, on the other hand, what we consider as requiring further development in the Report, and formally draw attention to certain points that were not touched upon in the Report at all. Obviously, in these few remarks we cannot give a full confession of the Orthodox conception of the Christian Church. It must be affirmed, to begin with, in stronger terms, that the Christian Hope is grounded on Christian Faith. It is grounded on the belief that God takes a personal interest in human life and human history. God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. The Christian Hope is grounded in the belief that Jesus Christ, Incarnate Lord, came down from Heaven to save men. He accomplished the work of salvation on the Tree of the Cross and He manifested the new life for humanity in His glorious resurrection. He established upon earth His Holy Church which is His Body in which by the power of the Holy Spirit He abides with man for ever. The Church of Christ is one loving Body of Christ in which all generations of believers are united in the new life of Christ.

It is misleading to describe the Church simply as “the pilgrim people of God” and to forget that the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant are but One Body. It is precisely in this unity that the Christian Hope is grounded. The Church is the great Communion of Saints. We upon earth live and strive in communion with the glorious “cloud of witnesses” revealed through the ages and are strengthened by the intercessions of the Theotokos and the Saints within whom we join in adoration of Christ our Redeemer.

(3) The Report justly stresses the importance of the belief in the second coming of Christ for the Christian Hope. However, we strongly believe that it is necessary to place an adequate emphasis on the actual presence of the Kingdom of God in the Church. The Kingdom has been founded by God through the incarnation of His Son, the Redemption, the Resurrection, the Ascension of Christ in glory and the descent of the Holy Spirit. It has been existing on earth since the Pentecost and is open to all men, bestowing to all who enter the power transforming and renewing human existence now on earth. Life eternal is not only an object of future realization; it is given to those who were called by the Word of God in the Sacrament of Baptism (Rom. 6) and is continuously renewed through the participation in the Holy Eucharist. Nothing has been left undone by God for our salvation and for the immediate transformation of human existence. Thus our participation in the renewed life of the Kingdom of God is a present reality as well as a future fulfillment.

(4) The hope in Christ is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit and no one can confess Him as Lord and Saviour except by the Holy Spirit. It would be in vain to preach Christ as the Hope of the World without mentioning divine action and acknowledging the reality of grace which is the sole source of this hope. The tragedy of the fallen world consists

precisely in its inability to hope in Christ without the help of grace. Moreover, this hope is meaningful and fruitful only inasmuch as it leads man into the real life in Christ which presupposes the continuous action of the Holy Spirit within us.

(5) The paragraphs of the Report dealing with the unity of the Church raise serious doubts. This subject will be treated in full in the Section on Faith and Order, but it should be noted that some of the ideas expressed in the Report lead to interpretations that cannot be accepted from the standpoint of the Orthodox Church.

The power of God is operating in the midst of human weakness. We never can fulfil all the demands which Christ makes upon us and in humility and repentance we must acknowledge our limitations and shortcomings, apply steadfastly for an increase of our faith and strength. And yet it is in the Church that we find this strength. The reality of the New Life is never compromised or annulled by our failures. Thus, the Church of Christ, as the realized Kingdom of God lies beyond Judgment, whereas her members being liable to sin and error are subject to Judgment.

(6) In proclaiming that Christ is the Hope of the world, we must not lose sight of the reality that Christ is not separated from His Father and the Holy Spirit. Hope in Christ cannot be separated from the Hope in God, the Father, and God, the Holy Spirit. Of all the promises of Christ, the most precious is when He asserts that the Holy Trinity will abide in us (John 14:23; 15:26; 16:13-17; 17:21-26). Life eternal is but fellowship with the Divine Trinity.

(7) Hope in Christ must be interpreted in its true content. We place our hope in the Incarnate Son of God, in Whom we also have become sons of God, the Father, and co-heirs with Christ. This sonship constitutes the foundation, the content, and the aim of our Christian Hope. Adoption by the Father renders man a "new creation." In Christ the Fatherhood of God has been revealed to us and communion with him has been given. Through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father bestows on us the knowledge of truth, divine love, sanctification, eternal life, and ultimately participation in the divine nature (theosis).

(8) Hope in Christ means hope in the Blessed Trinity. The Orthodox Church gives clear expression to this truth in one of her prayers: "My Hope is in the Father; my Refuge is the Son; my Shelter is the Holy Spirit; Holy Trinity, glory to Thee."

(9) Finally, we do not believe that the analysis of false hopes given in the Report is adequate and complete. False doctrines, which are mentioned in the Report, especially that of communism, threaten the whole of human existence, threaten human personality as such. All of these dehumanize life. It is this aspect of false hopes with which the Church is primarily concerned. The danger to man which these false doctrines present appears to be sorely underestimated in the Report. If we seek at the present time in our troubled and distorted world, a true basis for human hope, we must profess emphatically

that it is only in the Church of God, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, that this basis can be found, since the Church is the “pillar and ground of the Truth.”

THE DECLARATION OF THE ORTHODOX DELEGATES CONCERNING FAITH AND ORDER

At Evanston, Illinois, 1954, read by Archbishop Michael of North and South America, delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

As delegates of the Orthodox Church participating at this Assembly of the World Council of Churches, we submit the following statement concerning the report of Section I.

1. We have studied the document with considerable interest. It falls into three parts: the first contains an able exposition of the New Testament doctrine of the Church. The organic character of the Church and her indissoluble unity with Christ are adequately stressed in the document. We feel that this at least provides fruitful ground for further theological elaboration. The second and third parts of the document deal with the divided state of Christendom and suggest practical steps toward union. It is our conviction that it does not follow logically from the first part and indeed if we do actually accept the New Testament doctrine of the Church we should come to write different practical conclusions which have been familiar to us Orthodox for centuries. The whole approach to the problem of reunion is entirely unacceptable from the standpoint of the Orthodox Church.

2. The Orthodox conception of church unity implies a twofold agreement:

(a) The whole of the Christian Faith should be regarded as one indivisible unity. It is not enough to accept just certain particular doctrines, basic as they may be in themselves, e.g. that Christ is God and Saviour. It is compelling that all doctrines formulated by the Ecumenical Councils, as well as the totality of the teaching of the early, undivided Church, should be accepted. One cannot be satisfied with formulas which are isolated from the life and experience of the Church. They must be assessed and understood within the context of the Church's life. From the Orthodox viewpoint, reunion of Christendom with which the World Council of Churches is concerned can be achieved solely on the basis of the total, dogmatic Faith of the early, undivided Church without either subtraction or alteration. We cannot accept a rigid distinction between essential and non essential doctrines, and there is no room for comprehensiveness in the Faith. On the other hand, the Orthodox Church cannot accept that the Holy Spirit speaks to us only through the Bible. The Holy Spirit abides and witnesses through the totality of the Church's life and experience. The Bible is given to us within the context of Apostolic Tradition in which in turn we possess the authentic interpretation and explication of the Word of God. Loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition safeguards the reality and continuity of church unity.

(b) It is through the Apostolic Ministry that the mystery of the Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church. The Episcopal Succession from the Apostles constitutes an historical reality in the life and structure of the Church and one of the pre suppositions of her unity throughout the ages. The unity of the Church is preserved through the unity of the Episcopate. The Church is one Body whose historical continuity and unity is also safeguarded by the common faith arising spontaneously out of the fulness (pleroma) of the Church.

3. Thus when we are considering the problem of Church unity we cannot envisage it in any other way than as the complete restoration of the total faith and the total episcopal structure of the Church which is basic to the sacramental life of the Church. We would not pass judgment upon those of the separated communions. However, it is our conviction that in these communions certain basic elements are lacking which constitute the reality of the fulness of the Church. We believe that the return of the communions to the Faith of the ancient, united, and indivisible Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, namely to the pure and unchanged and common heritage of the forefathers of all divided Christians, shall alone produce the desired reunion of all separated Christians. For, only the unity and the fellowship of Christians in a common Faith shall have as a necessary result their fellowship in the sacraments and their indissoluble unity in love, as members of one and the same Body of the one Church of Christ.

4. The “perfect unity” of Christians must not be interpreted exclusively as a realization at the Second Coming of Christ. We must acknowledge that even at the present age the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church continues to breathe in the world, guiding all Christians to unity. The unity of the Church must not be understood only eschatologically, but as a present reality which is to receive its consummation in the Last Day.

5. It is suggested in the report of the section that the road which the Church must take in restoring unity is that of repentance. We must recognize that there have been and there are imperfections and failures within the life and witness of Christian believers, but we reject the notion that the Church herself, being the Body of Christ and the repository of revealed Truth and the “whole operation of the Holy Spirit,” could be affected by human sin. Therefore, we cannot speak of the repentance of the Church which is intrinsically holy and unerring. For, “Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that He might sanctify it in the washing of water and the word, that He might present it to Himself as a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5 26 27).

Thus the Lord, the only Holy One, sanctified His Church for ever and ordered that her task be the “edification of the saints and the building of the body of Christ.” Her holiness is not vitiated by the sins and failures of her members. They cannot in any way lessen or

exhaust the inexhaustible holiness of the divine life which from the Head of the Church is diffused throughout all the body.

6. In conclusion, we are bound to declare our profound conviction that the Holy Orthodox Church alone has preserved in full and intact “the faith once delivered unto the saints.” It is not because of our human merit, but because it pleases God to preserve “his treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God.” (2 Cor. 4: 7).

STATEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE U. S. A.

At the North American Faith and Order Study Conference, Oberlin, Ohio, 1957, read by Bishop Athenagoras of Elaia, delegate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

We are glad to take part in a study conference devoted to such a basic need of the Christian world as unity. All Christians should seek unity. On the other hand, we feel that the whole program of the forthcoming discussion has been framed from a point of view which we cannot conscientiously admit. “The unity we seek” is for us a given unity which has never been lost, and as a Divine gift and an essential mark of Christian existence, could not have been lost. This unity in the Church of Christ is for us a unity in the historical Church, in the fulness of faith, in the fulness of continuous sacramental life. For us, this unity is embodied in the Orthodox Church, which kept, *catholikos* and *anelleipos*, both the integrity of the apostolic faith and the integrity of the apostolic order.

Our share in the study of Christian unity is determined by our firm conviction that unity can only be found in the fellowship of the historical Church, preserving faithfully the catholic tradition, both in doctrine and in order. We cannot commit ourselves to any discussion of these basic assumptions, as if they were but hypothetical or problematic. We begin with a clear conception of the Church’s unity, which we believe has been embodied and realized in the age-long history of the Orthodox Church, without any change or break since the times when the visible unity of Christendom was an obvious fact and was attested and witnessed by ecumenical unanimity, in the age of the Ecumenical Councils.

We admit, of course, that the unity of Christendom has been disrupted, that the unity of faith and the integrity of order have been sorely broken. But we do not admit that the unity of the Church, and precisely of the “visible” and historical Church, has ever been broken or lost, so as to now be a problem for search and discovery. The problem of unity is for us, therefore, the problem of the return to the fulness of faith and order, in full faithfulness to the message of Scripture and Tradition and in obedience to the will of God: That all may be one.

Long before the breakup of the unity of Western Christendom, the Orthodox Church has had a keen sense of the essential importance of the oneness of Christian believers and from her very inception she has deplored divisions in the Christian world. As in the past, so in the present, she laments disunity among those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ whose purpose in the world was to unite all believers into one Body. The Orthodox Church feels that, since she has been unassociated with the events related to the breakdown of religious unity in the West, she bears a special responsibility to contribute toward the restoration of Christian unity which alone can render the message of the Gospel effective in a world troubled by threats of world conflict and general uncertainty over the future.

It is with humility that we voice the conviction that the Orthodox Church can make a special contribution to the cause of Christian unity, because since Pentecost she has possessed the true unity intended by Christ. It is with this conviction that the Orthodox Church is always prepared to meet with Christians of other communions in interconfessional deliberations. She rejoices over the fact that she is able to join those of other denominations in ecumenical conversations that aim at removing the barriers to Christian unity. However, we feel compelled in all honesty, as representatives of the Orthodox Church, to confess that we must qualify our participation, as necessitated by the historic faith and practice of our Church, and also state the general position that must be taken at this interdenominational conference.

In considering firstly “the nature of the unity we seek,” we wish to begin by making clear that our approach is at variance with that usually advocated and ordinarily expected by participating representatives. The Orthodox Church teaches that the unity of the Church has not been lost, because she is the Body of Christ, and, as such, can never be divided. It is Christ as her head and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that secure the unity of the Church throughout the ages.

The presence of human imperfection is powerless to obliterate the unity, for Christ himself promised that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.” Satan has always sown tares in the field of the Lord and the forces of disunity have often threatened but have never actually succeeded in dividing the Church. No power is mightier than the omnipotent will of Christ who founded one Church only in order to bring men into unity with God. Oneness is the essential mark of the Church.

A CONTRIBUTION OF THE ORTHODOX DELEGATES

In the Section of Unity at the New Delhi, India Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961.

Representatives of the Orthodox Church in the Section on Unity welcome the Report of

Faith and Order Commission adopted at St. Andrews, Scotland, in August, 1960, as an important and stimulating ecumenical document. The Ecumenical Movement, as it is now embodied in the World Council of Churches, has begun by protestant initiative, but was not meant, from the very beginning, to be a protestant endeavour, nor should be regarded as such. This must be especially emphasized now, when almost all churches of the Orthodox Communion have entered the membership of the World Council. In this situation the Orthodox Representatives feel themselves obliged to underline the basic difference between their own approach to the ecumenical problem and that which is implied in the document of St. Andrews. The ecumenical problem, as it is understood in the current ecumenical movement, is primarily a problem of the Protestant world. The main question, in this setting, is that of "Denominationalism." Accordingly, the problem of Christian unity, or of Christian Reunion, is usually regarded in terms of an interdenominational agreement or Reconciliation. In the Protestant universe of discourse such approach is quite natural. But for the Orthodox it is uncongenial. For the Orthodox the basic ecumenical problem is that of schism. The Orthodox cannot accept the idea of a "parity of denomination" and cannot visualize Christian Reunion just as an interdenominational adjustment. The unity has been broken and must be recovered. The Orthodox Church is not a confession, one of many, one among the many. For the Orthodox, the Orthodox Church is just the Church. The Orthodox Church is aware and conscious of the identity of her inner structure and of her teaching with the Apostolic message (kerygma) and the tradition of the ancient undivided Church. She finds herself in an unbroken and continuous succession of sacramental ministry, sacramental life, and faith. Indeed, for the Orthodox the apostolic succession of episcopacy and sacramental priesthood is an essential and constitutive, and therefore obligatory element of the Church's very existence. The Orthodox Church, by her inner conviction and consciousness, has a special and exceptional position in the divided Christendom, as the bearer of, and the witness to, the tradition of the ancient undivided Church, from which all existing denominations stem, by the way of reduction and separation. From the Orthodox point of view, the current ecumenical endeavour can be characterized as "ecumenism in space," aiming at agreement between various denominations, as they exist at present. This endeavour is, from the Orthodox point of view, quite inadequate and incomplete. The common ground, or rather the common background of existing denominations can be found, and must be sought, in the past, in their common history, in that common ancient and apostolic tradition, from which all of them derive their existence. This kind of ecumenical endeavour can be properly denoted as "ecumenism in time." The report of Faith and Order itself mentions "agreement (in faith) with all ages" as one of the normative prerequisites of unity. Orthodox theologians suggest this new method of ecumenical inquiry, and this new criterion of ecumenical evaluation, as a kingly rock, with the hope that unity may be recovered by the divided denominations by their return to their common past. By this way divergent denominations may meet each other on the unity of common tradition. The Orthodox Church is willing to participate in this common work as the witness which had preserved continuously the deposit of apostolic faith and tradition. No static restoration of old forms is anticipated, but rather a

dynamic recovery of perennial ethos, which only can secure the true agreement “of all ages.” Nor should there be a rigid uniformity, since the same faith, mysterious in its essence and unfathomable adequately in the formulas of human reason, can be expressed accurately in different manners. The immediate objective of the ecumenical search is, according to the Orthodox understanding, a reintegration of Christian mind, a recovery of apostolic tradition, a fulness of Christian vision and belief, in agreement with all ages.

THE DISCIPLINE OF HOLY COMMUNION

A statement unanimously approved by the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America at its meeting on January 22, 1965, at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, New York City.

The Standing Conference views with satisfaction the progress in mutual understanding that is leading the separated Christian bodies ever closer to each other in faith and life. The many formal organizations and movements dedicated to the specific task of furthering reunion, as well as the innumerable spontaneous evidences of charity and love that now mark interconfessional relations, are manifestations of the will of Our Lord Jesus Christ and must be regarded as evidences of the action of the Holy Spirit among those who surrender themselves in faith and humility to the Father Almighty.

We urge the faithful children of the Orthodox Church, especially in those portions of the vineyard committed to our oversight, to acquaint themselves with the nature and progress of all expressions of Christian yearning for fellowship and unity. Let them by prayer to God and with sympathy for brethren of other traditions, strive to be instruments of peace and reconciliation of love and understanding.

As unworthy inheritors of the faith committed to the Apostles and Fathers of Almighty God, and preserved unsullied in the Church through the centuries, we contribute to the reintegration of Christendom by witnessing to the precious confession delivered to us, more especially as it relates to the Eucharist, the Sacrament or Mystery of unity. It is, as all of her faithful children are aware, the ancient, unvarying and unalterable teaching of the Orthodox Church that the reception of Holy Communion is the final end and goal of the Christian life, the very fulfillment of unity. It is the last step in that earthly Christian progress which unites the faithful to Christ the Lord and to each other in Him. To the Holy Communion the Church admits only her baptized and chrismated children who confess the full Orthodox faith, pure and entire, and by it she shows forth their oneness with her and with her Divine Spouse. Holy Communion is the sign and evidence of right belief and of incorporation in the Israel of God. Further the Church teaches that the Eucharist cannot be found, and must not be sought, outside of her covenanted mysteries.

It is the achievement of unity.

The Standing Conference would at this time remind the children of the Church as they pray, study and work for Christian reunion that the Eucharistic Mystery is the end of unity, not a means to that end, and that therefore, decisions regarding Holy Communion reached by Christian bodies outside of the Orthodox Church have no significance of validity for the Orthodox Church or her members. Holy Communion will not be sought by Orthodox Christians outside of the Church, nor will it be offered to those who do not yet confess the Orthodox Church as their mother.

MESSAGE OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

To the World Council of Churches on the Occasion of Its Twenty Fifth Anniversary, August, 1973.

A) The Lord, "Who came to save us," carries out His redemptive work in many and various ways. He accompanies His people always and, through the grace of the Paraclete, He builds and promotes the Church, constantly showing her new perspectives and ways of life and action, so that His Will may be fulfilled in everything and so that His kingdom may be extended everywhere on earth.

The 20th Century offered to Christian Churches the possibility of seeing and experiencing this reality. The long-lived Ecumenical Movement and the World Council of Churches, which for 25 years has existed as a well-structured expression and organized form of it, constitute one of the means chosen by the Lord to make the "new commandment" of love more audible among persons and the precepts of reconciliation, peace and accord more precious to His Church.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, sharing joyously in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the World Council of Churches, attributes special significance to this event. The past quarter century is tangible evidence of precious experience vital to the Churches in their difficult common journey towards coexistence, common understanding, cooperation and coordinated efforts for reunion, and in their desire to advance in dialogue and in the exchange of love and fellowship so as "not to put an obstacle in the way of the Gospel of Christ" (I Cor. 9:12), and in order "that the world may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3), as God and Saviour.

On this momentous day, the Apostolic Church of Constantinople, ascribing praise and glory to God for everything accomplished up to the present in the ecumenical sphere, prays that the work for eventual rapprochement and reunion of all, undertaken cooperatively by the member Churches of the World Council of Churches, may proceed

and be furthered even more “in the one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptism, one Lord”; that is to say, in the one and eternal Kingdom of God, “Who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4 6), the eternal Father.

Our Ecumenical Throne, commemorating with gratitude those who have dedicated themselves to the idea of ecumenism and who have now departed this life into eternity in the hope and the vision of unity, extends its Christian appreciation also to all the untiring laborers of the spirit of unity in the present time, who through their honorable effort in every rank of ecumenical responsibility and action, contribute to the advancement of the work of the World Council of Churches.

B) After 25 years of specific ecumenical activity the facts tend naturally to receive their objective dimensions and, in examining and evaluating past events, our thoughts turn justifiably to the positive and fruitful steps that have been taken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the ecumenical movement already since the first years of the present century. The Encyclical of 1902, through which the Ecumenical Patriarch invited the entire Christian world to cooperation and common action; its second such Encyclical in 1920 “To the Christian Churches Wheresoever They May Be, “through which it called them to “love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (I Peter 1:22); its special contributions before, during and after the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948; and its Encyclical promulgated in 1952 concerning the relations and modes of participation in the work and the deliberations of the World Council of Churches; each of these, undertaken either on its own initiatives or with the other sister Orthodox Churches, constitute a humble offering and a testimony of the contribution of this Church to the work and purposes of the Council.

Today everyone acknowledges that most of the positive achievements and the subsequent enrichment of both the Council and of its member Churches and Confessions are, among others, the result and the fruits of Orthodox presence on the Council.

Examples of the positive presence of Orthodoxy in the Council, among whose members are included presently, at the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, all the local Orthodox Churches, are the following:

the amplification on a correct trinitarian basis of the First Article-Basis in the Constitution of the World Council of Churches;

the clarification of a theology of mission as the basic purpose of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church;

the admission of the necessity to abandon and to condemn unequivocally the past methods of proselytism, as well as the agreed definition of the fundamental principles of freedom of conscience and mutual respect in making our Christian witness;

the completely natural inclusion within the framework of ecumenical theology and interchurch dialogue of certain traditional theological principles, such as the theology of Holy Tradition, the Fathers, the Ecumenical Councils, the Christology of the fourth Ecumenical Council, Pneumatology, the nature and notes of the Church, Baptism, Eucharist, the Priesthood, etc.;

together with those significant clarifications concerning particular ecumenical issues which are most sensitive to the Orthodox Church and which were resolved in the well known discussions of the first two decades concerning the “Una Sancta” and through the renowned statement on “The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches,” up to the abandonment of the attempts to transform the Council into an “Ecumenical Council” and the promotion of tendencies toward “Intercommunion” in the last few years.

On the other hand, however, it is also acknowledged by all that the past quarter century has been equally enriching for Orthodoxy, both in the area of interchurch experience and theological study, and in the area of concrete and generous manifestations of Christian charity and mutual assistance, which have placed Christ in the hearts of millions of distressed Christians and many of our afflicted fellow men. All these things together have contributed and are continuing to contribute to the opening of hearts in a Christ-beloved interpretation of the Christian Churches and Confessions that confess the same Lord.

C) The World Council of Churches has in its favor the past 25 years of notable achievements. However, as an institution which unquestionably has within itself all the presuppositions and the power of self-development, it also undergoes moments of crisis and self-examination which the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the whole of Orthodoxy, despite their great confidence in the Council, follows with careful attention in the present moment of ecumenism.

As is well known, the World Council of Churches is inclining towards new areas. Having been called originally to serve on their behalf the Churches by witnessing and serving mankind, society and the world for their salvation, the Council lives and functions of course within a multidimensional and painful reality. Naturally, the problems of our sick society are also its own problems, as well as the problems of individual Christian Churches.

Such problems as secularism, rationalistic and materialistic trends and theories, organized resistance, violence, moral dissolution, unrestrained freedom, subversive movements, the excesses of contemporary youth, racism, the arms race, wars and the resultant social evils, such as the oppression of the masses, social inequality, economic misery, the uneven distribution or total lack of consumer goods, physical debilitation and undernourished people, the violent displacements of people, the refugee chaos, migration, illiteracy, ecological inadequacies for life and the destruction of the environment, the problems of developing societies in our unevenly industrialized and technological world,

the hopes of a suffocating population on our aged planet for the successful mastery of the universe, and the hopes for the future, all are part of the fabric of the infinite anguish of struggling humanity in our time. Indeed, the World Council of Churches feels compelled to assume the responsibility for extending its efforts toward all these new and ever increasing realities.

However, the question is raised: is it possible that all these issues, and only these, constitute the object and sole orientation of the World Council of Churches? The question is fundamental. The member Churches of the Council must apply themselves to the issues arising from this question, which expresses the deeper crisis currently rocking the Ecumenical Movement and the World Council of Churches as such.

There exists already a widely discussed polarization around this matter. Some look to the World Council of Churches as to an organization which provides the Churches with socio-political aims, and which thereafter proceeds to reflect theologically on these problems, purely as a theological justification for the various positions taken by the Council and the Churches. Others, on the contrary, wish to place the Council on the opposite pole. They consider the Council to be exclusively an ideological forum for theological discussion and for the tested and time-worn formulation of comparative theologies which perpetuate the differences and widen the divisions between the Churches.

As a faithful preserver of the original basis and fundamental position of Orthodoxy concerning reverence for the transmitted faith and teaching, the Ecumenical Patriarchate thinks that the impasse in this polarization can be surmounted and that the solution of this crisis in the World Council of Churches can be found only when and if a balance is achieved between these two extreme positions regarding the aims and aspirations, and ultimately the very nature and “raison d’etre,” of the World Council of Churches.

Here is a more detailed presentation of the relevant views of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the matter:

a) The World Council of Churches is and should remain a “Council of Churches” in accordance with the express requirements of the First Article-Basis of its Constitution. As such, it is supposed to serve the Churches in their broader efforts toward unity and cooperation in a fractured mankind still seminally containing the essential unity of the human race, which, just as it is bound to the Creator through one man, the first Adam, so through one man, the second Adam, it is preserved in unity with God the Father.

b) As an institution dedicated to the service of the Churches, the World Council of Churches is obligated in each case to act as the specific organ of the Churches in their common search for the shaken and elusive unity of the Churches, both in the

manifestation of the common signs of grace, truth and faith entrusted to them, and in the investigation and resolution of existing differences.

c) It is obvious that the World Council of Churches faces a clearly defined challenge: on the one hand, it seeks to include among its member Churches certain other Churches -- in particular the Roman Catholic Church -- with which it is negotiating intensely for some time; on the other hand, it is trying to incorporate certain movements or agencies or extra-ecclesial groups evidently lacking in ecclesiological characteristics. The Ecumenical Patriarchate expressly states that a beneficial openness of heart on the part of all concerned is desirable with regard to the admission into the World Council of Churches of these Churches, and in particular the Roman Catholic Church (existing doubts being removed -- because truly the World Council of Churches would be enriched in this manner and would attain greater pan Christian dimensions), whereas the opposite trends in the World Council of Churches to incorporate the above-mentioned extra-ecclesial movements must be avoided because it would result in a digression for the Council and would also put many of the member Churches in an extremely difficult position.

d) In fulfilling its basic aims, the World Council of Churches is bound to test all the theological insights ranging from ecumenical dialogue to the candid presentation of the faith and doctrine of participating members with full theological honesty and integrity, so that from the plurality of their teachings the oneness of the revealed truth in Christ may be distilled from both Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, upon which alone would be based any form of desired unity by the Council.

e) The World Council of Churches must offer its member Churches every ideological and practical opportunity to make a common witness to the world freely and with equal responsibility, both through the proclamation of the one undivided Christ and through the transmission of salvation in Christ today.

f) As an institution that does not replace the Churches but which in their name and on their behalf addresses the anguished man of today, the World Council of Churches must not forget the basic truth that this man sees himself as hungering for an answer to a basic question over and beyond his acute interest in the most vital current socio political problems. The question is: What is the reason for his existence on earth as a living person, as a moral individual and as a being reaching out to something beyond this present life and ultimately embracing the "eschaton"? This means that the World Council of Churches must seek to know man in his true dimensions: ontological, ethical and charismatic.

g) The World Council of Churches should examine carefully the resistance, whether it be justified or unjustified, of contemporary man to what the Churches are offering him. Furthermore, it should weigh the reasons why contemporary man is repelled by certain aspects of the Churches and their theology so that it may discover the most appropriate means of expressing Christian teaching and so that its message may not be the

insignificant word of a secularized movement, like so many others, nor inspired by a sterile bureaucracy, but rather a proclamation rich in prophetic tone, the very Word of Christ.

h) As an instrument of the Churches engaged not only in theological dialogue but in charitable and mutual collaboration with one another, and thus through cooperative assistance and support giving witness and service to man and to the world, the World Council of Churches should persist in greater efforts towards a broader and more positive encounter with a long-suffering mankind so that Christ and Christ alone may be proclaimed, through means visible and invisible; through words and deeds; through decisions and actions; wherever and whenever fitting. Let the Council not pursue aims foreign to it, which could alienate it from its original purely ecclesiastical and religious goals.

In formulating these views and prayers concerning the future of the World Council of Churches, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is convinced that it is not only pursuing a straightforward and consistent course, as it has always done in its relations with the World Council of Churches, but that it is also participating in the work of the council in love and humility and that it is collaborating in the work and desire of the Churches to better serve the common task for the union of all.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate prays for a lengthy and blessed journey and activity for the World Council of Churches in the future, for its pure witness and service to suffering mankind, and for its warm and sincere contribution to the member Churches. May God bless its efforts everywhere for unity. And may the day be near when the Lord will fulfill the longing of the Churches and their faithful, that there be “one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:14) in the Lord’s Church, one and undivided, “which is His Body, the fulness of Him Who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23).

The Ecumenical Patriarchate August 16, 1973

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The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches

Toronto, 1950

The Ecclesiological Significance of the World Council of Churches

I. Introduction

The first Assembly at Amsterdam adopted a resolution on “the authority of the Council” which read:

“The World Council of Churches is composed of Churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. They find their unity in Him. They do not have to create their unity; it is the gift of God. But they know that it is their duty to make common cause in the search for the expression of that unity in work and in life. The Council desires to serve the Churches, which are its constituent members, as an instrument whereby they may bear witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ, and cooperate in matters requiring united action. But the Council is far from desiring to usurp any of the functions which already belong to its constituent Churches, or to control them, or to legislate for them, and indeed is prevented by its constitution from doing so. Moreover, while earnestly seeking fellowship in thought and action for all its members, the Council disavows any thought of becoming a single unified church structure independent of the Churches which have joined in constituting the Council, or a structure dominated by a centralised administrative authority.

“The purpose of the Council is to express its unity in another way. Unity arises out of the love of God in Jesus Christ, which, binding the constituent Churches to Him, binds them to one another. It is the earnest desire of the Council that the Churches may be bound closer to Christ and therefore closer to one another. In the bond of His love, they will desire continually to pray for one another and to strengthen one another, in worship and in witness, bearing one another’s burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ.”

This statement authoritatively answered some of the questions which had arisen about the nature of the Council. But it is clear that other questions are now arising and some attempt to answer them must be made, especially in the face of a number of false or inadequate conceptions of the Council which are being presented.

III. What the World Council of Churches is not

- 1) The World Council of Churches is not and must never become a Super-Church.
- 2) The purpose of the World Council of Churches is not to negotiate unions between

Churches, which can only be done by the Churches themselves acting on their own initiative, but to bring the Churches into living contact with each other and to promote the study and discussion of the issues of Church unity.

3) The World Council cannot and should not be based on any one particular conception of the Church. It does not prejudge the ecclesiological problem.

4) Membership in the World Council of Churches does not imply that a Church treats its own conception of the Church as merely relative.

5) Membership in the World Council of Churches does not imply the acceptance of a specific doctrine concerning the nature of Church unity.

IV. The Assumptions Underlying the World Council of Churches

We must now try to define the positive assumptions which underlie the World Council of Churches and the ecclesiological implications of membership in it.

1) The member Churches of the Council believe that conversation, cooperation and common witness of the Churches must be based on the common recognition that Christ is the Divine Head of the Body.

2) The member Churches of the World Council believe on the basis of the New Testament that the Church of Christ is one.

3) The member Churches recognize that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own Church-body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those outside their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ.

4) The member Churches of the World Council consider the relationship of other Churches to the Holy Catholic Church which the Creeds profess as a subject for mutual consideration. Nevertheless, membership does not imply that each Church regard the other member Churches in the true and full sense of the word.

5) The member Churches of the World Council recognize in other Churches elements of the true Church. They consider that this mutual recognition obliges them to enter into a serious conversation with each other in the hope that these elements of truth will lead to the recognition of the full truth and to unity based on the full truth.

6) The member Churches of the Council are willing to consult together in seeking to learn of the Lord Jesus Christ what witness He would have them to bear to the world in His Name.

7) A further practical implication of common membership in the World Council is that the member Churches should recognize their solidarity with each other, render assistance

to each other in case of need, and refrain from such actions as are incompatible with brotherly relationships.

8) The member Churches enter into spiritual relationships through which they seek to learn from each other and to give help to each other in order that the Body of Christ may be built up and that the life of the Churches may be renewed.

None of these positive assumptions, implied in the existence of the World Council, is in conflict with the teachings of the member Churches. We believe therefore that no Church need fear that by entering into the World Council it is in danger of denying its heritage.

As the conversation between the Churches develops and as the Churches enter into closer contact with each other, they will no doubt have to face new decisions and problems. For the Council exists to break the deadlock between the Churches. But in no case can or will any Church be pressed to take a decision against its own conviction or desire. The Churches remain wholly free in the action which, on the basis of their convictions and in the light of their ecumenical contacts, they will or will not take.

A very real unity has been discovered in ecumenical meetings which is, to all who collaborate in the World Council, the most precise element of its life. It exists and we receive it again and again as an unmerited gift from the Lord. We praise God for this foretaste of the unity of His People and continue hopefully with the work to which He has called us together. For the Council exists to serve the Churches as they prepare to meet their Lord Who knows only one flock.

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