

# ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΗ ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ\*

Τ. Π. Ο.

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΥ Θ. ΣΤΑΥΡΙΔΟΥ

Καθηγητοῦ τῆς Ἱ. Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Χάλκης

## II

### B'. THE FUTURE (OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)

The second volume of the monumental work: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1948-1968, published by Dr. Harold E. Fey appeared in 1970<sup>1</sup>. Seventeen authors in all covered the different areas of study for the 20 years in ecumenical history.

Some chapters resemble a text of an ecclesiastical history, while others belong to the philosophy of history. Still others are critical studies of ideas or of historical events. Although we come across some passages of biographical nature, the work is mainly one of a history of institutions and ideas. In some chapters the authors, in their introductions, touch briefly upon the past.

Notwithstanding the fact that prophecy of things to come is a part of historical study, most of the authors refrain from commenting on them. A few, though, have some things to say about the future, which for us has already become the past. It might be of interest to consider what these scholars and ecclesiastical leaders had anticipated in 1968 for the future.

After enumerating the problems which the confessional families meet in their conversations, Dr. Harold E. Fey, the editor of the whole work, in his assignment, «Confessional Families and the Ecumenical Movement»<sup>2</sup>, concludes with the words:

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\* Συνέχεια ἐκ τῆς σελ. 240 τοῦ προηγουμένου τεύχους.

1. H a r o l d E. F e y, ed., The Ecumenical Advance, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. II, 1948-1968. London: SPCK, 1970, pp. XVII-524. A Book Review by Vasil T. Istavridis, in Kleronomia of Thessalonike, 4, (1972) 195-203.

2. H. E. Fey, 5. Confessional Families and the Ecumenical Movement, in H. E. Fey, ed., Ib., pp. 115-142, 142.

«Since many confessional families confront similar problems, it seems likely that discussions between world confessional families will sharply increase in vigour and relevance in the near future».

Prof. Meredith B. Handspicker, of Andover-Newton Theological School, writing on «Faith and Order»<sup>3</sup>, says:

«As the future breaks before us, it is clear that further growth and change in the work of Faith and Order is mandatory. Broader participation by the membership of all of our Churches has to come if unity is to be achieved — or received. Prayer and study are ways in which many can become involved. The so-called «grassroots» are increasingly leaping over the boundaries set by church discipline. A growing «anonymous ecumenical movement» threatens subtle schism if organizational inertia continues to block movements toward union.

The goal of the movement is «One Church Renewed for Mission»...

In the midst of this increasing polarization, the work of Faith and Order is pastoral as well as theological. It needs to seek the roots of reconciliation between these two poles, and there are the resources within the Churches to accomplish this. Many of our church-men, clergy as well as laymen, unite within themselves a deep spiritual life with a lively engagement with the problems of the contemporary world. The tragedy is that many of these folks, including large numbers of our younger churchmen, find neither spiritual resources nor the mutual support of a loving community within the organized life of our Churches».

I myself finished the article: «Orthodoxy and the World Council of Churches»<sup>4</sup> with only one line; «The future lies in the hands of God».

Dr. Lukas Fischer, Director of the Secretariat on Faith and Order of the WCC, follows with the article: «The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church»<sup>5</sup>. He concludes,

«Increasingly, of course, the question arises: What significance is to be attributed to the expansion of relations between the Churches? How do all the bilateral relationships contribute to the renewal of the people of God? How would this renewal be furthered, supposing we were successful in creating a fellowship of the majority of the now divided Churches? The decisive question is whether Christianity can stand the test in the

3. Meredith B. Handspicker, 6. Faith and Order, in H. E. Fey, ed., op. cit., pp. 143-170, 169-170.

4. Vasil T. Istavridis, 11. Orthodoxy and the World Council of Churches, in H. E. Fey, ed., *Ib.*, pp. 287-309, 309.

5. Lukas Vischer, 12. The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church, in H.E. Fey, op. cit., pp. 311-352, 352.

present world. The urgency of this question becomes increasingly obvious, and more and more people are asking with a certain uneasiness whether ecumenical relationships are at bottom simply a new form of the Church's self-preoccupation. This doubt surfaced at the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order and, in a more reticent way, at the Second Vatican Council. It was posed, above all, at the World Conference on Church and Society, emphatically and unequivocally. The future of the ecumenical movement lies, therefore, not—or, at least, not exclusively—in the further development of relationships but in the places where the Church authenticates itself.

Worthy of notice, from the side of futurology, is the announcement on the future publication of vol. III of the present history<sup>6</sup>.

The second volume of «A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1948-1968», had as a closing chapter the one under the title «Uppsala and Afterwards», written by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, the then General Secretary of the WCC<sup>7</sup>. Under the heading «Next Steps», Dr. Blake asks the question, «What of the Future»? In answering this he presents the whole essence of the book, as such: «This is a book of history, rather than one of prophecy». Instead of turning to a prophet, he prefers to rely upon the findings of the «Report on the Re-examination of the Structure of the World Council of Churches from the Central Committee to the Fourth Assembly» (1968)<sup>8</sup>.

«The report... goes on to suggest the major considerations that should be in mind for the future. These are:

1. The effect of the World Council's growth away from the North Atlantic region which gave it birth «towards the Third World».
2. The fact that Orthodox Churches now play a larger role in its life.
3. The ramifying partnership with the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican Council II and with other non-member Churches...

The new Committee is warned against supposing that all programmes and functions must necessarily be continued, and it is directed

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6. H. E. Fey, ed., *Ib.*, pp. 413, 436, 443.

7. Eugene Carson Blake, 15. Uppsala and Afterwards, in H. E. Fey, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 411-445, 444-5.

8. Report on the Re-examination of the Structure of the World Council of Churches from the Central Committee to the Fourth Assembly (1968), in Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968*, Geneva: the World Council of Churches, 1968, pp. 355-388.

to attempt to see «how the World Council of Churches can be both faithful and flexible in its response to the calling of God»...

The Committee is further instructed to take into its consideration the implications of the regional councils of Churches on the one hand and of the existence of the world confessional families on the other...

An examination of the Assembly and of all the committees structure is also called for. The two most important questions that need to be considered are:

(a) The relations between church representation and legislative authority and responsibility, and between ecclesiastical control and lay professional expertise and insight... (e)... how the committees needed can in practice secure an attendance more fully representative geographically and confessionally and also of the varied energies and enthusiasms, with experience and insight, within the churches».

Dr. Blake, being very careful in his pronouncements for the future, finishes his article and the whole book of about 550 pages, with this conclusion:

«...New and younger leadership is now established in the Central and Executive Committees. Since January 1967 new directors are in charge or are soon coming to take charge of almost all the major programmes and service units of the Council. It is a new era.

The attitude of the world towards the World Council of Churches remains as ambivalent as its attitude toward the Churches themselves. Hope and fear, criticism and appreciation, longing for faith and a retreat towards nihilism—all are compounded to make up this attitude».

Having been asked to speak on the future of the ecumenical movement, from an Orthodox point of view, I prefer to start with a case study on this topic by presenting to you what some authors, collaborating in the publication of vol. II of the above study, had to say on the future of the ecumenical movement.

Major areas of concern for the future of the ecumenical movement in the year 1968 were the following:

1. Wider, as possible, participation of the member Churches and their faithful in the ecumenical movement.
2. Spiritual ecumenism.
3. Anonymous ecumenism.
4. National Councils of Churches—Confessional Families.
5. Participation of the Third World Churches.
6. Participation of the Orthodox Churches.

7. Roman Catholicism—the World Council of Churches.

8. The problems of Church and World, and increased polarization in the interests of the WCC and reconciliation between the conflicting interests.

It is up to us now, after the lapse of six years, to find out whether their prophecies were fulfilled or not.

According to Prof. Agouridis of the University of Athens, «because whatever we feel about the contribution of science and technology to our life, we cannot deny that humanity as a whole is afraid of the future»<sup>9</sup>. This fear is due to the fact that the future lies beyond man's knowledge and direct control. Nevertheless, the great progress attained in the different fields of science and technology aim at the future. Preparations for the days to come based on statistics, on five, ten or fifty year plans, and generally the science of futurology are hopeful signs for the future. For us Christians, besides all human efforts, there extends the spiritual kingdom to come, for which we have been asked to pray. The same Professor continues, «The future of the ecumenical movement is not only a matter of what we all do; rather it will be the result of our daily prayer that we may all be one»<sup>10</sup>.

A point of departure for any pronouncement on the future of the ecumenical movement could be its past and present assessment. In the early years of the ecumenical movement, the Ecumenical Patriarchate with its famous Encyclical of the year 1920 «Unto all the Churches of Christ», was one of the few Churches which initiated the present ecumenical movement. Orthodoxy started her official cooperation in the year 1920. As it seems, only a handful of clerics and professors of theology and some laymen were actively involved in this ecumenical work, without having an impact on the wider membership, which situation, more or less, continues to the present. At the establishment of the WCC in 1948, Orthodox participation was very small, but eventually all Orthodox Churches became members of the Council. A process of give and take is in existence between these Churches which participate in the ecumenical movement. The presence of Orthodoxy, along with some other Churches of Catholic tradition, gives to the ecumenical movement its pan-Christian character.

The year 1973 marked a milestone in the history of the WCC. On

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9. Savas Agouridis, *The Goal of the Ecumenical Movement*, *The Ecumenical Review*, 25, (1973) p.p. 266-9, 268.

10. *Ib.*, p. 269.

the Orthodox side we have been witnesses to some opinions expressed by official Churches, ecclesiastical leaders, theologians, laymen and members of the youth. Alongside the accusations made by a vocal minority of conservative Orthodox circles, labeling the ecumenical movement as a heresy, and openly advocating the duty of Orthodoxy to leave the WCC, Orthodox assessment of the movement and the WCC, where Orthodoxy is a partner, has been mainly one of constructive criticism<sup>11</sup>.

According to them, the ecumenical movement has been under the influence of relativism, secularism and false methods of union. Salvation within the WCC has been thought of mainly as a trend towards «horizontalism», without allowing any possibility for the main «vertical» dimension, that is as an overemphasis on the social and political dimensions of salvation, to the detriment of its eternal dimensions. A polarization is in sight. To these some other factors may be added, such as: the decision to finance some reactionary movements in Africa and elsewhere, the financial difficulties which the WCC is going through, the immense institutional growth and the danger of losing the dynamics of a movement, the problem of closer relations and possible membership to the Council of the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Protestant and Pentecostals, the position and understanding of the non-Church movements within the WCC, etc.

Due to the above-mentioned factors, I believe that the ecumenical movement and especially the WCC has somehow reached a critical stage, which will extend itself to the future.

Besides the positive contribution Orthodoxy has made to the ecumenical movement and the WCC, we Orthodox can not overlook our weaknesses.

Orthodox participation in the WCC has on some occasions been thought of as lacking in balance, in consistency, continuity, and whole-

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11. Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America (the Metropolia), Encyclical Letter of the Synod of Bishops of..., on Christian Unity, March 20-21, 1973. *The Orthodox Church*, vol. 9, 9 May 1973, no. 5, pp. 5-7. Message of Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and all Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, August 7, 1973 (on the World Conference «Salvation Today», Bangkok, Thailand, Dec. 29, 1972-Jan. 8, 1973). Message of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to the World Council of Churches on the occasion of its Twenty-Fifth Anniversary, August, 1973, August 16, 1973, in R.C. Stephanopoulos, ed., *Guidelines for Orthodox Christians in Ecumenical Relations*, New York: SCOBA, 1973, R.G. Stephanopoulos, ed., as above. George Tssetsis, *The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the World Council of Churches (1948-1973)*, Athens: Ekklesia, 1973, in Greek.

ness. To some extent, this is true in comparison with Western Churches. This was probably so because of the divided line of action taken by some Orthodox, the unpreparedness of some Orthodox delegates, and their inability to follow the discussions, due to language deficiencies. The negative attitude against ecumenism taken by conservative Orthodox circles has not helped.

I think the Orthodox can make a more positive contribution to the ecumenical movement by taking some necessary steps.

1. Conscience of the internal unity of Orthodoxy and its manifestation in the thoughts, deeds and everyday life of the Orthodox.

2. The return of our Western brethren to the common sources and Tradition of ancient Christianity forces the Orthodox to make a critical assessment of the points, which constitute the essence of Orthodoxy.

3. On the world level, the Orthodox are in a process of becoming acquainted with others, of living as good neighbours, and of being challenged by the progress made by others in many aspects of ecclesiastical living and theological scholarship.

4. Making the ecumenical movement a part of the life of the Churches and individual Christians.

5. Efforts to prepare as many capable and well qualified persons as possible to deal efficiently with ecumenical affairs and to work as staff members in the WCC headquarters at Geneva. Orthodox theology should work consistently to train such persons.

6. Introduction to the WCC for discussion, parallel to other matters, of more subjects essential to the Catholic-Orthodox Tradition of the Church.

Professor Agouridis, in his study on «the Goal of the Ecumenical Movement», asks the question: «Where are we heading»? According to him, writing in 1973, «our goal cannot be other than this, the *Una Sancta*». Alongside the studies already in process, he suggested «a study on evil and suffering in human life»<sup>12</sup>.

Archbishop Iakovos of the Americas, on the occasion of his being awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, spoke on «Ecumenics Vs. Christian Uni-

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12. S. Agouridis, op. cit., pp. 266, 267.

ty», treating critically the topic I am dealing with here today. Among other things he said:

«Modern Ecumenism must stop adding obstacles along the rocky road leading to Christian unity. The Ecumenism in the next 25 years should rally all its forces and prepare itself for another confrontation: a confrontation with a divided world, which hoped in vain that it could be united through a re-united, dynamic, all-renewing Christianity, Christianity, which is a unity of *martyria* and *diakonia*, can be a tremendous asset in the hands of generations to come»<sup>13</sup>.

Finally, let me read in extent from the Patriarchal Message the relevant views of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to which I belong, on the future of the WCC.

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 tru-

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13. Iakovos of America, *Ecumenism Vs. Christian Unity*, *Orthodox Observer*, vol. 39,3 Oct. 1973, no. 670, pp. 1,8. 17 Oct. 1973, no. 671, pp. 3,8.

ly 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 unity desired 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, not 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 theo-

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logical 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»<sup>14</sup>.

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14. In R. G. Stephanopoulos, ed., op. cit., pp. 58-60.