

The Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches: Friend or Foe?

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I. Introductory Questions

Although it appears simple that the Christian Churches *confess Lord Jesus as God and Savior*, it is not; on the contrary it is quite complicated in view of the continuing scandal of division among Christians. Jesus asked his disciples: “*Who do you say that I am?*” – “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*”, Peter responded¹. What does such a universal claim about Jesus Christ mean for Christians and for the members of other religions?

It is a common principle among Christians that Jesus is the life of the world, a blessing to many and an offence to others². How much the world needs such a blessing today, but how big is the failure of Christians to fulfill Jesus’ commandment to be all one, following the prototype of unity of the Holy Trinity³. What then are the consequences and responsibilities resulting from the tragedy of Christian disunity and the pain of the contemporary world torn by oppression, starvation, violence, intolerance, hate and killing?

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1. *Mark* 8, 29.

2. I. Bria, *Jesus Christ – The Life of the World – An Orthodox Contribution to the Vancouver Theme*, WCC, Geneva 1982, pp. 32-33.

3. G. Florovsky, *La Sainte Église Universelle – Confrontation œcuménique*, Delachaux, Paris 1948, p. 17: «*Est le seul modèle de l’unité parfaite, c’est la Trinité Très Sainte, où les Trois Personnes ne font ou plutôt ne sont qu’un seul Être unique. C’est sur cette exemple suprême que l’unité chrétienne doit être modelée*».

Thus, what is the importance of identity in the current unity process? Am I member of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed etc. Church, or am I primarily member of the Body of Christ? And even more, can we speak of Churches (in plural) instead of Church? Is our identity a problem to this unity? Do we receive as identical the Body of Christ within our confessional ecclesial body? Who defines the limits of the Church? What sort of diversity could be accepted? What is actually ecclesial unity? What does diversity in the ecclesiastical life mean and how far can we speak about legitimate or not legitimate diversity? In other words is diversity against catholicity (*Una Sancta*)? Do we share Christ, or do we possess Christ like a valuable object kept within our confessional boundaries and with no will to share Him with the other?

II. Proposals by the Orthodox Church to overcome the hill

Without any question Ecclesiology and Christology remain the crucial issues for theologians in the modern ecumenical agenda. And while we take for granted that we have reached a common place of agreement regarding Christology at the same time we experience and live within our various confessional bodies a *different Christ!* We are the receivers of the baptismal gift (*unum baptisma*) and of the calling to be workers of unity, but still we are living in a “*not yet*” unity situation⁴. We all witness the paradoxical phenomenon of accepting that baptism brings us in communion with God, but not with one another, especially not with those who come from different Christian denominations⁵, coming in that way in controversy with Paul’s words: “*By one Spirit we are baptized*

4. Aug. Bairactaris, “Unity in Diversity and the Perspective of Baptism”, in *Catholicity under Pressure: The Ambiguous Relationship between Diversity and Unity – Proceedings of the 18th Academic Consultation of the Societas Oecumenica*, Leipzig 2016, pp. 301-302. See also, Th. Best & D. Heller, “Becoming a Christian – The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism”, *Faith and Order Paper* No. 184, WCC (Geneva 1999), pp. 8-29.

5. Vl. Phidas, “Baptism and Ecclesiology”, *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2002), pp. 43-46.

into one body”⁶. Thus, it means in other words that either we deny the transcendent reality of baptism or we attempt a schism within the Body of Christ⁷. We read in Faith and Order’s study document “The Nature and Purpose of the Church”: “*In the One Baptism with water in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit...Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity*”⁸. We are “already” in God’s grace, but “not yet” in that same gracious acceptance of one another. We tend to want to correct each other before we encourage one another; to judge before we accept. Statements of faith tend to carry more value than acts of faith⁹.

It is commonly accepted that the Churches as institutions are in the midst of a long crisis and it has been realized stagnation within the ecumenical movement. The separation seems to get an *institutional* and *bureaucratic form*, a condition accepted unfortunately by some Churches who have abandoned their original commitment, while some others Churches have withdrawn their membership of the Council. Finally, there are some others partners going one step further by founding international ecclesial bodies and affiliations besides the WCC. Apparently the Church of Christ, which we all proclaim and confess as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, is still divided.

A first warning from the Orthodox Church manifested with the Declaration of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the World Council of Churches in 1973. In that official text though it is noted the tremendous work achieved by the Council in the social and diaconal sector during these years, at the same time the Patriarchate expresses its worries about the question whether the contemporary social issues should constitute the only objective and orientation of the WCC. Some members-Churches consider the Council as

6. I Cor. 12, 13.

7. L. Vischer, *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, The Bethany Press, Missouri 1963, p. 135.

8. “The Nature and Purpose of the Church”, *Faith and Order Paper* No. 181, WCC (Geneva 1998), p. 36.

9. Th. Best, “Faith and Order at the Crossroads Kuala Lumpur – The Plenary Commission Meeting 2004”, *Faith and Order Paper* No. 196, WCC, Geneva 2005, p. 129.

an organization aiming at certain social and political problems on behalf of the Churches, while some other Churches see the Council as a forum for theological dialogue of doctrinal differences. It is proposed then by the same text that a proper balance between these two orientations should be found in order to keep untouched the inner cohesion of the Council. As such the Ecumenical Patriarchate proposed that the World Council of Churches should remain as it was a *Council of Churches* serving the member-Churches in their wider efforts towards unity. Also, the Ecumenical Patriarchate asked the officials of the WCC, instead of incorporating movements which are neither Church, nor have relation with some Church, to include in particular the Roman Catholic Church. This would enrich the Council giving it a wider spectrum of Christianity, while the different, namely to include non-Church groups, would get the Council out of its original route and cause. Additionally the Ecumenical Patriarchate, criticizing WCC's social horizontalism, noticed that its supportive voice should not be a secular one among other similar voices, but a living prophetic voice proclaiming Christ and Christ alone. Finally, the declaration pointed out once more that according to the Council's Constitution the WCC is a Churches' instrument acting in the ecumenical dialogue on their behalf and that the Council could never replace the Churches.

Specifically, after the successful 4th and 5th General Assemblies of the WCC in Nairobi (1975) and in Vancouver (1983) relatively, the Orthodox Church was quite satisfied with the agenda and also with Faith and Order's studies presented. The real problems between the Orthodox Church and their partners in the Council appeared during the 7th General Assembly in Canberra (1991), where it was noticed a departure from the fundamental and traditional biblical framework regarding the Triune God, the meaning of Salvation, the good news, the creation of human in likeness and image of God and the nature of the Church. Also, the provocative main presentation by K. Chung confusing the Christian teaching of the Holy Spirit with the spirits of earth, air, water, Jeanne D' Arc, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, with the spirit of Jewish people killed in the gas chambers, of Vietnamese people killed by napalm bombs, with the spirit of the Amazon rain forest, with

the spirit of people killed in Chernobyl etc.¹⁰ and the desire of the WCC to expand its relations with other religions, were some serious reasons which caused the dissatisfaction of the Orthodox Church. Consequently, the members of the Orthodox delegations submitted in the end as a protest a separated document including their opinions and decisions and expressing their disappointment with the general orientation of the present Assembly's works.

Notably the Orthodox participants declared their concerns that the main aim of WCC must be the restoration of the unity of the Church. That neither diminishes nor excludes Churches' unity with the wider unity of humanity. On the contrary, the achieved unity among Christians will contribute effectively to the unity of humanity as a whole. Likewise the visible unity in faith and in worship cannot be taken for granted, since it is long and a demanding process. Also, it has been noticed by the Orthodox participants a tendency to marginalize the Basis of WCC which affirms Jesus Christ as Saviour. Meanwhile the Orthodox Church while it promotes the relations with other religions, the mutual respect, the co-operation with neighbors of other faiths, all these must not take place in expense of the Christian unity. It is necessary then a definition regarding the limits of diversity.

Notwithstanding the differences and the problems arising from time to time within the organization, the dominating spirit in the relations between the Orthodox Church and the WCC is best described during the official visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras at the headquarters of the Council in Geneva in 1967. He started his speech with Matthews' words: "*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them*"¹¹. He firmly believed in Christ's real presence in the midst of the Christians delegations, because the Kingdom of Christ is the Kingdom of love. According to Athenagoras' address to the plenary not even one Church has the right to remain in isolation, staying away from other Churches and denominations. On the contrary those who believe in Christ and remain faithful to His teaching should collaborate and enter the ecumenical

10. M. Kinnamon, "Signs of the Spirit – Official Report of the Seventh Assembly", WCC, Geneva 1991, pp. 37-47.

11. *Matthew* 18, 20.

dialogue with humility and mutual charity following the impetus of the Holy Spirit in order to build up Jesus' Body. Moreover, he emphasized that the real scope of the ecumenical co-operation should be the sharing of the same bread and wine from the same chalice. Therefore, in a world torn by lack of spiritual guidance and suffering from moral confusion, the collaboration of Christian Churches is urgent and requisite for the sake of the whole oikumene more than ever before¹². Thus, it goes without saying that the local Orthodox Churches participate fully and equally in the life and various activities of WCC, contributing with all the means they have at their disposal in order to promote the peaceful co-existence and also to advance their co-operation facing the critical social and political challenges of post-modernity.

A glimpse of enthusiasm and hope for a closer *rapprochement* between Churches took place with the publication of the convergence document of Lima in 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. However, Churches preferred to remain cohered with their own respective confessional and denominational ecclesiological roots and history, denying any further unification.

A solution to the problematic and questioning relation of the Orthodox Church with the WCC emerged during the 90's was the establishment of the *Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the Council*, which was the follow up of the Inter-Orthodox Conference held in Thessaloniki in 1998. The established Special Commission, proposed by the Orthodox and accepted by the WCC officials, led to the formation of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration. Finally, the criteria were approved and included in the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches.

The Orthodox Churches came forward in the ecumenical dialogue proposing a new method called *ecumenism in time*. This suggestion is based upon the recovery of unity, where Churches and different denominations would return back to their own common past. Accepting that methodology several denominations and confessions would meet

12. Op. cit., Gennadios Limouris, "Address by His All Holiness Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch on the occasion of His visit to WCC Headquarters, 1967", p. 35.

each other on the historical traces of their common tradition, time and space. It sounds like an ecumenical journey back in time¹³. Again, that type of unity is not based on a rigid uniformity, but rather it has a dynamic dimension, since the same faith cannot be expressed identically by humans in the same manner in all times. According to the opinion of the Orthodox Church that methodology of ecumenism in time would lead the ecumenical partners to a recovery of the Apostolic Tradition, to a fullness of Christian vision and to a reintegration of Christian mind.

Additionally, it must be clear that among the Christian Churches there is an already existing unity; that is why during the first assembly in Amsterdam it was declared that “*Churches intend to stay together*”. That means that beyond their differences they are still united establishing their common faith in Jesus who is the bond of unity. Christ has made Christians to be his own, and he is not divided! In others terms there are two types of unity: the one which is on route and the other which is promised. In any case Churches have to work, act and pray together in order to respond to His calling in the garden of Gethsemane. Hence, ecclesial unity is not something to be fabricated or elaborated within a group of some experts but it is given as a gift, and demands on humans’ part their effort and spiritual obedience to do His will.

But how must Churches continue on their way to Emmaus searching for unity? There is a great need of re-discovering Christ. In the times of crisis of faith Jesus has been placed under question. On the contrary He must be placed again in the midst of the Churches and a renewal of faith must emerge from the ecclesial tradition rooted in the apostolic years. This demanding return of Churches back to their common origins could help them also to declare openly their metanoia and repentance for the historical divisions they mutually caused. At the same time Churches inspired by their common past must set new visions and new ways of acting together according to the new contextuality, but without ignoring or changing the content of the message. In that process of transmitting the Gospel to people cultural environment and historical background

13. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God*, London 1953, p. 21: “*We are in a transitory phase of the journey from disunity to unity*”.

should be also taken under serious consideration. In other words the “good news” must be implemented, without *chop and change* its salvific message, according to the current social language in order to be understood and received well by modern society. From the hermeneutics point of view unity is never static, which means it cannot be institutionalized. Rather unity is received as a process linked essentially with the notion of gathering around the altar. So, the Church is the Body of Christ but at the same time it could be seen as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, where each one of us individually is called to bring their charisma as a service to the pleroma. Through that perspective Church becomes an expansion of Jesus’ incarnation and of community’s Pentecost. Within that ecclesial community there is a vast space for manifold interpretations and for a convergence in seeking the truth in Christ.

Three major elements could be seen in the picture of the Pentecost:

1. *The given Spirit is a gift to the whole people of God:* The Spirit descends upon each member of the community and all are baptized becoming spirit bearers. Also there is another giving of the Spirit by Risen Christ upon his disciples: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whatsoever sins you remit, they are remitted and whatsoever sins you retain, they are retained”¹⁴. At this moment disciples become apostles representing the later hierarchy of the Church, not as a form of exercising power, but as a special charisma given for the service of community by binding and loosing sins.

2. *The given Spirit is a gift of unity:* It is Spirit’s work to bring in one place all people together in accordance, so to con-celebrate the Eucharist sharing the same bread and wine from the one and unique chalice.

3. *The given Spirit is a gift of diversity:* The tongues of fire at the Pentecost symbolize the gifts given individually to each one of the members of community, but also they picture collegially the diversity of services upon which the ecclesial unity is built. This community’s vision for unity is realized on diversity and vice versa. They are two complementary but not contrary aspects of the same reality: *unity in diversity and diversity in unity*¹⁵.

14. John 20, 22-23.

15. Gennadios Limouris (Metropolitan of Sassima), “Hermeneutics: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on the Search for Christian Unity”, in Peter Bouteneff & Dagmar

III. Orthodox Church, Ecclesiology and Ecumenical Dialogue: a relation of comfort or of discomfort?

For the Orthodox Church the issue of ecclesiology remains a crucial one, which requires special attention within the ecumenical perspective. A church-centered ecumenism must be developed so that the Churches achieve a consensus status regarding the appropriate model of ecclesiology accepted by all members of the WCC. The area of ecclesiology could be easily conceived as a vision and as a place of witnessing Jesus in sacraments. Questing for unity is identified with questing for Church. If we find the answer to the question what kind of unity we desire, we shall find at the same time the answer to what kind of Church we desire. They are two sides of the same reality.

Some of the most prominent Orthodox theologians of the 20th century have written about ecclesiology: “*ecclesiology of sobornost*” by Boulgakoff, Zernov, Florofsky, “*eucharistic ecclesiology*” by Afanasieff, “*ecclesiology of open sobornost*” by Staniloae, “*pneumatological ecclesiology*” by Nissiotis, “*ecclesiology of communion*” by Clement. According to the Orthodox theology there are two important key elements of ecclesiology in order to understand the notion of ecclesial unity. Firstly there is an internal actual relation between the spirituality and the salvific experience. Therefore ecclesiology describes the experience of salvation of the faithful member of the local community.

Secondly, unity is the outcome of the sacramental essence of the Church. Jesus is one, the Holy Spirit is one, the Church is one. Since the Church is the Body of Christ, it is by nature indivisible. Unity is not a result of gathering separated groups into one entity, but rather it is growing together into the fullness of Christ. Mutual acceptance and shared reconciliation are pre-conditions for the Churches to meet at the same locus. However, are these elements quite enough when we speak about sacramental unity?

A group of Orthodox theologians, staff at WCC, gathered in Bossey for two days in 1974 working on the topic “*Concepts of Unity and models of*

Heller, *Interpreting Together – Essays in Hermeneutics*, WCC, Geneva 2001, pp. 122-127.

Union". There, the model called *organic union* was analyzed. According to their opinion "unity is preserved alive by the Holy Tradition (with capital T) in the Church from the very beginning. The faith, hope and love of the apostolic community are a reality perpetuated in history by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is by this living Tradition, that the Church is one. Moreover, the witness borne by the Church is exactly the same as that of the first apostolic community finding its supreme expression in the Divine Liturgy".

Additionally, the Church has a ministry (ordained episcopate) which continues the apostolic ministry and its life is related to the experience of the saints of all ages. The prayer also for the presence of the Spirit in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is an expression that God renews the community continually. Divided Christians then are able to re-discover their full communion in the one Body of Christ as they are led to re-discover one another in this living Tradition¹⁶.

For the Orthodox theology Church remained one, catholic and undivided, even if several confessions might appear and divisions might take place during the historical route. They believe that the Orthodox Church is the bearer of the UNA SANCTA. To the potential question what is the relation of the Orthodox Church to the fellowship with the other Christians, the given answer should be like that: the Orthodox Church does not penetrate into the mystery of *oikonomia* of God and certainly it cannot replace God's judgment. What is important for the Orthodox is the notion of unity in true faith and in sacraments. The Orthodox Church does not stand against the model of *unity in diversity*; however such diversity is not accepted to be identified with some contradictory differences in teaching which have caused painful separations in the past. Another question is: what elements of the ecclesial life are changeable, and which are not?

For the Orthodox Church the ecclesial communion (*koinonia*) should be stressed upon the vertical perspective of unity, without of course ignoring the horizontal dimension. The communion of the faithful

16. I. Bria, "What kind of Unity?", *Faith and Order Paper* No. 69, WCC, Geneva 1974, pp. 65-74.

in hope, faith and love within the Body of Christ is literally the true koinonia, where peoples are incorporated ontologically in a spiritual manner into the risen human nature and glorified divine nature of Jesus. In Jesus, God communes with his creation and with the totality of humankind. Thus, the human person in baptism participates in Jesus' resurrection and in Eucharist participates in Jesus' glorification. Hence the faithful enters into communion with God and partakes in the mission of the Church. Moreover, such kind of koinonia unites each one in solidarity with the other members of the Body of Christ. Consequently, the Church can be understood as a sacrament, becoming the community of salvation, where Baptism and Eucharist link all Christians to Christ and one another in a fundamental sacramental communion. Church does not have a political or social concept, but it is a sacramental place where grace and eschatology meet together.

Thus, the Orthodox Church since the beginning of that ecumenical pilgrimage has participated toward the full and visible unity along with the other Christian Churches and Confessions. The above mentioned elements are necessary for the Orthodox ecclesiology in order to achieve a convergence in understanding the Church as a communion and as a sacrament.

On the other hand the WCC has presented in a series of texts a comprehensive articulation of ecclesiology beginning with Toronto (1950), highlighted in New Delhi (1961), focused in Nairobi (1975), explicated in Canberra (1991) and most recently reflected with the Faith and Order Paper *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (2005).

IV. The Unity is dead; Long live the Unity

Whether it is pleasant or not there are in front of us some facts *vis a vis* the ecumenical movement demanding solutions:

- Fact number one: The current situation where the Churches live in is the one of separation and division.
- Fact number two: The unity of Churches has been lost.
- Fact number three: The WCC was founded at a very critical and

historical moment for humanity, after the end of WWII when disrespect, hate, suspiciousness, controversy, rivalry and conflicts dominated the relations between states and between Churches as well. The world had been torn into two pieces¹⁷.

Given that situation the work demanded by WCC seemed to be enormous. It must become clear that the task of the WCC was not to create a new homogeneous Church by bringing together different ecclesial communities, but to restore the broken church unity according to its historical and spiritual continuity. Thus, it is without doubt that the WCC managed to impel Churches to go beyond their limits and move far away from their isolation entering into a new era of communication. However, it is still premature and unrealistic to believe that full unity among the member-Churches of the Council has been reached. At the same time we have to see what the Council has inspired Churches to do: cooperation in mission, union conversations, reconciliation, theological research, spiritual sharing, etc.

A few decades ago WCC had to deal with issues such as the nuclear crisis, the war crisis in Vietnam, the hostility between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the apartheid in South Africa, the political system of oppression and the military dictatorships ruling in Central and Latin America, just to mention a few. After the fall of Berlin's wall the whole situation didn't improve as it was initially expected. Globalization influenced dramatically all aspects of life: economy, communication, religiosity, education, commercial relations, etc. Simultaneously, other problems raised such as the ecological crisis due to the exploitation of the natural resources, the economic debt of the poorest countries of the South to the richest of the North, the unjust forms of the world economic and trade system, the loss of the self-governing of the small communities, etc. Trying to tackle these problematic situations created around the oikumene, WCC shifted from its first aim which was the convergence on the doctrinal issues. As a result a series of working theological papers and projects were deployed with positive results. For instance, new theological trends were developed: theology of liberation, black and feminist

17. Op. cit., I. Bria, "An Orthodox Contribution to the question of unity", pp. 73-74.

theology, but mainly several projects such as the *Alternative Globalization addressing people and earth* (AGAPE), *Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society* (JPSS), *Program to Combat Racism* (PCR), *Churches' Participation in Development* (CCPD) and many others which mobilized significant amounts of resources and humans' activity. After the 90's a need for re-configuration within the Ecumenical Movement was highlighted by many members-Churches especially by the Orthodox which felt that this shift of the programmatic orientation and the change of the agenda of the WCC were leading the whole organization to uncharted waters.

However, besides the temptations and difficulties caused by the secularization that WCC had to deal with, another one appeared; the spiritual crisis or else the problem of desacralisation which eventually raised the following question: What exactly is the role of the WCC in the third millennium. There is a spiritual crisis related to the problem of the new identity of WCC in the post-modern era. In other terms, WCC felt that it should advocate all peoples who were in danger, act as a defender of all marginalized groups and have generally an active role in the social and political life around the world.

For some Churches engaged in the ecumenical movement this shift was an inevitable development, while for some other Churches this attitude was a total remove from the starting point of the Council's foundation, which was the unity of the Church. The pivotal moment where this shift unconsciously took place was the 3rd General Assembly of the WCC in 1961 in New Delhi, where a large number of Orthodox Churches and even a larger number of Churches coming from Africa and Latin America entered the Council. After the first moments of enthusiasm it became clear that for these Churches it was crucial to find a place of recognition, to find an international organization where they would be treated as equals, since they were striving for their national dignity, for their economic and political freedom and for a general development in their education and health systems. They did not ask for charity, but they did ask of a forum where they would be recognized competent to present their perspective of Christian life and to be listened to about their daily life's problems they had to face. So, they sought for an understanding and for a serious support by their ecumenical partners.

The doctrinal issues which separated mostly the European Churches were not their main concern. They had a social arena to fight for their rights, and they asked for a social implementation of Gospel's values¹⁸. The new hermeneutics therefore had to find a wider and broader dimension of *inclusiveness* of all into Christ's Body. Likewise the mission of the Church obtained a new dynamics. These inevitable changes in the agenda of WCC had by that time given a socially oriented targeting that took shape in the 4th General Assembly of the Council in Uppsala in 1968. Consequently, the Council decided to contribute and to react as an ecumenical family as much as they could to the existing reality the newly independent and developing countries were facing.

The Orthodox member-Churches of the Council, without ignoring the importance of these historical events, expressed their worries about the social-political activity of the WCC. The significance of the fact that some of the Orthodox Churches were living under the continuous control of the communist-soviet regimes should not be underestimated. Besides, the Orthodox Churches could affiliate neither the theological language and terminology, nor the biblical arguments used by the new member-Churches coming from the South. In others words, the Orthodox Churches were in agreement with the incorporation of the new member-Churches into the organization under the condition that the Council would not lose its theological nature or its original scope of foundation, namely to promote the unity among the Christian Churches. So they refused the socio-political dimension and action of the WCC which was formed in '60s and developed in '70s.

Another issue strongly related to the current situation of the Ecumenical Movement regards the different way of understanding the notion of unity by the members coming from the Protestant family and by the members coming from the Orthodox family. While for the Protestants union could be achieved by bringing together in the same *space* different denominations creating an inter-denominational adjustment, for the Orthodox Churches unity is identical with the *restoration of the*

18. G. Tsetsis, "The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement – The ups and downs of a one century old relationship", (unpublished lecture in Bossey Ecumenical Institute, 2004-2005), pp. 3-7.

schism. Therefore, it has the meaning of healing the past; it is like doing ecumenism in *time*. The Orthodox Church does not accept the *parity of denominations* (or “*equality of Confessions*”, according to the document of the Holy and Great Council) but they do accept equality in terms of participating in commissions and working groups of the Council according to its Constitution and also they accept parity in questing for the truth. In that sense they are all equal *vis a vis* the inquiry of truth developing though firstly different ways of expressing the relation between God and humanity and secondly different types of worshipping God in the sacramental ritual life.

For the Orthodox Church the union between different Churches can be neither the outcome of a simple reconciliation, nor an agreement between two different parties. Therefore the Orthodox Church “*in no way is she able to accept the unity of the Church as an inter-confessional compromise*”¹⁹. For the Orthodox Church unity is a long process of searching for a common ecclesiological ground linked with the tradition of the ancient and undivided Church of the seven Ecumenical Councils, but it must be also founded on the unity of faith, preserved in the sacraments. The only way the Orthodox realize the Churchly unity is based on the sacramental life of the Church, without passing judgment upon those Christian communities which hold a different perception.

Therefore, according to the Orthodox ecclesiology the apostolic succession through the episcopate and the sacramental priesthood must be in an unbroken continuity with the timeline of the common history. In 1961 during the works of the general assembly in New Delhi the Orthodox representatives had declared that “*the Orthodox Church by her inner conviction and consciousness has a special and exceptional position in the divided Christendom as the bearer of the tradition of the ancient undivided Church from which all existing denominations stem, by the way of reduction and separation*”²⁰.

19. “Programme of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church”, in *Commemorative Edition of the APOSTOLOS TITOS bulletin, on the occasion of the convocation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete* (2016), p. 261.

20. Op. cit., Gennadios Limouris, “The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement”, p. 30.

Certainly the type and the tone of the written language has been modified by that time, but the belief of the Orthodox Church has remained the same as it is witnessed in the official document of the Holy and Great Council in Crete in 2016, where it is noted that the “*Orthodox participation in the movement to restore unity with other Christians in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is in no way foreign to the nature and history of the Orthodox Church, but rather represents a consistent expression of the apostolic faith and tradition in a new historical circumstances*”²¹. Moreover, the Orthodox Church has always serviced for the restoration of the Christian unity, because of its ecumenical engagement and its charity to pray that “all men may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”²². Such an attitude does not contradict Orthodox Church’s nature and history, but rather represents a deep expression of its apostolic faith and tradition within a new historical environment.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία
καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν: Φίλος ἢ ἐχθρός;

π. Αὐγουστίνου Μπαϊραχτάρη, Ἀναπλ. Καθηγητῆ
Πατριαρχικῆ Ἀνώτατῆ Ἐκκλησιαστικῆ Ἀκαδημία Κρήτης

Οἱ Χριστιανικὲς Ἐκκλησίες καὶ Ὁμολογίες, μετὰ ἀπὸ μία περίοδο ἔντασης ποὺ εἶχε ὡς χαρακτηριστικὸ τὴν ὀδυνηρὴ ἐμπειρία τοῦ ὁμολογιακοῦ φανατισμοῦ, ἀνταγωνισμοῦ καὶ προσηλυτισμοῦ²³, πέρασε στὴν ἐπόμενη φάση τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας, ἡ ὁποία διακρίθηκε ἀπὸ τὴν τάση καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμία γιὰ εἰρήνευση, καταλλαγὴ καὶ διάλογο ὡς μορφὴ ἀντερείσματος στὰ ὀράματα τῶν φιλοσοφικῶν καὶ

21. Op. cit., “Programme of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church”, in *Commemorative Edition of the APOSTOLOS TITOS bulletin, on the occasion of the convocation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete (2016)*, p.261.

22. 1 Tim. 2, 4.

23. Μ. Σιδῶτος, «Ἡ Οἰκουμενικὴ Κίνησις καὶ τὸ Παγκόσμιον Συμβούλιον τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν», ἀνάτυπο ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ Ἐκκλησία (1961), σ. 5.

ἐπιστημονικῶν θεωριῶν ποὺ ἀποζητοῦν τὴν ἀπόλυτη εὐδαιμονία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὴν ὑπαρξὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ ποιμαντικὴ λοιπὸν μέριμνα καὶ ἡ κοινὴ ἀγωνία τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν ἔναντι τῶν καθημερινῶν προβλημάτων, ἀκόμη καὶ γιὰ τὴν ἴδια τὴν ὑπόστασι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἀποτέλεσε τὴ βάση τοῦ σύγχρονου Οἰκουμενικοῦ Διαλόγου. Εἶναι πλέον ξεκάθαρο καὶ πέραν πάσης ἀμφιβολίας ὅτι ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς ὀφείλει τὴν ὑπαρξή του στὶς ἴδιες τὶς Ἐκκλησίες καὶ ὄχι τὸ ἀντίστροφο. Ἀποτέλεσε δηλαδὴ καρπὸ τῆς συλλογικῆς προσπάθειας τῶν Χριστιανῶν νὰ βροῦν ἀπὸ κοινοῦ διεξοδὸ στὰ σύγχρονα προβλήματα ποὺ δημιουργήθηκαν μέσα σὲ ἓνα περιβάλλον ἀδιάφορης ἢ ἀντι-θρησκευτικῆς κοινωνικῆς παιδείας, γιὰ τὴν ὁποία ἐν πολλοῖς ὑπεύθυνες εἶναι οἱ ἴδιες οἱ Ἐκκλησίες. Σύμφωνα μάλιστα μὲ τοὺς Heinz Schilling καὶ Wolfgang Reinhard, ἡ ὑπαρξὴ τῆς ὁμολογιακῆς ταυτότητας κατὰ τὴ Μεταρρύθμιση δὲν ἦταν ὑπεύθυνη μόνο γιὰ τὴ διαμόρφωση καὶ τὴν ἐξέλιξη τῆς δογματικῆς διδασκαλίας τῶν Χριστιανικῶν ὁμολογιῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ γιὰ τὴν ἐπιρροή καὶ τὴ μεταμόρφωση τῶν ἰδίων τῶν εὐρωπαϊκῶν κοινωνιῶν²⁴.

Ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη μεριά, ὁ κοινωνικὸς ἀκτιβισμὸς προσέφερε ποικιλοτρόπως σὲ πολλοὺς τομεῖς τὰ ποθούμενα ἀντικατάστατα τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀναζητήσεων μὲ συνέπεια ὁ Χριστιανισμὸς, καὶ κυρίως ὁ Εὐρωπαϊκὸς Χριστιανισμὸς, νὰ τεθεῖ στὸ κοινωνικὸ περιθώριο. Ἐδῶ ἀξίζει νὰ ἀναφερθεῖ ὅτι τὸ 1970 στὴν Εὐρώπη καὶ στὴ Β. Ἀμερικὴ ὁ χριστιανισμὸς κάλυπτε τὸ 56% τοῦ πληθυσμοῦ, ἐνῶ τὸ 2005 τὸ ποσοστὸ μειώθηκε στὸ 37%. Πλέον ἔχει ἐπικρατήσῃ τὸ θρησκευτικὸ κοινωνιολογικὸ φαινόμενο, τὸ ὁποῖο ὀνομάζεται “believing without belonging”, δηλαδὴ οἱ ἄνθρωποι πιστεύουν ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀνήκουν κάπου, δὲν διατηροῦν δεσμοὺς μέσω τῆς μυστηριακῆς ζωῆς μὲ κάποια Χριστιανικὴ Ὁμολογία ἢ Ἐκκλησία²⁵, ποὺ ὅμως ἴσως νὰ εἶναι καλύτερο ἀπὸ τὸ νὰ ἀνήκεις κάπου χωρὶς νὰ πιστεύεις, δηλαδὴ τὸ ἀνάστροφο (believing without believing).

24. A. Maffei, “Confession on Faith and Church Communion”, στὸ: *Reimagining Religious Belonging – Ecumenical Responses to Changing Religiosity in Europe*, ἐκδ. Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2011, σ. 227.

25. J. Gibaut, “On Doing Ecclesiology in a Time of Crisis and Transition”, στὸ: *Reimagining Religious Belonging – Ecumenical Responses to Changing Religiosity in Europe*, σ. 234.

Για τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ἡ ἀποκατάσταση τῆς ἐνότητας μεταξὺ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ὡς αἴτημα καὶ ὡς κίνημα κατὰ τὸν 20ὸ αἰῶνα δὲν ἀποτέλεσε κάτι τὸ πρωτόγνωρο, ἄγνωστο καὶ ἄκαιρο, παρὰ ὑπῆρξε μία διαρκῆς κίνηση γιὰ συνάντηση μὲ τὸν ἕτερο καὶ μία συνεχῆς ἔκφραση εὐχαριστιακῆς προσευχῆς – ἀπόρροια τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς τῆς ἐμπειρίας. Ἀπὸ τὴ θεολογία τῆς εὐθύνης λοιπὸν γεννήθηκε τὸ αἶσθημα τῆς ὑπευθυνότητος γιὰ τὸν πλησίον καὶ γιὰ τὴν καλλιέργεια τῆς συνεργασίας μέσα σὲ ἓνα καθεστῶς ἀμοιβαίας κατανόησης. Ἐπιπλέον ἡ συμμετοχὴ τῶν Ὁρθόδοξων στὰ *fora* τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Διαλόγου δὲν σημαίνει ταυτόχρονη ἄγνοια τῶν ὑφισταμένων δυσκολιῶν. Δὲν παύει ὅμως νὰ ἐλπίζει ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία στὴν ἐπιστασία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, τὸ ὁποῖο ἀναπληρώνει τὰ ἐλλείποντα καὶ φωτίζει τὴν πορεία πρὸς τὴν ἀνεύρεση καὶ ἀνάδειξη τῶν στοιχείων ἐκείνων ποὺ προέρχονται ἀπὸ τὴν κοινὴ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ παράδοση καὶ μποροῦν νὰ λειτουργήσουν ὡς θεμέλια ἐνότητας²⁶. Σὲ αὐτὴν τὴν πορεία μόνον ὁ διάλογος εἶναι ἱκανὸς νὰ διαπλάσει ὀρθὲς καὶ τίμιες ἐκκλησιαστικὲς συνειδήσεις, εἰδικὰ στὴ νέα γενιὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν²⁷.

Ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης Ἀθναγόρας δῆλωνε τὸ 1960, σὲ μία ἀνέκδοτη ἀπαντητικὴ ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ πρὸς τὸν Μητροπολίτη Κερκύρας καὶ Παξῶν κ. Μεθόδιο, περιγράφοντας τὴ σχέση μεταξὺ τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ χριστιανικοῦ κόσμου: «Διερχόμεθα, ἀδελφέ, κρίσιμους ἐκκλησιαστικοὺς καὶ κοινωνικοὺς καιροὺς εἰς ἀντιμετώπισιν τῶν ὁποίων ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ὀφείλει νὰ κατέλθῃ. Διότι, ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία οὐκ ἔστι μόνον πίστις καὶ παράδοσις καὶ ζωὴ, ἀλλ' ἐν ταυτῷ καὶ προβολὴ ὡς χρέος πρὸς τὸ ἑαυτῆς Πλήρωμα ἐν ἀπάσῃ τοῦ Κυρίου δεσποτεία καὶ εἰς ἀπάντησιν πρὸς τὸ ἔξωθεν αὐτῇ ἐρχόμενον αἴτημα, ὅπως συνεχῶς προάγῃ τὴν ἀναληφθεῖσαν ἡγεσίαν τῆς παγχριστιανικῆς κινήσεως πρὸς τὴν μεγάλην ὑπόθεσιν τῆς ἐνότητας τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ»²⁸. Σὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πλαίσιο ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη

26. J. Getcha, “La tradition vivante – Une approche Orthodoxe”, στό: *Reimagining Religious Belonging – Ecumenical Responses to Changing Religiosity in Europe*, σ. 300.

27. Α. Ἀλιβιζάτος, «Σύγχρονοι Ἐνωτικαὶ Προσπάθειαι – Αἱ Παγχριστιανικαὶ Συσκέψεις Oxford – Edimburgh», ἀνάτυπο ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ *Ἐκκλησία* (1937), σσ. 26-27.

28. Ἀθναγόρας ἐλέω Θεοῦ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, *Νέας Ρώμης καὶ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης*, Ἀριθ. Πρωτ. 810, Κωνσταντινούπολις 1960, σσ. 1-2

Ἐκκλησία κατῆλθε καὶ συνομίλησε ἰσοτίμως μὲ τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς τῆς Δύσεως, χωρὶς νὰ περιορίσει ἢ νὰ ἀπολέσει κάτι ἀπὸ τὴν ἀλήθειά της, συμμετέχοντας διαχρονικὰ καὶ μόνιμα τόσο στοὺς διμερεῖς, ὅσο καὶ στοὺς πολυμερεῖς θεολογικοὺς διαλόγους, ἐμπνεόμενῃ ἀπὸ τὴ θεολογικὴ τῆς αὐτοσυνειδησία, ποὺ προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὴν Πατερικὴ γραμματολογία καὶ ἀπὸ τὴ θέλησή της νὰ διαφυλάξει τὴν ἐνότητα σύμφωνα μὲ τὴ συνοδικὴ πρακτικὴ της. Ὁ προβαλλόμενος κίνδυνος ἀπὸ διάφορους ἐκκλησιαστικοὺς κύκλους γιὰ δῆθεν διάβρωση τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ φρονήματος τῶν συμμετεχόντων στὸν Οἰκουμενικὸ Διάλογο εἶναι ἀνυπόστατος καὶ χωρὶς οὐσία. Ἀντιθέτως ἀποτελεῖ βασικὴ προοπτικὴ τῆς ἀποστολῆς της στὸν σύγχρονο κόσμ²⁹. Ἡ λειτουργία ἐπομένως τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κίνησης βοήθησε στὴν ἀμβλυνση τῆς ὀξύτητας καὶ στὴν ἄρση πολλῶν προκαταλήψεων καὶ παρεξηγήσεων τοῦ παρελθόντος³⁰.

(ἀδημοσίευτο). Σὲ συνέχεια τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Γράμματος ὁ Μητροπολίτης Κερκύρας Μεθόδιος μὲ μία νέα ἀνοικτὴ ἐπιστολὴ ζήτησε διευκρίνιση ἀναφορικὰ μὲ τὴ φράση: «Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ὀφείλει νὰ κατέλθῃ». Ἀναφέρει συγκεκριμένα: «...δὲν δύναται νὰ κατανοηθῆ ἔκεινο τὸ ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ὀφείλει νὰ κατέλθῃ, ἀλλὰ πρέπει νὰ δοθῆ διευκρίνισις περὶ τούτου. Τὸ «ὀφείλει νὰ κατέλθῃ» νοεῖται, ἢ πρέπει νὰ νοηθῆ, ὅτι ὀφείλει νὰ κατέλθῃ εἰς συνεργασίαν; Ὡς καὶ πρότερον ἐδηλώθη οὐδεὶς ἀποκλείει συνεργασίαν, ἀλλ' ὅχι ἐν ἀγνώρισει εἰς τὴν Αὐτοῦ Ἁγιότητα τὸν Πάπαν τῆς Ρώμης δικαιοδοσίαν παγχριστιανικῆς αὐθεντίας, ὡς ἡ ἀξίωσις προβάλλεται διὰ τοῦ πρωτείου καὶ δὴ αὐθεντίας ἰσοχρίστου ὡς ἀξιοὶ ἢ ἰδιότης τοῦ ἀλαθῆτος. Πιστεύω ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία οὐδέποτε θὰ κατέλθῃ εἰς τοιαύτην πτώσιν, καὶ δὴ κωμικὴν, ἵνα μὴ εἶπω κωμικοτραγικὴν, δι' ἀποδοχῆς τοιαύτης πίστεως. Διότι, ἐν τοιαύτῃ ἀπευκατὰ περιπτώσει δὲν θὰ λέγεται Ὁρθόδοξος». Βλ. Πρὸς τὴν Α. Θ. Παναγιότητα τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριάρχην Κύριον κύριον Ἀθηναγόρα, Ἀριθμ. Πρωτ. 3461, Κέρκυρα 1961, σσ. 12-13 (ἀδημοσίευτο). Εἶναι φανερὸ μέσα ἀπὸ τὴ συγκεκριμένη ἐπιστολὴ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ ἄλλα ἐκκλησιαστικὰ κείμενα τῆς ἐποχῆς ἐκείνης, ὅτι στὶς ἀρχές τῆς δεκαετίας τοῦ 1960 ἀκόμη δὲν ἦταν πρόδηλο ποῦ ἀπέβλεπε ἡ Οἰκουμενικὴ Κίνησις, ποιὸς ἦταν ὁ θεσμικὸς ρόλος τῶν Ὁρθόδοξων στὰ διάφορα διεθνῆ καὶ περιφερειακὰ ὄργανα τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κίνησης καὶ ποιά ἦταν ἡ θέση τῆς Ρωμαιοκαθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐναντι τοῦ οἰκουμενισμοῦ. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ὡστόσο φυσιολογικὸ, καθὼς ὀλόκληρη ἡ δεκαετία τοῦ '60 ἦταν μία ἐποχὴ ἐκκλησιαστικῶν ζυμώσεων, ἀνακατατάξεων, ἐπαναπροσδιορισμοῦ καὶ διάσπασης τῶν δεσμῶν τῶν προκαταλήψεων τοῦ παρελθόντος, μία ἐποχὴ ἢ ὁποία ζητοῦσε τόλμη, εἰλικρίνεια καὶ ἐμπνευση, προκειμένου νὰ πῆσουν τὰ τεῖχη τῆς ἀμοιβαίας ἀδιαφορίας τῶν αἰῶνων καὶ ἡ Ἀνατολὴ νὰ συναντήσῃ ἐκ νέου τὴ Δύση.

29. Μητροπολίτης Ἑλβετίας Δαμασκηνός (Παπαανδρέου), *Λόγος Διαλόγου – Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία ἐνώπιον τῆς τρίτης χιλιετίας*, ἐκδ. Καστανιώτη, Ἀθήνα 1997, σ. 203.

30. Σ. Λώλης, *Υπόμνημα πρὸς τὴν Ἱερὰν Σύνοδον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (1952), σ. 6 (ἀδημοσίευτο κείμενο): «... οὐ μόνον ἀποτελεῖ αἴτημα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας

Ἀκόμη ὅμως καὶ ἂν δεχθοῦμε ὡς ὑπαρκτὴ τὴν ἐνότητα μεταξὺ τῶν Χριστιανῶν, ποὺ προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸ βάπτισμα, δὲν εἶναι πλήρης, καθὼς εἴμαστε ἀκόμη μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὴν κοινὴ συμμετοχὴ στὴ Θεία Εὐχαριστία. Τὸ μυστήριό τῆς Θείας Εὐχαριστίας εἶναι ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς σιωπῆς καὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς πληρότητας καὶ σὲ αὐτὴν τὴν πορεία ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Διάλογος λειτουργεῖ ὡς ὑπενθύμιση πρὸς τὶς Ἐκκλησίες τῶν λόγων τοῦ Κυρίου «ἵνα πάντες ἐν ᾧσιν», οἱ ὁποῖες ἀναπτύχθηκαν γιὰ αἰῶνες μέσα σὲ ἓνα περιβάλλον ἀπομόνωσης καὶ ἀδιαφορίας γιὰ τὸν ἕτερο³¹. Τώρα ὅμως αὐτὸς ὁ ἕτερος καλεῖται νὰ γίνῃ ἐταῖρος, γιὰτὶ διαφοροτικὰ εἶναι σὰν νὰ μὴ λαμβάνουμε στὰ σοβαρὰ τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου: «μία ποιίμνη, εἷς ποιμήν». Γιὰ νὰ συμβεῖ ὅμως αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐπιτακτικῆς φύσεως ἡ ἀλλαγὴ κατεύθυνσης στὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἐκπαίδευση καὶ στὸν τρόπο ἐφαρμογῆς τῆς ἱεραποστολῆς³². Θὰ πρέπει ὡς Ἐκκλησίες νὰ ἀναζητήσουμε τὴν ἐνότητα μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἱεραποστολὴ καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψουμε στὶς παρυφῆς τοῦ οἰκουμενισμοῦ, τότε δηλαδὴ ποὺ τέθηκαν οἱ βάσεις γιὰ ἓναν κοινὸ παγχιριστιανικὸ πρακτικὸ Χριστιανισμό. Αὐτὸ ποὺ πρέπει νὰ ἐνδιαφέρει τὶς Ἐκκλησίες δὲν εἶναι ἡ ἐπέκταση τῶν γεωγραφικῶν ἢ διοικητικῶν τους ὁρίων, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἐπέκταση τοῦ πολλαπλασιασμοῦ τῆς κλάσεως τοῦ ἄρτου. Δὲν εἶναι ἡ ἀσφάλεια τοῦ ἐκκλησιολογικοῦ ὁρίου ποὺ πρέπει νὰ ἀναζητοῦμε ἢ τὸ πῶς θὰ ἐνταχθοῦμε σὲ κάποια ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ὁμάδα, ἀλλὰ ὀφείλουμε νὰ ἀναζητοῦμε τὴν ἀσφάλεια τῶν λόγων τοῦ

ὡς ἔκφρασις τῆς ἱστορικῆς πορείας τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ διὰ μέσου τῶν αἰῶνων πρὸς ἐκπλήρωσιν τῆς ἀποστολῆς του, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο πόθον μυχαιάτατον καὶ ἀδιάκοπον εὐχὴν καὶ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας. Τούτου ἕνεκα οὔτε δύναται αὐτὴ νὰ ἀμβλυωπῇ καὶ κωφεύῃ εἰς τοιαύτας δεδομένας περιστάσεις καὶ εὐκαιρίας, ἔχουσα ἐπὶ πλεόν καθήκον καὶ ὑποχρέωσιν νὰ συντρέχῃ, ὅση αὐτὴ δύναμις, ἐφ' ὅσον καλεῖται μάλιστα πρὸς τοῦτο...».

31. Α. Ἀλιβιζάτος, *Αἱ Σύγχρονοι Εἰρηνευτικαὶ Τάσεις καὶ τὰ ἐν Στοκχόλμῃ Συνέδρια 1926*, Διᾶλεξις στὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Τμήμα τοῦ Παγκοσμίου Συνδέσμου πρὸς Προαγωγὴν Διεθνoῦς Φιλίας διὰ τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν, Ἀθῆναι 1927, σ. 23: «Μετὰ θάρρους καὶ ἐπισήμως ἀνεγνωρίσθη ὅτι αἱ χριστιανικαὶ Ἐκκλησίαι παρημέλησαν μέχρι τοῦδε τὸ καθήκον τῆς ἀναπτύξεως καὶ διαδόσεως τοῦ ὑψίστου χριστιανικοῦ δόγματος τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγάπης μεταξὺ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων ... καὶ τῶν ἀναριθμῶν ψυχῶν, αἵτινες διψῶσι τὴν δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν».

32. Ἕνα τέτοιο παράδειγμα μπορούμε νὰ ἀντλήσουμε ἀπὸ τὸν διμερῆ θεολογικὸ διάλογο μεταξὺ τῆς Ρωμαιοκαθολικῆς καὶ τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, γεγονός ποὺ ἀποτυπώνεται στὸ κείμενο: *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue*, ἐκδ. SPCK, London 2007.

Εὐαγγελίου τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς: Ἡ γενέθλια ἡμέρα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι τότε ποὺ ἀνοίχθηκε στὰ ἔθνη καὶ ὄχι τότε ποὺ κλείσθηκε στὸν ἑαυτό της.

Ἡ ἀποσαφήνιση λοιπὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς οἰκονομίας καὶ τῆς σημασίας τῆς ἀναγνώρισης τοῦ βαπτίσματος τῶν ἐτέρων Χριστιανῶν ἀποτελοῦν δύο σημαντικὰ εἰσαγωγικὰ βήματα γιὰ τὴν περαιτέρω ὁμαλὴ καὶ καρποφόρα διεξαγωγὴ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Διαλόγου. Κατὰ τὸν Μ. Βασίλειο, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς οἰκονομίας δὲν ἀποτελεῖ μίᾳ προσωρινή, ἔκτακτη παραβίαση τῆς ἀκριβείας, ἀλλὰ σημαίνει ἀπομίμηση τῆς θείας οἰκονομίας, τῆς θεϊκῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς θείας συγκαταβάσεως πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Ἔτσι καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία, ὡς σῶμα Κυρίου ζώντας μέσα στὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ νέου νόμου, δηλαδὴ τῆς εὐαγγελικῆς ἀγάπης καὶ ὄχι τοῦ παλαιοῦ νόμου, καλεῖται νὰ ἐπιδεικνύει καὶ νὰ ἐφαρμόζει στὸ πλαίσιο τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Διαλόγου τὴν ἀρχὴ τῆς οἰκονομίας, ἔχοντας πάντοτε ἐνώπιόν της τὸν ὀραματισμὸ γιὰ τὴν πραγμάτωση τῆς ἐντολῆς τοῦ Κυρίου γιὰ ἐνότητα.

Οἱ Ὀρθόδοξοι Ἐκκλησίες σὲ καθεστῶς ἡρεμίας καλοῦνται νὰ συσκεφθοῦν γιὰ νὰ προχωρήσουν σὲ αὐτὸν τὸν διάλογο, καθὼς δὲν ἔχουν τίποτε ἀπολύτως οὔτε νὰ φοβηθοῦν καὶ περισσότερο οὔτε νὰ χάσουν. Ἀντιθέτως θὰ φανοῦν τίμιες ἔναντι τοῦ Κυρίου, ἔναντι τῆς ἀποστολῆς τους στὸν κόσμο καὶ ἔναντι τοῦ ποιμνίου τους, καθὼς ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἀποτελεῖ τὸ κατ' ἐξοχὴν μυστήριό τῆς εἰρήνευσης καὶ τῆς καταλλαγῆς μεταξὺ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὄχι αἰτία διαίρεσης καὶ ἀντιπαλότητας. Εἶναι ἡ καταλληλότερη ἱστορικὴ στιγμή προκειμένου οἱ Ὀρθόδοξοι νὰ φανερώσουν τὴ φιλάδελφη διάθεσή τους πρὸς ἐκείνους ποὺ γιὰ κάποιους λόγους δὲν εἶναι μέλη τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας³³.

33. Μητροπολίτης Γέρων Ἐφέσου Χρυσόστομος (Κωνσταντινίδης), *Ἡ ἀναγνώριση τῶν μυστηρίων τῶν ἑτεροδόξων στίς διαχρονικὲς σχέσεις Ὀρθοδοξίας καὶ Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ*, ἐκδ. Ἐπέκταση, Κατερίνη 1995, σσ. 221-222.