The Orthodox Informer

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

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

The Deadly Sin of Orthodox Ecumenists: Participating in the Interfaith Venture of the World Council of Churches

The Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in Canberra, in February of 1991, left no room for doubt that the future of this Geneva- based ecumenical organization is clearly pan-religious and that its syncretistic degeneration is unavoidable.

A. THE DEADLY sin of Orthodox ecumenists participating in this Assembly cannot be forgiven—in spite of the "vigorous" protestations that they put forward—for two main reasons:

First reason: The Orthodox ecumenists, after affirming the syncretistic tendencies of the **WCC** and its openness towards third world "theologies," not only did not withdraw from the pan-Protestant association of Geneva, but seven months later, at a special inter- Orthodox Consultation—in which, it should be noted, Non-Chalcedonians or Monophysites also took part—in Chambésy, Switzerland (September 12-16, 1991), they hammered out an extended "Report" (Chapters 1-3, 27 sections), whereby they **renewed their decision "for a fuller Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement"!**[1]

• **Indeed,** this lamentable "Report," in referring to the necessity for a rediscovery, "by concerned Orthodox, of a purified, well-

informed, and responsible Orthodoxy" as the "most powerful response" to the "unethical" activities of certain "missionaries," expresses the opinion that the Orthodox **"need the help of everyone, but especially the support of their brothers in the WCC"!** (see note 1).

• **That is,** if Orthodoxy, the blessed Body of the God-Man, Christ our Savior, is to offer Her saving witness to the world, She needs help from the heterodox; if the Truth is to shine, it needs falsehood!

Second reason: The Orthodox delegation played a decisive rôle in broadening the "unionist" vision of the WCC and in preparing **"the ground for a wider ecumenism,"**[2] that is, for an affirmation of other religions as venerable spiritual experiences and traditions.

• **And** more specifically, the so-called "ecumenical movement," and consequently the WCC, after sixty years of deliberation and after a profound fermentation of positive and negative views (Edinburgh 1910, Jerusalem 1928, Tambaram, India 1938, Accra, Ghana 1957-1958, New Delhi 1961, Mexico 1963, Kandy, Sri Lanka 1967, Ajaltoun, Lebanon 1970, and Zürich 1970), made a definite decision that it would now commit itself to dialogue with other religions.[3]

• **In January of 1971,** the Central Committee of the WCC met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, its main theme being "Dialogue with People of Other Religious Convictions."

The keynote speaker was Metropolitan Georges (Khodr) of Mount Lebanon, from the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, who expanded the topic **"Christianity in a Pluralistic World—the Work of the Holy Spirit."**[4]

The Central Committee, basing itself on the Zürich Statement, regarded interfaith dialogue as an "ecumenical priority" and undertook a "bold step": it proceeded to establish the *"Subunit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies."*[5]

The year 1971, therefore, is considered the starting-point for the broadening of the unionist vision of the WCC and the opening of its gates to all religions.

• **It should** be noted that the broadening of the boundaries of ecumenism by this Geneva-based organization **took place in a manner worthy of tears, especially for Orthodox ecumenists, and with unprecedented degradation.**

What precisely occurred?

In Addis Ababa, Metropolitan Georges (Khodr), in his attempt to lay the foundations of a new theology, the "theology" of dialogue with other religions, literally trampled on every point of the Faith and promoted a polymorphous brand of heresy.

• **The unfortunate Hierarch:**

—confirmed the authentically spiritual life of the unbaptized;

—affirmed that we can enrich our life experience with the riches of a universal religious community;

—recognized that Christ illumines those of other religions, when they read their scriptures;

—maintained that the Holy Spirit operates independently of Jesus Christ and His Church, inspires the non-Christian religions, and is really the common denominator of all the world's religions:

> **The Spirit operates and applies His Own energies in accordance with His Own economy and we could, from this angle, regard the non-Christian religions as points where His inspiration is at work. All who are visited by the Spirit are the people of God.**[6]

The syncretistic methodology of this pitiful Metropolitan shocked even the Protestant members of the Committee in its audacity, and also constitutes amazing proof of how, through ecumenism, one is inexorably led to the pan-religion of the "New Age"!

B. A LEGITIMATE question, therefore, arises: why do the Orthodox ecumenists "protest" over an **"increasing divergence from the basis of the WCC,"**[7] when they have never expressed protest over the "theology" of Metropolitan Georges (Khodr), this pitiful Orthodox clergyman, and those of like mind with him, whose theology constitutes an **indispensable presupposition** for the further interfaith ventures of the WCC?

The "uneasiness" of the Orthodox ecumenists over the **"tendency for the basis of the WCC to become marginalized when it carries out its work"** (see note 7), making constant reference, as they do, to the "Toronto Statement" (1950), provokes mirth even among the more simple-minded students of the so-called "ecumenical movement."

And this is because it is undeniable that the theological and practical framework of the ecumenist federation of the WCC preserves its "ancestral" desire to be recognized and confirmed as a kind of supreme authority *supra Ecclesiam,* as an "Ecumenical Church," contrary to the occasional "Statements" of the Toronto variety and in spite of the "anxieties," "reflections," and "protestations" of the Orthodox ecumenists.

The Orthodox members of the Assembly in Canberra detected the creation

> **'of certain dangerous conditions in the WCC'; 'Absent from many texts of the WCC is an affirmation that "Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world"'; they also observed, among other things, 'an increasing departure from the Biblical Christian understanding concerning 1) the Triune God, 2) salvation, 3) the "Good News" of this Gospel itself, 4) man as a creature "in the image and likeness of God," and 5) the Church'** (see note 7)

C. AND YET, precisely thirty months after Canberra and these "Orthodox anxieties," Metropolitan Georges (Khodr) of Mount Lebanon, at the WCC's Fifth World Conference on

Faith and Order in the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostella (August 3-14, 1993),[8] reiterated his syncretistic theology, and this in the presence of a very broad pan-Orthodox delegation (forty-six members):

> **...But the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills and holiness in the sense of enlightenment and glorification can be received by all people everywhere.... Dialogue for truth can be established. Christian adherence to Christ as the truth should not obscure the truths scattered in the religious traditions surrounding them. All these truths spring from the same Divine source. We should welcome all spiritual life-giving nourishment, not as a human word but as bread from Heaven. All discourse resists different discourse, and all scriptures resist different scriptures. That is why the aim of dialogue is above all, by going beyond religious traditions, to seek the Divine truth latent beneath different words and symbols. That is not to relativize the Christian message: it is not syncretism, it is the same Christ we worship as he journeys through the infinite spaces of other religions. This requires us to have a kenotic [sic] attitude. Kenosis [sic] is witness without words and can be fruitful. In dialogue the Church opens up, goes deeper and comes to know itself....[9]**

From the Fifth World Conference of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission, in Santiago de Compostella, Spain (August 3–14, 1993), with the theme, "Towards Koinonia *in Faith, Life and Witness."*

From left: Pastor Gao Ying, from China; the Anglican Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, from South Africa; Pastor Dr. Dorothy Lee, from Australia; the Papist professor, Father Jean-Marie Tillard, from Canada; Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) from the Patriarchate of Constantinople; and Pastor Dr. Günther Gassmann from Germany.

D. IN 1991, Archimandrite Gennadios (Lymoures), Th.D.,

Professor at the University of Strasbourg, a staff member of the WCC and the Delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in describing the events in Canberra, admitted:

> **But we were not lacking in moments of *discouragement* and *exasperation*, *indignation* and *pessimism*, as we reflected on the future course of the ecumenical movement, the gravity of the situation, and the *impasse of multilateral theological discussions*, so that one ended up posing the question: *Quo vadis, Œcumene?*** [10]

• **Underlining** once again our original observation regarding the **deadly sin** and the indescribable fall of the Orthodox ecumenists—who even now, at this crucial turning-point of the WCC, before it finally dissolves in the pan-religious melting pot, have not only not repented, but ***"support"*** it in its disastrous course with "theologies" of the Khodr variety and are swept along with it into the abyss of syncretism—, we conclude with a final question:

"Quo vadite, Orthodoxi Œcumenisti?"
"Whither go ye, O Orthodox ecumenists?"

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Notes

1 See the full text of the "Report" in *The Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, February 1991: Chronicle, Texts, Remarks* [in Greek], ed. **Georgios N. Laimopoulos** (Katerine: Ekdoseis "Tertios," 1992), pp. 93-106; *Enemerosis,* 7-1991/9-10, pp. 10-16 [in Greek]; *Apostolos Barnabas* [Cyprus] (January 1992), pp. 21-29 [in Greek]; *Episkepsis,* No. 467 (20 September 1991), pp. 5-12 [in Greek]; *Ecumenical Press Service,* No. 26 (91.09.27) (abstract of the "Report").

2 **Anton Houtepen,** "Faith," in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement,* ed. Nicholas Lossky, José Miguez Bonino, John Pobee, Tom Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Pauline Webb (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), p. 410b (§ Faith and dialogue with other faiths). (Anton Houtepen, a Papist, is Director

of the Inter-University Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, Utrecht, and Professor of Fundamental Theology at Erasmus University, Rotterdam, Netherlands).

3 See, in more detail: **Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili,** *The World Council of Churches and the Interfaith Movement* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1997), pp. 14-28.

4 **Basileios T. Stavrides,** *History of the Ecumenical Movement* [in Greek] (*Analekta* of the Vlatadon Monastery, No. 47; Thessaloniki: Patriarchikon Hidryma Paterikon Meleton, 1984), pp. 193-194.

5 See **Georgios N. Laimopoulos,** "The World Council of Churches and Interfaith Dialogue" [in Greek], *Kath' Hodon,* [Thessaloniki] No. 3 (September-December 1992), p. 45; **Marlin VanElderen,** "Consultation Speaks on Plurality," *Ecumenical Press Service,* No. 3 (90.01.90); **Wesley Ariarajah,** "Dialogue, Interfaith," in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, op. cit.,* p. 285A.

6 **Georges (Khodr), Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon,** "Christianity in a Pluralistic World: The Work of the Holy Spirit," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* [Alexandria], Vol. LIII, No. 2 (1971), p. 239; Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future,* rev. ed. (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1979), pp. 15-20; **Metropolitan Parthenios of Carthage,** "The Central Committee of the WCC in Addis Ababa" [in Greek], *Pantainos,* Vol. LXIII (March 1971), pp. 157-162; *Ekklesia,* Nos. 7-8 (1-15 March 1971), pp. 151-154 [in Greek]: "Report of the Delegates of the Church of Greece at the General Assembly of the WCC in Addis Ababa," (there were three delegates: Metropolitan Nikodemos [Gatziroules] of Attica and Professors Constantine Bones and Savvas Agourides).

7 "Reflections of the Orthodox Members of the Assembly," in *The Seventh General Assembly,* op. cit., p. 78 (b, §2).

8 See *Ekklesia,* No. 13 (1-15 September 1993) [in Greek]; *One World,* No. 189 (October 1993), pp. 12-17; *Ecumenical Press Service,* No. 21 (93.08.01 and 93.08.17), and No. 22 (93.08.18-29).

9 "Koinonia in Witness," in **Thomas Best** and **Günther Gassman** (eds.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostella, 1993* (Faith and Order Paper No. 166; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994), pp. 124 and 126.

10 **Archimandrite Gennadios Lymoures,** "The Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Its Theological Problems and the Orthodox Presence and Witness" [in Greek], *Gregorios Ho Palamas,* No. 738 (May-August 1991), p. 359 (*emphasis ours*).