

A CONFESSION OF FAITH Against Ecumenism

From a Convention of Orthodox Clergymen and Monks

Greece, April 2009

Those of us who by the Grace of God have been raised with the dogmas of piety and who follow in everything the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, believe that:

The sole path to salvation of mankind¹ is the faith in the Holy Trinity, the work and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their continuance within His Body, the Holy Church. Christ is the only true Light;² there are no other lights to illuminate us, nor any other names that can save us: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”³ All other beliefs, all religions that ignore and do not confess Christ “having come in the flesh,”⁴ are human creations and works of the evil one,⁵ which do not lead to the true knowledge of God and rebirth through divine Baptism, but instead, mislead men and lead them to perdition. As Christians who believe in the Holy Trinity, we do not have the same God as any of the religions, nor with the so-called monotheistic religions, Judaism and Mohammedanism, which do not believe in the Holy Trinity.

For two thousand years, the one Church which Christ founded and the Holy Spirit has guided has remained stable and unshakeable in the salvific Truth that was taught by Christ, delivered by the Holy Apostles and preserved by the Holy Fathers. She did not buckle under the cruel persecutions by the Judeans initially or by idolaters later, during the first three centuries. She has brought forth a host of martyrs and emerged victorious, thus proving Her divine origin. As Saint John the Chrysostom beautifully expressed it: “Nothing is stronger than the Church... if you fight against a man, you either conquer or are conquered; but if you fight against the Church, it is not possible for you to win, for God is the strongest of all.”⁶

Following the cessation of the persecutions and the triumph of the Church over Her external enemies - in other words, the Judeans and the idolaters - the internal enemies of the Church began to multiply and strengthen. A variety of heresies began to appear, which endeavored to overthrow and adulterate the faith once delivered, such that the faithful became confused, and their trust in the truth of the Gospel and traditions was debilitated. In outlining the ecclesiastical state of affairs that was created by the dominance for over 40 years - even administratively - of the heresy of Arius, Saint Basil the Great says: “The dogmas of the Fathers have been entirely disregarded, the apostolic traditions withered, the inventions of the youth are observed in the Churches; people are now “logic-chopping” not theologizing; precedence is given to the wisdom of the world, pushing aside the boasting in the

¹ See treatise by Gennadius II Scholarios, Patriarch of Constantinople: “Regarding the only way to the salvation of mankind,” to George Scholarios “The complete extant works - Oeuvres Complètes de Georges Scholarios,” Volumes I-VII, Paris 1928-1936, publ. L. Petit - X. Siderides - M. Jugie, Vol. III, 434-452.

² John 8:12 “I am the light of the world - whosoever follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 3:19 “The light had come to the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light.”

³ Acts 4:12.

⁴ 1 John 4:2-3: “Every spirit that confesses Jesus had cometh in the flesh, is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ had cometh in the flesh, is not from God. And this is what you have heard regarding the antichrist: that he cometh and is now already in the world.”

⁵ See “Didaches” (Teachings) of St. Cosmas of Aetolia, of I. Menounos, “Cosmas of Aetolia teachings” (and biography), Tinos publications, Athens, Didache A1, 37, page 142: “All faiths are false, counterfeit, all of them the Devil’s. This I realized as being true, divine, heavenly, correct, perfect, both by my word and by your word: that the faith of the pious and Orthodox Christians is good and holy, and that we must believe and be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ “Homily prior to the exile” 1, EHE 33, 186.

Cross. Shepherds are driven out, and in their place cruel wolves are ushered in, dispersing Christ's flock.”⁷

That which happened because of external enemies - religions - also happened because of internal ones - heresies. The Church, through Her great and enlightened Holy Fathers, demarcated and marked the boundaries [*perixarakose*] of the Orthodox faith with decisions by Local and Ecumenical Synods in the cases of specific, dubious teachings, but also with the agreement of all the Fathers (Consensus Patrum), on all the matters of the Faith. We stand on sure ground when we follow the Holy Fathers and do not move the boundaries that they have set. The expressions “Following after our Holy Fathers” and “Not withdrawing the boundaries that our Fathers have set” are signposts for a steady course of spiritual advance and a guardrail for [remaining within] the Orthodox faith and way of life.

Consequently, the basic positions of our Confession are the following:

1. We maintain, irremovably and without alteration, everything that the Synods and the Fathers have instituted. We accept everything that they accept and condemn everything that they condemn; and we avoid communication with those who innovate in matters of the Faith.⁸ We neither add, nor remove, nor alter any teaching. Even from the apostolic era, the God-bearing Saint Ignatius of Antioch in his epistle to Saint Polycarp of Smyrna wrote: “Anyone who says contrary to what has been decreed - even if he is trustworthy, even if he fasts, even if he lives in virginity, even if he performs signs and prophesizes, let him appear to you as a wolf in a sheep's hide, aspiring to the corruption of the sheep.” Saint John the Chrysostom, in interpreting the Apostle Paul's words “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1:9), observes that the Apostle “did not say if they should proclaim something contrary or if they should overturn everything, but that even if they should preach even the smallest thing that has not been delivered to you, even if they should simply provoke it, let them be anathema.”⁹ Upon announcing its decisions against the Iconoclasts to the clergy of Constantinople, the 7th Ecumenical Synod wrote: “We have followed the tradition of the Catholic Church, neither loosening [the matters of faith] nor making any superfluous addition, but, having been taught in the apostolic manner, we maintain the traditions we have received, accepting and respecting everything that the Holy Catholic Church has received from the first years, unwritten and written... for the true and straightforward judgment of the Church does not make any allowance for innovations within Her, or for attempts to remove anything. We, therefore, by following the laws of our Fathers, having received Grace by the one Spirit, have duly safeguarded without any innovations and reductions, all the things of the Church.”¹⁰

Along with the Holy Fathers and the Synods, we too reject and anathematize all the heresies that appeared during the historical course of the Church. Of the old heresies that have survived to this day, we condemn Arianism (still surviving, in the pseudo-Witnesses of Jehovah) and Monophysitism - the extreme form of Eutychius and the more moderate form of Severus and Dioscorus - according to the decisions of the 4th Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon and the Christological teaching of the great Holy Fathers and Teachers such as Saints Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Photios the Great and the hymns of our worship.

2. We proclaim that Roman Catholicism is a womb of heresies and fallacies.¹¹ The teaching of the

⁷ Epistle 90, “To the most holy brothers and bishops in the West” 2, EITE 2, 20.

⁸ This refers to those who provoke and innovate with regard to the Faith. It does not mean that Orthodox Christians should have no contact with non-Orthodox in the context of missionary outreach and witness, which would mean the cessation of all evangelism, missionary work, sharing of our Faith, etc. –Ed.

⁹ Galatians. 1, 9. To Gall. Homily chapt. 1, PG 61, 624.

¹⁰ Mansi, 13, 409-412.

¹¹ In our age of “political correctness” this statement may seem outrageous and unnecessarily inflammatory. It is, however, “soft” in comparison to the writings of the Holy Fathers (e.g., note the language of St. Photios the Great throughout his 10th-century treatise against the *filioque* clause, *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* – and this was long before many other heresies were introduced). The Holy Fathers have, for centuries, viewed the Roman Catholicism as a womb of heresies, beginning with the adoption and promulgation of the *filioque* clause.

“Filioque” - that is, the procession of the Holy Spirit AND from the Son - is contrary to everything that Christ Himself taught about the Holy Spirit. The entire chorus of Fathers, both in Synods and individually, regard Roman Catholicism as a heresy because apart from the Filioque, it produced a host of other fallacies, such as the primacy and the infallibility of the Pope, the unleavened bread (host), the fires of Purgatory, the immaculate conception of the Theotokos, created Grace, the purchasing of absolution (indulgences)... it has altered nearly all of the teaching and the practice pertaining to Baptism, Chrismation, the Divine Eucharist and the other Sacraments, and has converted the Church to a secular State.¹²

Contemporary Roman Catholicism has deviated even further than the medieval Latins from the teaching of the Church, to the extent that it no longer comprises a continuance of the ancient Church of the West. It has introduced a swarm of new exaggerations in its “Mariology,” such as the teaching that the Theotokos is a parallel redeemer (co-redemptrix) of the human race. It has reinforced the “Charismatic Movement” of Pentecostal (supposedly Spirit-centered) groups. It has adopted eastern religious practices and methods of prayer and meditation. It has introduced additional innovations into Divine worship, such as dances and musical instruments. It has shortened and essentially ruined the Divine Liturgy. With respect to Ecumenism it has set down the bases for a unification of all religions (*panthriskeia*) with its Second Vatican Council, by recognizing “spiritual life” in the people of other religions. Dogmatic minimalism has led it to a diminishing of moral requirements, on account of the bond between dogma and morality, resulting in the moral failures of leading clergymen and an increase in moral deviations such as homosexuality and pedophilia among clergymen.¹³ By continuing to support “Uniatism” - that caricature of Orthodoxy with which it victimizes and proselytizes faithful - The Vatican is sabotaging the dialogue and is contradicting its supposedly sincere intentions for union.

Generally speaking, after the Second Vatican Council there has been a radical change in Catholicism and a turn towards Protestantism, and even an adoption of various “spiritual” movements of the “New Age.”

According to Saint Simeon of Thessaloniki, the Mystagogue, “Papism” caused more damage to the Church than all the heresies and schisms combined. We Orthodox have communion with the pre-Schism Popes and we commemorate many Popes as Saints. However, the post-Schism popes have all taught heresy; they have ceased to be successors to the throne of Rome; they no longer have Apostolic succession, because they no longer have the faith of the Apostles and the Fathers. It is for this reason

Consider the following statements from another Confession of Faith from modern times, the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1848: “As soon as [the *filioque*] was introduced into the Churches of the West it brought forth disgraceful fruits, bringing with it, little by little, other novelties, for the most part contrary to the express commands of our Savior in the Gospel—commands which till its entrance into the Churches were closely observed... It drove the theologians of the West, as its defenders, since they had no ground either in Scripture or the Fathers to countenance heretical teachings, not only into misrepresentations of the Scriptures, such as are seen in none of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, but also into adulterations of the sacred and pure writings of the Fathers alike of the East and West.”

Similar language is found in the the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895: “[B]ut the present Roman Church is the Church of innovations, of the falsification of the writings of the Church Fathers, and of the misinterpretation of the Holy Scripture and of the decrees of the holy councils, for which she has reasonably and justly been disowned, and is still disowned, so far as she remains in her error.... [A]s has been said before, the Western Church, from the tenth century downwards, has privily brought into herself through the papacy various and strange and heretical doctrines and innovations, and so she has been torn away and removed far from the true and orthodox Church of Christ.” If some find the language of the “Confession of Faith Against Ecumenism” offensive, they might consider whether this is due to a lack of familiarity with the writings of the Holy Fathers, and past confessional statements of the Orthodox Church. – Ed.

¹² Again, see the Patriarchal Encyclicals of 1848 and 1895, which lay this out in great detail. – Ed.

¹³ The moral laxity and decadence, even among the clergy, had already been noted at the beginning of the 15th century, by Saint Simeon of Thessaloniki (see ‘Dogmatic Epistle 16’ in D. Balfour, by Simeon of Thessaloniki (1416/17-1429) “Theological Works,” Vlatades Gleanings 34, Thessaloniki 1981, page 218: “And furthermore, that they did not regard fornication at all entailing Hell, not even among their priests, but instead, they would unscrupulously have concubines and youths for fornication and would every day officiate.” Ibid, 15, page 216: “They also do not follow an evangelical lifestyle; for, every kind of luxury and fornication to them is not a reprehensible matter, nor anything else that is forbidden for Christians.”) The moral decadence that is observed of late even among the Orthodox clergy is the result of liberalism which accompanies ecumenism and of secularism.

that, as St. Symeon states, with each such pope, “not only do we have no communion, but we also call him a heretic.” On account of their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit with their teaching of the Filioque, they forfeited the presence of the Holy Spirit and therefore everything of theirs is deprived of Grace.¹⁴ Not one of their Mysteries (Sacraments) is valid, according to Saint Simeon: “Therefore the innovators are blaspheming and are far away from the Spirit, by blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, hence everything of theirs is graceless, inasmuch as they have violated and have demoted the Grace of the Spirit... which is why the Holy Spirit is not among them, and there is nothing spiritual in them, as everything of theirs is new and altered and contrary to Divine tradition.”¹⁵

3. The same things apply to an even greater degree to Protestantism, which as the offspring of Papism has inherited many heresies, but has also added many more. It has rejected Tradition, accepting only Holy Scripture (*Sola Scriptura*), which it misinterprets; it has abolished the Priesthood as a unique Mystery (Sacrament), as well as the veneration of the Saints and of the holy Icons; it has failed to honor, or even, in some cases, slighted the person of the Most Holy Theotokos (Mother of God); it has discarded monasticism; among the Holy Mysteries, it accepts only Baptism and the Divine Eucharist, which are understood in a way that deviates sharply from the teaching and the practice of the Church; it teaches such things as absolute predestination (Calvinism) and justification through faith alone. Furthermore, its more "progressive" sector has introduced Priesthood for women and marriage between homosexuals - whom they even accept into the ranks of the clergy. But above all, it lacks a proper ecclesiology, because the Orthodox understanding of the nature of the Church does not exist among them.¹⁶

4. The only way that our communion with heretics can be restored is if they renounce their delusion (*plani*) and repent, so that there may be a true union and peace: a union with the Truth, and not with delusion and heresy. For the incorporation of heretics into the Church, canonical precision (*akriveia*) requires that they be accepted through Baptism.¹⁷ Their previous “baptism,” performed outside the Church (without the triple immersion and emersion of the one being baptized in water sanctified by a particular prayer) is in no way a baptism.¹⁸ All attempts at baptism outside the Church lack the Grace of the Holy Spirit (Who does not remain within schisms and heresies) and as such, we have nothing in common that unites us, as Basil the Great points out: “those who had apostatized from the Church had no longer on them the Grace of the Holy Spirit, for it ceased to be imparted when the continuity was broken...they who were broken off had become laymen, and, because they are no longer able to confer

¹⁴ The term “Grace” is often misunderstood today. The Patristic teaching on the subject was best expressed by our Venerable Father Diadochus the God-bearer, Bishop of Photike in Epirus. As he writes in his *Hundred Texts on Spiritual Knowledge and Discernment*: “Before holy baptism Grace encourages the soul towards good from the outside, while Satan lurks in its depths, trying to block all the intellect’s ways of approach to the divine. But from the moment we are reborn through Baptism, the demon is outside, Grace is within.” And, in our own days, Blessed Archbishop Seraphim of Sophia writes concerning the two forms of Grace: “According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, the Grace of the Holy Spirit is manifest in two forms: firstly, as an external, providential Grace, which acts in and throughout the lives of everybody, enabling anyone to accept the True Faith; and, secondly, as an internal, salvific Grace, which revivifies, redeems, and functions solely in the Orthodox Church.” Here the Confession refers to the latter form of Grace. The general operation of the Holy Spirit among all men is not in question. – Ed.

¹⁵ Dialogue 23, PG 155, 120-121. Epistle regarding blessedness 5, in D. Balfour, Simeon Archbishop of Thessaloniki (1416/17-1429), “Theological Works,” Vlatades Gleanings 34, Thessaloniki 1981, page 226. These comments of Saint Simeon should be interpreted on the basis of the Patristic teaching on Grace, as referred to in note 14 above. – Ed.

¹⁶ Here the Confession speaks generally of Protestantism. Given that there are 26,000+ denominations, it is impossible to make a succinct statement about Protestant tenets that applies accurately to them all. The Confession is admittedly painting with a broad brush, but these are all aspects of Protestantism that apply more or less to all Protestant groups, unless otherwise specified as speaking to particular confessions (such as Calvinism). – Ed.

¹⁷ “Canonical precision” or *akriveia*, is the norm, as it is most consistent with the theological principles under-girding the Canons concerning Holy Baptism. Nevertheless, the authors of the Confession would agree that, *when canonical presuppositions existed*, “canonical dispensation”, or *oikonomia*, has been employed. It is also the case, however, that, in almost every case today, those presuppositions (such as triple immersion) do not exist. – Ed.

¹⁸ The reception of a convert into the Church by *oikonomia*, when indeed it is done within the canonical prescriptions and leads to the same end as *akriveia*, in no way can be interpreted as altering Orthodox ecclesiology. Employing *oikonomia* in the reception of non-Orthodox does not mean acceptance *per se* of non-Orthodox mysteries. The acceptance *per se* of non-Orthodox mysteries by some Orthodox representatives in the ecumenical movement is impossible to reconcile with Orthodox ecclesiology and is to be rejected as contrary to the Orthodox Dogma of the Church. – Ed.

on others that Grace of the Holy Spirit from which they themselves are fallen away, they had no authority either to baptize or to ordain.”¹⁹

That is why the new attempt by Ecumenists to push the idea that we have a common baptism with heretics is unfounded. Indeed, upon this nonexistent baptismal unity they want to base the unity of the Church, which supposedly exists wherever a baptism may exist.²⁰ One enters the Church, however, and becomes Her member, not with just any baptism, but only with the “one baptism,” that uniformly performed baptism, officiated by Priests who have received the Priesthood of the Church.

5. As long as the heterodox continue to remain in their errors, we avoid communion with them, especially in common prayer. All those holy canons which address the matter of common prayer are unanimous in prohibiting not only common officiating and common prayer in the temple of God, but even ordinary prayers in private quarters. The Church's strict stance toward the heterodox springs from true love and sincere concern for their salvation, and out of Her pastoral care that the faithful be not carried away by heresy. Whosoever loves, reveals the truth and does not leave the other in falsehood; otherwise, any love and agreement with him would only be counterfeit and false. There is such a thing as a good war and a bad peace: “...for a praiseworthy war is superior to a peace that separates one from God” says Saint Gregory the Theologian.²¹ And Saint John the Chrysostom recommends: “If you should see devoutness infringed upon, do not prefer a oneness of mind to the truth, but stand fast until death... in no way betraying the truth”. And elsewhere, he recommends with emphasis: “Do not accept any false dogma on the pretext of love.”²² This stance of the Fathers was also adopted by the great defender and confessor of the Orthodox faith against the Latins, Saint Mark of Ephesus, who concluded his own Confession of Faith in Florence with the following words: “All the teachers of the Church, all the Councils and all the divine Scriptures exhort us to avoid heretics, and to refrain from communion with them. Therefore, am I to disregard them all, and follow those who under the pretense of a manufactured peace strive for union? Those, who have counterfeited the sacred and divine Symbol of Faith (The Creed) and who introduced the Son as the second cause of the Holy Spirit? [...] May this never happen to us, benevolent Comforter (*Paraclete*), and may I never fall away from my own duteous thoughts, but, by following Thy teaching and the blessed men who were inspired by Thee, may I be added to my fathers, by bringing in, if nothing else, this: devoutness.”²³

6. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, the Church has steadfastly and immutably maintained a dismissive and condemnatory stance towards all heresies, as clearly formulated in the Synodicon of Orthodoxy which is recited on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Heresies and heretics are anathematized, one by one; furthermore, in order to ensure that no heretics be left out of the anathema, there is a general anathema at the end of the text: “Let all heretics be anathematized.”

Unfortunately, this uniform, steady and unswerving stance of the Church up until the beginning of the 20th century has begun to be progressively abandoned, following the encyclical that was released by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1920, “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” which for the first

¹⁹ Canonical Epistle A, *To Amphilocheios of Iconion*, 1st Canon.

²⁰ In the text of the 9th General Convention of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006, which was accepted by the representatives of the Orthodox churches and was titled “Called to be the One Church,” in paragraph 8 it states: “All those baptized in Christ are united in His name.” In paragraph 9: “That we all belong in common to Christ through baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, gives the churches the possibility and it invites them to walk together, even when they disagree. We assure that there is one baptism, exactly as there is one body and one Spirit, one hope in our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one God and Father to all of us (see Ephes.4:4-6).” The Metropolitan of Pergamos John (Zizioulas) in his work “Orthodox Ecclesiology and the Ecumenical Movement,” *Sourozh Diocesan Magazine* (England, August 1985, vol.21, page 23), had paved the way for this position, by stating: “Within baptism, even if there is a break, a division, a schism, you can still speak of the Church... The Orthodox, in my understanding at least, participate in the ecumenical movement as a movement of baptized Christians, who are in a state of division because they cannot express the same faith together. In the past this has happened because of a lack of love which is now, thank God, disappearing.”

²¹ Apologetics on the flight to Pontus 82, EIII 1, 176.

²² To Romans, Homily 22, 2, PG 60, 611. To Philipians, Homily 2.1, PG 62, 119.

²³ Confession of faith displayed in Florence, in Documents relatifs au Concile de Florence, II, Oeuvres anticonciliaires de Marc d'Ephèse, par L. Petit, *Patrologia Orientalis* 17, 442.

time officially characterized heresies as “churches”²⁴ that are not alienated from the Church, but are familiar and related to Her. It recommended that “the love between the Churches should above all be rekindled and reinforced, and they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and ‘fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ.’”²⁵

The path is now open for the adoption, the shaping and the development of the heresy of Ecumenism within the sphere of the Orthodox Church – this “pan-heresy,” initially of Protestant inspiration, now with Papal acceptance, which adopts and legalizes all heresies as ‘churches’ and assaults the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This new dogma regarding the Church, this new ecclesiology, is now developed, taught and imposed by Patriarchs and bishops. According to this new teaching, no Church is entitled to demand for itself exclusively the designation of the catholic and true Church. Instead, each one of them is a piece, a part, and not the entire Church; they all together comprise the Church.²⁶

All the boundaries set by the Fathers have fallen; there is no longer a dividing line between heresy and Church, between truth and delusion. Heresies are also ‘churches’ now; in fact, many of them – like the Papist one- are now regarded as ‘sister churches’ to which God has entrusted, jointly with us, the care for mankind's salvation.²⁷

The Grace of the Holy Spirit now also exists within heresies, and therefore their baptisms are – like all the other mysteries – considered valid.²⁸ All who have been baptized into a heretical group are now considered members of Christ's Body, the Church.

The condemnations and the anathemas of the councils are no longer valid and should be stricken from liturgical books. We are now lodged in the “World Council of Churches” and have essentially betrayed - with our membership alone²⁹ - our ecclesiastical self-awareness. We have removed the dogma regarding the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church - the dogma of “one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.”³⁰

7. This inter-Christian syncretism has now expanded into an inter-religious syncretism, which equates

²⁴ That is, “churches” in a more or less real, ecclesiological way, implying mystical union with the one, true Church of Christ, the Orthodox Church. – Ed.

²⁵ See I.Karmiris’, “The Dogmatic and Symbolic Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church,” vol. 2, page 958.

²⁶ One recent example of this is found in the declaration of the 9th General Convention of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006, which was accepted by the representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and was entitled “Called to be the One Church.” In section II, paragraph 6 of the document, which is a common declaration of Orthodox and heterodox, we read: “Each church is the Church catholic and not simply a part of it. Each church is the Church catholic, but not the whole of it. Each church fulfils its catholicity when it is in communion with the other churches.” But, as it would be expected, this “new dogma” takes on a wide variety of expressions, from including only two churches, such as (in the “two lung” theory) Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox Church, or three churches, as in the classic Branch Theory of the Anglicans, or including many churches, as has been expressed in the “invisible church” ecclesiology of the World Council of Churches and the “baptismal unity” theory. That which binds these various theories together is a rejection of “ecclesiological exclusivism” and an ecumenism “of return.” A sentiment that is said often and by many, including Orthodox primates and hierarchs, is that “a Catholic will not become an Orthodox and vice versa, but we must approach the altar together” (Bishop Tichon, Diocese of Central and Western Europe of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria on his visit to the Pope, October 22nd, 2009; See <http://www.zenit.org/article-27299?l=english>).

²⁷ See joint statement by Pope John-Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew during the latter's visit to Rome on the 29th of June, 1995. The same had been proclaimed at an earlier date by the Combined Theological Committee for the Dialogue between Orthodox and Papists, in Balamand, Lebanon in 1993.

²⁸ The term “valid” here means accepting heterodox baptism “per se”, in and of itself, apart from the Church, and has ecclesiological implications which the *kat'oikonomia* reception of the non-Orthodox can never imply.

²⁹ This is a question of methodology, the “essential betrayal” being an abandonment of the patristic methodology of witness, wherein the Scriptural command, “a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Tit 3:10) is followed, if not in word than in spirit. Rather, we have “lodged” ourselves in the World Council of Churches as full organic members, even committing ourselves to dialogue without presuppositions or limits. This disregard for patristic and scriptural guidelines to proper witness inevitably has led to a betrayal of the Church's self-understanding.

³⁰ Ephesians 4:5.

all the religions with the unique knowledge of and reverence for God and a Christ-like way of life – all revealed from on high by Christ. Consequently, it is not only the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in relation to the various heresies that is being attacked, but also the foundational and unique dogma of revelation and salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ in relation to the religions of the world. It is the worst delusion, the greatest heresy of all ages.

8. We believe and confess that salvation is possible in Christ alone. The religions of the world, but also the various heresies do not lead man to salvation. The Orthodox Church is not merely the true Church; She is the only Church. She alone has remained faithful to the Gospel, the Synods and the Fathers, and consequently She alone represents the true catholic Church of Christ. According to the blessed Elder Justin Popovitch, Ecumenism is a common name for the pseudo-churches of Western Europe; their common name is “pan-heresy.”³¹

This pan-heresy has been accepted by many Orthodox patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, clergymen, monks and laity. They teach it, “bareheaded,” they apply it and impose it in practice, communing with heretics in every possible manner - with common prayers, with exchanges of visits, with pastoral collaborations - thus essentially placing themselves outside the Church.³² Our stance, per the Conciliar canonical decisions and per the example of the Saints, is obvious. Each one must now assume his responsibilities.

9. There are of course collective responsibilities also, and chiefly in the ecumenistic conscience of our hierarchs and theologians, towards the Orthodox people (*pleroma*) and their individual flocks. To them, we declare with a fear of God and with love that this stance of theirs and their involvement in ecumenistic activities are condemnable from every aspect, because:

- a) they actively impugn our Orthodox-Patristic Tradition and Faith;
- b) they are sowing doubt in the hearts of their flock and unsettle many, leading to division and schism, and
- c) they are luring a portion of the flock into delusion, and thus, to spiritual disaster.

We, therefore, declare that, for the aforementioned reasons, those who endeavor within this ecumenist irresponsibility, whatever rank they may hold within the Church Body, contradict the tradition of our Saints and are thus stand in opposition to them. For this reason their stance must be condemned and rejected by the entirety of the Hierarchy and Faithful.³³

³¹ Archimandrite Justin Popovitch, *Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Thessaloniki 1974, page 224.

³² What is not meant here is an institutional departure from the Church by excommunication or anathema. And this is clear by the use of the terms “essentially” and “placing *themselves*.” Rather, what is meant is that by their actions and their words they have *separated themselves* in essence from the Church – from Her Fathers, Her Way and Her Life. They have *essentially removed themselves* from the Church by no longer following the Holy Fathers, no longer expressing the Orthodox Faith.

The passage draws on the 15th canon of the 1st -2nd Synod. The understanding behind the phrase “essentially placing themselves outside the Church” is clearly implied in the canon when it states: “For not bishops, but false bishops and false teachers have they condemned...” The 15th canon, although praising those who cease commemoration of their bishop, who is teaching heresy “bareheaded”, does not make ceasing commemoration a requirement. It leaves the particular course of action – based on the canons and councils and fathers – to the discretion of each. The *Confession* follows suit, clearly naming the heresy and calling all to appropriate response (“Our stance, per the Conciliar canonical decisions and per the example of the Saints, is obvious.), but leaving the particulars to each one’s discretion (“Each one must now assume his responsibilities”). – Ed.

³³ As of November 11, 2009 12,150 clergy, monks and laymen have signed this Confession of Faith against Ecumenism. See: <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/ABF82395.el.aspx> for a complete list of signers.