



UNEASINESS ABOUT MODERNISM AND ECUMENISM IN THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE*

A Serious Look at Metropolitan Cyprian and His Ecclesiology of Resistance

In a recent book, *Екуменизам и Време Апостасију* [*Ecumenism in the Age of Apostasy*] (Prizren, Serbia: 1995), published with the blessing of Bishop Artemije of Rashka and Prizren, Hieromonk Sava (Janjich), an erudite theologian and clergyman in the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, discusses the history of the ecumenical movement with great clarity and with obvious concern for its violation both of the primacy of the Orthodox Church and the canonical proscriptions by which Orthodox Christians, in preserving the integrity of their Faith, are forbidden to pray with the heterodox. He bemoans the participation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement and, in a very chilling rhetorical question, asks: “Could it be that this fearful Golgotha through which the Serbian people are passing is the result of their Church’s participation in the World Council of Churches for the last thirty years, and the heretical ecumenical course which it has pursued during those thirty years?” (p. 48).

Towards the middle of his book, Father Sava describes the resistance to the panheresy of ecumenism which has surfaced in various national Orthodox Churches: the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was formed in resistance to Sergianism—a Communist precursor of the ecumenism which later dominated the compromised Russian Patriarchate—and an ecclesiastical body with which the Church of Serbia has had close relations for decades, and the Old Calendar movements in the Bulgarian, Greek, and Romanian Churches. The recent formation of an anti-ecumenical coalition of these Churches in 1994 he describes as “a bone caught in the throat of the Orthodox ecumenists,” who count Papists and Protestants as their brothers, but revile these Orthodox confessors (p. 69).

In a very accurate and astute analysis of the history of the Greek Old Calendarist movement (pp. 68-70), Father Sava dismisses the extremist factions as having deviated from a correct ecclesiology and a serious witness. The Synod of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and

Fili alone, he observes, provides a viable model for resistance in other Orthodox Churches. He further recounts the support given by Patriarch Diodoros I of Jerusalem to Metropolitan Cyprian and his Bishops, resulting in the former's humiliation by an enraged Œcumenical Patriarch (pp. 65-66), and the retreat from ecumenism of Elder Adrian of Mt. Sinai into the jurisdiction of the resisters under Metropolitan Cyprian (p. 88). And he subsequently points out that the Serbian Church can either maintain relations with the ecumenists, working from "within" the so-called "official" Churches for a return to correct belief, or follow the course of Metropolitan Cyprian, realizing that the issue is not one of thirteen days or the calendar as such, but the innovation and heresy that ushered in the calendar change.

In the final pages of his book (esp. pp. 100-108), Hieromonk Sava cites historical examples of, and Patristic justifications for, the same ecclesiology of resistance espoused by Metropolitan Cyprian and his Bishops in resisting the contemporary panheresy of ecumenism, which has infected the "official" New Calendarist Church of Greece. He further contends that the "walling off" of True Orthodox Christians in resistance to various heresies is a matter of canonical necessity for all right-believing Orthodox. Father Sava's keen intellect, his penetrating insight into the nature and direction of the Greek Old Calendarist movement, and his thorough grasp of the theology of resistance underlying the witness of Metropolitan Cyprian's Synod are particularly evident in the closing comments of this classic work on ecumenism in our days of widening apostasy. This offers great hope for the emergence of a traditionalist movement in the ancient Church of Serbia, which, though it adheres to the traditional Church Calendar, has been beset for decades by overt participation in the ecumenical movement and full communion with the Orthodox ecumenists and their Faith-betraying activities and policies.

[We suggest that those interested in purchasing the volume in question write directly to the author, as follows: Jeromonach Sava, Manastir Visoki Decani, 383 22 Decani, Serbia (Yugoslavia).]

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*The following report, written at the request of the Holy Synod, was submitted to the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate on November 17, 1994, by the aforementioned Bishop Artemije, Hieromonk Sava's spiritual superior. His Grace, a spiritual son of the Blessed Archimandrite Justin (Popovich), received his doctorate in theology at the University of Athens. His view of ecumenism, its source, its dangers, and its effects on the Serbian Church reflects much of the thinking of our own Church and occasions further hope for the blossoming of True Orthodoxy in Serbia.***

The Origin of the World Council of Churches

1. Simply the title “World Council of Churches” (W.C.C.) already expresses the heresy of this pseudo-ecclesiastical organization. Among the teachings of the Christian Faith, there are those which are true, which were given, in the dogmatic definitions of the Holy Fathers of the Church in the Ecumenical Synods, a precise and final formulation that does not allow for various interpretations. Thus, the Holy Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Synod defined the dogma of faith by the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, not by “many” churches, from which some sort of “council,” or “union,” or some kind of a “super-church” might come forth.

The Church is One and Catholic and in it are gathered together all Truth, all Grace, and all that the Lord brought with Him to the earth, granted to men, and left them for their salvation. It is One and Catholic, because it gathers all who want salvation into an internal union, in the Body of the God-Man Christ.

Thus the very idea of a “council” or “union” of Churches is impossible, impermissible, and unacceptable for the conscience of every Orthodox person.

2. The history of the “World Council of Churches” finds its prehistory in the appearance of the contemporary heresy—super-heresy—which is called ecumenism.

As a phenomenon, ecumenism contains nothing new; it is an old idea that has been revived. For many years and decades people have been writing and talking about it, such that we can say that we are speaking of quite an intricate issue.

First, ecumenism is an ecclesiological heresy, for its primary attack is directed against the very foundation of the Orthodox Faith: against the Holy Church, in an effort to transform it [the Church] into an ecumenist organization deprived of the Theanthropic Grace of the Body of Christ, thereby opening the way for the coming of Antichrist.

The foundations of ecumenism were laid already at the end of the last century, in 1897, at the conference of one hundred ninety-four bishops in Lambeth (England). At this conference, the principles for the coming ecumenist *unia* of “Christian” churches were set forth.

The Lambeth Conference established a dogmatic *minimum*, which stems from the idea that unity must be sought in the lowest common denominator of theological beliefs.

This lowest common denominator is to be sought in Holy Writ (and not in Sacred Tradition), in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and in two Holy Mysteries: Baptism and the Eucharist.

Moreover, the ground was laid for the principle of openness regarding the teachings of other “churches,” in preparation for the introduction of a “compromise of love.”

The third creation of the Lambeth Conference was the well-known “branch theory,” which stems from the idea that the Church of Christ is, supposedly, a tree with many branches, all of which have equal rights with one another and which represent the one Church only in their common uni-

ty. This evil seed, once it had been sown, grew audaciously.

Already by 1910, in Edinburgh, a World Mission Conference of Protestant "churches" was held, where it was decided to organize a worldwide Christian movement to resolve questions of faith and church order.

At the same time that this movement was being organized, the "Life and Work" movement was formed, the task of which was the realization of the union of Christians through their mutual cooperation in matters of daily life (a movement for unity). It was these two exclusively Protestant movements that founded, at its First General Assembly in Amsterdam, in 1948, the "World Council of Churches," with its main center in Geneva.

At this gathering, unfortunately, there were present various representatives of the Orthodox Churches: from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Archdiocese of Cyprus, the Archdiocese of Greece, and the Russian Metropolia of North America (now known as the "Orthodox Church in America").

3. Unfortunately, Orthodoxy did not distance itself from these temptations of modernism and secularism, and shortly it was infected by them.

Among the Orthodox Churches, the first to surrender to ecumenism was the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This happened as early as January of 1920, with the encyclical "To All of the Churches of Christ." This encyclical called not only the local Orthodox Churches "Churches," but applied this term, for the first time in history, to various heretical confessions. At the very beginning of this encyclical it is written: "...[T]he effort of various Christian Churches to approach one another, and their desire for cooperation, cannot be rejected because of differences in dogma between them...."

The encyclical calls for cooperation and the realization of full unity; various heretical groups are called "churches," which are not alien to us but are close and akin to us in Christ, and together with us they are co-inheritors and co-participants in the promises of Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:6).

As a first, practical step for attaining mutual trust and love, it is reckoned necessary for the Orthodox Church to accept the New (Gregorian) Calendar, "so that all the great Christian feasts can be celebrated by all the Churches at the same time."

This was quickly done by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (and later, as well, by sundry other local Orthodox Churches), which paid a high price for this: an internal schism both in the Church and between the people.

However, other Orthodox Churches for a time resisted this dangerous temptation. In particular, the Patriarchate of Moscow expressed a well-known caution concerning ecumenism. The meeting of Bishops of the local Orthodox Churches held in Moscow on July 8-18, 1948, on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary of the autocephaly of the Russian Church, bore witness to this. Representatives of the Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Albania took part in this meeting.

The representatives of these Churches rejected membership in the worldwide ecumenical movement and in the World Council of Churches, which had just been formed, and they condemned the movement as heresy.

But this zeal for the defense of the Divine Truth of the Church did not

continue for long, unfortunately. A mere four years after the formation of the World Council of Churches, in 1952, Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople issued an encyclical which exhorted all the heads of the local Orthodox Churches to join the World Council of Churches.

In spite of the fact that such exhortations were banal and non-ecclesial (for example, they contained such expressions as: "...[B]oth people and nations are working intensely to come together in confronting the great problems which occupy the whole of humanity"), certain Orthodox Churches, in that very same year, rushed to enroll in the World Council of Churches. The Ecumenical Patriarchate began to send its permanent representatives to the main center of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

In 1959, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches met with the representatives of all the Orthodox Churches for consultations on the island of Rhodes. Beginning at that moment, we can observe that ecumenism penetrated into Orthodoxy and, like a cancerous tumor, began to consume it from within.

After the meeting on Rhodes, the Orthodox appear to have begun to compete with one another, as to who could be the more ecumenical.

Beginning in 1961, Orthodox ecumenists began to convene one conference after another, for the purpose of bringing into reality their ecumenist agendas and goals. Thus, in 1964, a Third Conference was summoned on Rhodes, where the decision was made to establish dialogues with heretics "on equal grounds," and each local Orthodox Church was obliged to establish, independently, "fraternal relations" with heretics. The primary leader in all of these ecumenist games was Patriarch Athenagoras, who began frequent meetings with the Pope, negotiating for the mutual lifting of the Anathemas of 1054, for common prayers, and so forth. Since then, his successors and assistants, Archbishops Iakovos of North and South America and Stylianos of Australia, Damascene of Geneva, and many others, have travelled the same path.

Other representatives of various local Orthodox Churches also act according to this ecumenist plan, even though their actions have not a thing in common with the teaching and Canons of the Holy Fathers of the Church.

The borders established by our Holy Fathers have been violated, the borders between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, Christ and Belial.

The primary factor in all of these outpourings of sentiments (which essentially constitute pure hypocrisy) is the desire for all Orthodox Christians to learn the "truth" that they are brothers in Christ and members of the one and true Church together with the non-Orthodox. This is what is discussed at meetings and conferences, written about in newspapers, journals, and books, and broadcast on radio and television. These things are necessary in order to lead us up to the "common cup," to communion between us, which is the basic goal of this so-called "dialogue of love."

All of this, according to Father Justin (Popovich), *amounts to the betrayal of Judas, a terrible betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ and the entire Church of Christ.*

The Relationship of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the World Council of Churches

Following the example of the other local Churches, and likewise citing the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Serbian Orthodox Church from the very beginning made an effort to “keep in step” with the times.

In spite of the fact it was not yet formally a member of the World Council of Churches, it began to establish contacts and connections with this “council of heresy,” as Father Justin would have called it, and began to receive representatives of the W.C.C., first as persons who were sending assistance, such as Mr. Tobias, Mr. Maxwell, and Ms. Meyhoffer, and finally, the General Secretary, Mr. Visser ‘t Hooft.

It is true that the Serbian Church did not have an official representative or observer at the Second Assembly of the W.C.C. in Evanston, in America, but at the Third Assembly in New Delhi, in 1961, it had a delegation of three members (with Bishop Bessarion as its head). At this assembly, the question of the participation of the Orthodox Churches in the movement was discussed. Apparently, under pressure from the Communist régime, the Moscow Patriarchate and the Churches of the Soviet satellite countries, along with it, became members of the W.C.C. Thus, the Patriarchates of Moscow, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Romania, as well as the Metropolias of Poland and Czechoslovakia, all became members of the W.C.C.

The Serbian Church joined the members of the W.C.C. by the “back door,” unnoticed, unofficially, in the following way. The General Secretary, Visser ‘t Hooft, went for a visit and made an offer for the Serbian Church to become a member, without any need of signing theological documents that might possibly be without dogmatic or canonical foundation. The Synod, with Patriarch German as its head, decided to join the W.C.C. This decision was accepted and ratified at the meeting of the Central Committee of the W.C.C., somewhere in Africa, in 1965.

Since then, the Serbian Church, like the other local Orthodox Churches, has been a part of the W.C.C.

Through our Bishops and theologians, we began to take part in all conferences, assemblies, meetings, prayer gatherings, and everything else the W.C.C. concocted, and agreed to everything without argument.

As a result of this coöperation, the Serbian Orthodox Church from time to time received material assistance from the W.C.C., such as medicines, scholarships, trips to Switzerland, and financial subsidies (e.g., for constructing the new building for the theological faculty [in Belgrade]). For these crumbs of help, we have lost, in the spiritual plane, the purity of the Faith, the canonical heritage of the Church, and faithfulness to the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

The presence of representatives of Orthodox Churches at various ecumenist gatherings has no canonical justification whatsoever. We do not go there in order to confess boldly, openly, and unwaveringly the eternal and unchangeable Truth of the Orthodox Faith and Church, but in order to make compromises and, more or less, to agree to all the decisions and formulations that the non-Orthodox offer us.

It was through such actions that we arrived at Balamand, at Chambésy, and at Assisi, all of which together constitute infidelity and a betrayal of the

Holy Orthodox Faith.

During this whole period of falls, and indeed of the ruination of the Church of Saint Sava, only one single voice was heard, the voice of [the Blessed] Archimandrite Justin of Chelije (†1979), who alone remained the unwavering and vigilant conscience of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It was he, deeply sensing and experiencing liturgically the Apostolic and Patristic spirit of Truth, who wrote, regarding the ecumenical “success” of Patriarch Athenagoras: “And the Patriarch of Constantinople? He, by his neo-Papist behavior, has for decades scandalized, in word and deeds, the consciences of the Orthodox, denying the unique and wholly salvific Truth of the Orthodox Church and Faith, recognizing the Roman Supreme Pontiff, with all of his demonic, anti-ecclesiastical pride....”

These words clearly express a mature, sincere, Patristic view of, and relationship to, the heretical Patriarch, as well as a precise diagnosis of the basic intentions of Constantinople, where the successors of Patriarch Athenagoras to this day act in the same way towards Rome, with the silent approval of the other Orthodox Churches. What would Father Justin say today? The only good thing that can be found in this whole affair is that our official representatives and participants in various ecumenist gatherings, when they return home, do not write anything about them and do not reveal to the Church press things that could poison the Orthodox people. Frequently, even we Bishops, gathered in council, leave without being informed by our own Bishops, who represent us, of these things—something that I consider altogether unacceptable.

Bearing in mind what we have already said, on the one hand, and, on the other, the eternal and unerring words of the Gospel—“Every tree shall be known by its fruits”—, it is easy to realize what we must do.

Even now, at this upcoming council, we must be resolute: the Serbian Orthodox Church must withdraw from the W.C.C. and from all similar organizations (such as the European Council of Churches and others) and put an end to its participation in ecumenical and atheistic gatherings. This must be done for the following reasons:

1. *In obedience to Saint Paul, who counsels and commands: after a first and second exhortation, turn away from a heretic.*

2. *These things are not consistent with the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church, against which we have grievously sinned.*

3. *There is not a single one of the Holy Fathers of the Church who would have justified our joining and remaining in the non-ecclesial organization of the W.C.C. and others like it.*

4. *For the salvation of our souls, of the souls of the flock entrusted to us, which we have severely scandalized and harmed by remaining in ecumenism, and also for the salvation of those who are still outside the Ark of Salvation, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Orthodox Church, whom our decisive and clear action can assist in their search for salvation and the Truth—something not occasioned in the toady and godless company of ecumenism.*

* Source: *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (1996), pp. 52-56.

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