

■ “It behooves us to avoid Communion with those whose way of thinking we abhor.” (St. Athanasios the Great)



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 Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1321)

■ On the occasion of an official statement by the new General Secretary of the WCC

Participation in the “World Council of Churches” as an Ecclesiological Heresy*

“Invisible Unity” and “Baptismal Theology”

I. Anxieties and qualms

1. **AS IS WELL KNOWN**, the “Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference” of Thessaloniki (20-24 September 2004, featuring sixty speakers) issued the following momentous proclamation:

The VERY ACT OF PARTICIPATION in the ‘World Council of Churches’ and in theological dialogues with heretical Papists, Protestants, and Monophysites CONSTITUTES A DENIAL OF THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH and an adequation of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church with heresies and schisms. It is, as has been said, THE GREATEST ECCLESIOLOGICAL HERESY IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.¹

2. **TO BE SURE**, this proclamation is not without precedent: expansive participation in the ecumenical movement, which involves not only the WCC and “dialogues,” but also an unimagin-

ably broad spectrum of inter-Christian and interfaith activities, has been aptly and correctly characterized as “something far worse than a panheresy” (Andreas Theodorou, 1973)² and as “the greatest and most grievous blow against the work of redemption, which [Orthodoxy] is called to fulfill in the midst of the modern world” (Konstantinos Mouratides, 1973).³

3. WITH REGARD, specifically, to the WCC, the initial anxieties of the Orthodox, both members and non-members thereof, led to the well-known Toronto Statement (Central Committee, 9-15 July 1950), entitled “The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches,”⁴ which is reckoned to “constitute the most reliable document to date concerning the nature of the WCC,”⁵ “primarily from an ecclesiological standpoint,”⁶ and by which, supposedly, “many qualms on the part of the Orthodox Churches were, at least partially, dispelled.”⁷

4. HOWEVER, the Toronto Statement is not only *inadequate*, but also *misleading* and, in the end, *useless*, given the existence of the WCC’s Constitution, with its particular *theological bias* and manifestly theological character; the propositions of the Statement and of the Constitution are mutually contradictory.

a. “Membership in the World Council does not imply the acceptance of a specific doctrine concerning the nature of Church unity”; “[t]he World Council cannot and should not be based on any one particular conception of the Church” (Toronto Statement).⁸

b. The “Purposes and Functions” of the WCC are “to call the Churches to the goal of visible unity” (Constitution [of the WCC], III.1).^{9, 10}

II. Invisible and visible unity

1. NOW, IS NOT the theology of the “invisible unity” of the Church—this supposedly existing unity, which aims, by means of



the ecumenical movement, in general, and of the WCC, in particular, to become “visible”—also included among the “specific doctrine[s] concerning the nature of Church unity” and “particular conception[s] of the Church”?

2. RECENTLY, the new General Secretary of WCC, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Kobia, in a very clear and official way, affirmed the *ecclesiological importance* of the theology of “invisible unity,” which forms the essential ecclesiological foundation of the ecumenical movement more broadly.

—On 16 June 2005, Dr. Kobia visited the new Pope, Benedict XVI; in the course of his formal salutation, he mentioned, *inter alia*, the “theme of unity,” in the presence of the Deputy General Secretary, Mr. Georgios Laimopoulos (Church of Constantinople), and also of Archbishop Makarios of Kenya (Church of Alexandria), a member of the Central Committee [of the WCC—*Trans.*]:

In baptism Christ has made us His own. In making us his own, Christ has bound each of us inseparably to Himself—and to each other. Because it is rooted not in us but in Christ, our bond of unity is unbreakable. We are one in Christ. May all Christians pray and work together, in order that that [*sic*] our unity may be visible for all the world to see!¹¹

3. THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL content of the theology of “invisible unity” is, therefore, quite evident: We Christians, regardless of dogmatic differences, “are,” according to Dr. Kobia, already “**one in Christ**”; “**Christ has made us His own**”; this “**bond of unity is unbreakable**”; our goal is that “**our unity may be visible.**”

—**This** “particular conception of the Church,” this “doctrine concerning the nature of Church unity,” has often been given expression, one way or another, by Protestants and Papists, but, unfortunately, also by Orthodox ecumenists, even though its syncretistic comprehensiveness is completely at odds with the exclusiveness of Orthodox ecclesiology and soteriology.

III. “Invisible Unity” and “Baptismal Theology”

1. **IN HIS** aforementioned statement, which expressed the *collective consciousness* of the *member-churches* of the WCC, its General Secretary, Pastor Samuel Kobia, founded the alleged “invisible unity” of Christians on “Baptism”; consequently, there exists an “invisible Church,” whose “limit” is “Baptism”; there exist “**baptismal limits in the Church,**” and there exists “**baptismal unity.**”¹²

In 1985, the now Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon (Church of Constantinople) set forth with complete clarity an inclusive “Baptismal theology,” which is a kindred form of the Protestant “Branch Theory,” asserting, indeed, that “**outside baptism there is no Church,**” whereas “**within baptism, even if there is a break, a division, a schism, you can still speak of the Church.**”¹³

2. **THE DIRECT** connection between “invisible unity,” which is supposed to become “visible,” and “Baptismal theology,” and their interdependence is so strong in the context of the ecumenical movement that it is promoted, in season and out of season, as the *Megale Idea* [Great Idea]¹⁴ of the ecumenists, who rush into successive *declarations* and *acts* of recognition of “baptism,” but prohibit “rebaptism.”

Apart from Dr. Kobia, who, in the aforementioned address at the Vatican, made mention also of a “mutual recognition of baptism among our member churches,”¹⁵ a large number of testimonies confirm beyond question that both the WCC and the ecumenical movement have a **clear ecclesiological identity and self-understanding**, which, however, bears no relation to the teaching of the Church Fathers.

3. **NEXT**, we will cite significant evidence in support of our critical conclusions and in order to demonstrate that there truly now exists a “broad ecumenical world family,”¹⁶ which, in May of 2005, the New Calendarist Archbishop Christodoulos called an “international brotherhood of Churches,” the members of which are already

engaged in a “common witness” and “fulfill together their common calling.”¹⁷

a. “The Church is one, unique, and united before the Triune God, in Whose Name all of its members are Baptized, thus attaining their justification, **regardless of the Confession to which they belong**, united with Christ and with each other in a single Body, which cannot be divided into a plurality of bodies” (Ioannes Karmires, 1973).¹⁸

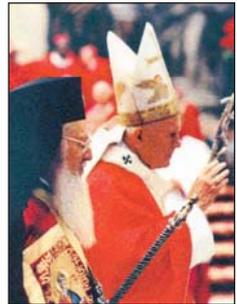
b. “As members of the body of Christ, we are already united by **our common baptism**” (Seventh General Assembly of the WCC, Canberra, 1991).¹⁹

c. “The theology of baptism is what unites us”; “in our search for **visible unity** we have taken too little from that **common baptism** in which we all share”; “baptism in the name of the Trinity unites us with God Himself and makes us members of his family” (Anglican Archbishop George Carey, Geneva, 1992).²⁰

d. “On each side [i.e., Orthodoxy and Papism] **it is recognized that what Christ has entrusted to His Church**—a profession of apostolic faith; participation in the same sacraments, above all; the one priesthood celebrating the one sacrifice of Christ; the apostolic succession of bishops—**cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our Churches**. In this context it is clear that **rebaptism must be avoided**” (Balamand Union, Lebanon, 1993).²¹

e. “The **Sacrament of Baptism**, which we have in common, represents ‘the sacramental bond of unity.’ The theological, pastoral, and ecumenical implications of our common Baptism are many and important”; “[T]he ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to **re-establish full visible unity among all the baptized**” (Pope John Paul II, 1995).²²

f. “We exhort our faithful, Catholic and Orthodox, to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood, which derives **from a single Baptism** and participation in the sacramental life...”; “[t]hey [the Pope and the Patriarch] included in



Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew solemnly entering St. Peter's Basilica, in the Vatican, to pray together at the Patronal Feast of Rome, 29 June 1995.

their prayers all those **incorporated into Christ on the basis of their Baptism...**" (Joint Communiqué of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew, Vatican, 1995).²³

g. It is necessary to accelerate the process "of restoring our full communion [of Orthodox and Papists], so that the approaching third millennium of the Christian era may find the **Church of God visibly united...**" (Metropolitan John [Zizioulas] of Pergamon, Vatican, 1998).²⁴

h. "The Orthodox and Catholic members of our Consultation acknowledge, in both of our traditions, a common teaching and a common faith in one baptism..."; "we also **recognize each other's baptism as one and the same**" (Agreed Statement, Crestwood, New York, 1999).²⁵

i. "Although ecclesiastical communion does not yet exist between our Churches [Orthodox and Protestant], we each **regard the other's members as baptized, and in the case of a change in confession, we refuse to undertake a new baptism.** The participants in the dialogue salute the efforts of the Churches in Germany (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen) **to reach agreement regarding a mutual recognition of Baptism**" (Joint Communiqué, Phanar, 2004).²⁶



j. "Baptism should be regarded as the **only real sacrament of unity**, which is recognized by both of the Churches [Protestant and Papist], in spite of their differences on dogmatic issues" (Statement by the German Lutheran Bishop Jürgen Johannesdotter, 2004).²⁷

k. The "Third European Ecumenical Assembly" (Sibiu, Romania, 4-8 September 2007), for which preparations are being made by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), will concern itself, *inter alia*, with the question of the "**visible unity of the Churches**" (Meeting of the Joint Commission of the CEC and the CCEE),²⁸ in continuity with the agreement reached at the "Second European Ecumenical Assembly" (Graz, Austria, 23-29 June 1997)²⁹ about dedication "to the unflagging pursuit of the goal of **visible unity**" and about exhorting "the churches [members of the CEC] to seek **to achieve mutual recognition of Baptism among**

all Christian Churches,” in anticipation, no doubt, of the “Charta Ecumenica” (signed in 2001).³⁰

IV. “Not alienated from God?”

1. IT IS quite evident that the ecclesiological foundations of the WCC, in particular, but also, more broadly, of the ecumenical movement, are the heretical theology of “invisible unity” and the equally heretical “theology of Baptism.”

2. AWARENESS of this awful reality fully justifies the ever-memorable Elder Justin (Popović; †1979), who very aptly characterized participation by the Orthodox in the WCC (as “organic members,” to boot!), and also their general stance towards ecumenism, in the following very severe terms: *slavish degradation, pitifully and dreadfully anti-traditional, an embarrassment, un-Orthodox, anti-Orthodox, apocalyptically horrendous, and an unprecedented betrayal!*³¹

3. NOW, how would one characterize a situation such as that today, when the ecumenists claim that their fall to ecumenism, issuing *joint proclamations* and undertaking *common service*, occurs at a pan-Orthodox level and by a pan-Orthodox synodal decision?

‘Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement has always been founded’ ‘on the decisions of the Holy Synods of the local Orthodox Churches, the Pan-Orthodox Consultations, such as the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation of 1986, and the gathering of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches at the Phanar in 1992.’³²

4. FINALLY, this awareness also justifies those Orthodox who are *walled-off in a God-pleasing manner* from the ecumenists, in the well-founded realization that the innovators are “alienated from God,” since they preach “another gospel” “than that [which we] have received”³³ from the Apostles, the Synods, and the Fathers, who teach us with absolute clarity:

Angels do not dare to alter a thing, and if they do alter something..., they do not remain unanathematized [Galatians 1:8-9]. And so, how can any man in the flesh who brings about changes and innovations, and especially such innovations as these, not be alienated from God?³⁴

11-12 November 2005 (Old Style)
Sts. Theodore the Studite
and John the Merciful

*Source: Ἅγιος Κυπριανός, No. 329 (November-December 2005), pp. 242-243; No. 330 (January-February 2006), pp. 266-269.

Notes

1. Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference, "I. Findings—II. Proposals," Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, No. 1577 (17 December 2004), p. 5b, §A2; Παρακαταθήκη, No. 38 (September-October 2004), p. 4b.
2. Andreas Theodorou, Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία Χθὲς καὶ Σήμερον [*Orthodoxy Yesterday and Today*] (Athens: Ekdoseis "Orthodoxos Typos," 1973), p. 21.
3. Konstantinos D. Mouratides, Οἰκουμενικὴ Κίνησις—ὁ σύγχρονος μέγας πειρασμὸς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας [*The Ecumenical Movement: The Great Contemporary Temptation of Orthodoxy*], 2nd ed. (Athens: Ekdoseis "Orthodoxos Typos," 1973), p. 28.
4. Basileios T. Stavrides and Evangelia A. Barellas, Ἱστορία τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κινήσεως [*History of the Ecumenical Movement*], 3rd ed. (Thessaloniki: Patriarchikon Hidryma Paterikon Meleton, 1996), pp. 121-122.
5. Great Protopresbyter Georgios Tsetses, Οἰκουμενικὰ Ἀνάλεκτα—Συμβολὴ στὴν Ἱστορία τοῦ Παγκοσμίου Συμβουλίου Ἐκκλησιῶν [*Ecumenical Gleanings: A Contribution to the History of the World Council of Churches*] (Katerine: Ekdoseis "Tertios," 1987), p. 21.
6. See note 4.
7. See note 5.
8. See <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/ts-e.html>. Accessed 22 May 2006.
9. Stavrides and Barellas, Ἱστορία τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κινήσεως, p. 370.
10. Tsetses, Οἰκουμενικὰ Ἀνάλεκτα, p. 114. "The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe" (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/con-e.html>. Accessed 22 May 2006).

11. "Address by Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, on the occasion of their meeting at the Vatican, June 16, 2005," §7 (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/kobiavatican2005.html>. Accessed 22 May 2006).
12. Professor John Zizioulas, "Orthodox Theology and the Ecumenical Movement," *Sourozh*, No. 21 (August 1985), p. 23.
13. *Ibid.*
14. The "Great Idea" was an ideology which flourished from the middle of the nineteenth century through the third decade of the twentieth century and which "envisaged the restoration of the Christian Orthodox Byzantine Empire, with its capital once again established in Constantinople, which would be achieved by incorporating within the bounds of a single state all the areas of Greek settlement in the Middle East" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).
15. "Address by Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia to Pope Benedict XVI," §5.4.
16. Petros Vasileiades (ed.), *Ἐκκλησιολογία καὶ Οἰκουμηνικὸς Διάλογος* [*Orthodox Theology and Ecumenical Dialogue*] (Athens: Ekdoseis "Apostolikes Diakonias," 2005), p. 383.
17. Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens, "Ἱεραποστολή καὶ Διάδοση τοῦ Εὐαγγελικοῦ Λόγου" ["Mission and Spreading the Gospel Message"] (Welcoming Address at the WCC's Thirteenth Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, 9-16 May 2005), *Ἐκκλησία* (May 2005), pp. 377, 378ab.
18. Ioannes Karmires, *Δογματικῆς Τμήμα Ε', Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησιολογία* [*Dogmatic Theology, Part V, "Orthodox Ecclesiology"*] (Athens: 1973), p. 241.
19. Georgios N. Laimopoulos (ed.), *Ἡ Ζ' Γενικὴ Συνέλευση τοῦ Παγκοσμίου Συμβουλίου Ἐκκλησιῶν, Καμπέρα—Φεβρουάριος 1991: Χρονικὸ, Κείμενα, Ἀξιολογήσεις* [*The Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, February 1991: Chronicle, Texts, Evaluations*] (Katerine: Ekdoseis "Ter-tios," 1992), p. 136.
20. "Anglican Leader Visits WCC, Meets Leaders of Ecumenical Bodies," *Ecumenical Press Service*, No. 16 (92.06.04).
21. "The Balamand Statement," §13, *Eastern Churches Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1 (Winter 1993-1994), p. 19.
22. Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, §§66, 77 (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html. Accessed 22 May 2006).
23. *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 520 (31 July 1995), p. 20.
24. "Chronicle of the Eastern Churches," *Eastern Churches Journal*, Vol. V, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p. 270.
25. "Baptism and 'Sacramental Economy': An Agreed Statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, Crestwood, New York, June 3, 1999," *Eastern Churches Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 111-112.
26. See "Annäherung im Taufverständnis zwischen EKD und griechisch-orthodoxer Kirche" ["Rapprochement in the Understanding of Baptism Between the EKD and the Greek Orthodox Church"] (http://www.ekd.de/orthodoxie/pmi83_2004_

- ekd_patriarchat_konstantinopol.html. Accessed 22 May 2006). (This document contains the communiqué of the “13th meeting in the bilateral theological dialogue between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, [which] took place between 16th to 22nd September 2004 on the subject of ‘God’s mercy and the salvation of the world’ in the Phanar, the headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul” [http://www.ekd.de/bulletin/bulletin4_2004_15.html]. Accessed 22 May 2006.)
27. *Ἐνημέρωσις* (Geneva), Vol. II, No. 6 (November-December 2004), p. 16b.
 28. *Ἐνημέρωσις* (Geneva), Vol. II, No. 1 (January-February 2005), p. 7b (for the original text, see “Im Sakrament der Taufe besteht die Einheit der Kirche schon jetzt” [“The Unity of the Church Already Exists in the Sacrament of Baptism”] [<http://www.velkd.de/aktuell/presse.php?id=334>]).
 29. “Ecumenism as an Ecclesiological Heresy,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (1999), pp. 13-14.
 30. With regard to the “Charta Oecumenica,” see: Nikolaos P. Vasileiades, *Πανθρησκευτικὸς Οἰκουμενισμὸς [Pan-Religious Ecumenism]* (Athens: Ekdoseis “Ho Soter,” 2002), pp. 9-32; Metropolitan Pavlos of Cyreneia, “Ἡ ‘Οἰκουμενικὴ Χάρτα’ ἀπὸ ὀρθοδόξου ἀπόψεως” [“The ‘Charta Oecumenica’ from an Orthodox Standpoint”], *Παρακαταθήκη*, No. 16 (January-February 2001), pp. 3-6; Archimandrite Georgios (Kapsanes), “Ἡ Οἰκουμενικὴ Χάρτα ὀρθοδόξως κρινομένη καὶ κατακρινομένη” [“The Charta Oecumenica Judged and Condemned from an Orthodox Perspective”], *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 1443 (25 January 2002), pp. 1, 5; *idem*, “Οἰκουμενικὴ Χάρτα” [“The Charta Oecumenica”], *Ὁ Ὅσιος Γρηγόριος*, No. 26 (2001), pp. 104-105; *Καθολικὴ*, No. 2934 (26 June 2001), p. 1; No. 2937 (11 September 2001), pp. 6, 7. For the full text of the “Charta Oecumenica,” see <http://www.ccc-kek.org/English/ChartaFinE.htm>. Accessed 22 May 2006.
 31. “Orthodoxy and Ecumenism: An Orthodox Appraisal and Testimony by Archimandrite Justin (Popović)” (http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theo_en/E3a4012Popovic.pdf. Accessed 22 May 2006).
 32. Protopresbyter Stephanos Abramides, “Οἱ Ἀξιώσεις (Desiderata) τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας ἔναντι τοῦ ΠΣΕ” [“The *Desiderata* of the Orthodox Church vis-à-vis the WCC”], *Ἐκκλησία*, No. 4 (April 2005), p. 307a.
 33. Cf. Galatians 1:6, 9.
 34. St. Theodore the Studite, “Epistle I,36, ‘To Evprepianos and Those With Him,’” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1033D.