

## ECUMENISM AND NEW AGE<sup>1</sup>

*New Age* is a global movement that claims that every 2000 years, humanity welcomes a new messiah who brings new truths to the world. Therefore (according to this theory) the Age of Christ and of Christianity is over and we now await the Messiah of the New Age (the Age of Aquarius), who at the same time will be a political leader who will unite humanity, but also a religious leader who will unite all religions<sup>2</sup>.

The so-called New Age movement primarily aims at: a) a New Order in the political-economic sector and b) a New Order in the religious arena. Globalisation<sup>3</sup> (about which we hear so many things) is explicitly linked to both of these goals. The “engineers” of the New Order aim at removing not only the borders of all countries and of their economies but also the borders of their cultures and religions (so that this union may become more certain and more permanent) by means of a cultural globalisation, namely of a cultural homogenisation and downward levelling (adoption of by-products of an American way of life).

On the other hand, *Ecumenism* or *Ecumenical Movement* are terms denoting the organised attempts that aim (according to the declarations of the architects of Ecumenism themselves) at the reunification of the separated Christians. The time frame within which this movement has so far operated has been the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly its second half. It should be important to note that already since the 1970s, the ecumenist vision and goals would not keep to the union of the Christian confessions (Orthodox, Papists, Protestants, ‘Anti-Chalcedonian’) but would spread to all world religions, starting from the so-called “monotheistic” ones (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) in order to expand upon the rest (Hinduism, Buddhism etc.) Thus, from an inter-Christian syncretism (for this is what it’s all about) we pass to an inter-religious syncretism. The declaration of former Patriarch Athenagoras, a dean of Ecumenism, is characteristic: “*with the unity of the Churches we walk towards a pan-humanity*”<sup>4</sup>; so is that of former Archbishop Iakovos of the GOA: “... *The WCC proceeds to the realisation of its goal through the blending of civilisation, religions and nations*”<sup>5</sup>.

In order to trace the close relationship between the above two phenomena, we need to focus our attention on a few basic beliefs of New Age that at the same time constitute determinant factors of Ecumenism.

We begin with the so-called **dogmatic pluralism**.

The **Theosophy** movement of Blavatsky, of Besant, of Bailey and of their successors, is the spiritual mother of New Age. With its religious syncretism, Theosophy places the foundations of a **pan-religion**. A basic dogma of Theosophy is: “No religion is above the truth”. All religions have grains of truth. No one particular religion has the whole truth. For this reason they must all contribute their share, so

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the first part of the excellent book *Ecumenism, Neo-Idolatry and New Age* by monk ARSENIUS VLIAGOFTIS, Doctorate in Theology, Bachelor in Philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the book *Modern Heresies – A real threat* by fr. ARSENIUS VLIAGOFTIS, ed. “Parakatatheke”, Thessalonica 2004, esp. the introductory article “Christians opposite ‘New Age’” (pp. 251-263).

<sup>3</sup> The question is not “why globalisation?” The question is “*what* globalisation?” A globalisation that would support Romanity’s way of life would certainly be welcome. – *Ed.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. article by fr. G. METALLINOS “The dialogues unmasked”, period. *Parakatatheke* t. 25, July – August 2002, p.8b

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit. p.9a

that each can enrich the other religions and also be enriched by them. Exactly this is the basic precondition behind the mounting of councils such as the "[Parliament of the World's Religions](#)" (Chicago, USA in 1893 and 1993 etc.; most recently in Melbourne, Australia 2009) but also behind meetings such as the one in Assisi, Italy in 1986, 1994, 2002 etc.

"All paths lead to God. Believe what you want; just don't be a one-way road": This is a different formulation of the aforementioned Theosophical—New Age dogma. This is the so-called dogmatic pluralism. We stress the first word: the word *dogmatic*. This means that pluralism is not the main issue at hand, namely the co-existence of different dogmas and faiths, but rather the fact that pluralism is raised to a dogma. Whoever doubts the truth of this dogma is characterised as a fanatic and is cast out!

The representatives of New Age are of the opinion that one should not make axiological criticisms on (i.e. measure the value of) the correctness, superiority or inferiority of the various religions, since all of them are equally valid religious traditions which are different simply due to historical and cultural reasons. Dogmatic pluralism is directly connected to the fundamental theory of New Age that there are no limits (cf. the fundamental message of "no limits" in advertising; there are no limits, no borders). Thus, according to the New Age preachers, good and evil are merely two sides of the same coin; in other words, the theory of yin and yang of Eastern religions. Dogmatic pluralism is also connected with another fundamental belief of various New Age groups: subjectiveness. "This is how it is, if this is what you think". By extension, this principle leads us to the basic dogma of neo-Satanism: "*Do what you want; this is the entire law*"<sup>6</sup>.

The spirit of the syncretistic pan-religion is perfectly expressed by the Hindu guru Swami Vivekananda in a speech he gave at the "First Parliament of the World's Religions" which took place in 1893 in Chicago, USA, that included a collection of programmatic statements for what was to follow years later. Among other things, he also said the following:

*"If someone in this audience hopes that this unity will come with the triumph of any one religion and the undoing of the others, to him I have nothing else to say but this: 'My brother, your expectations will be disconfirmed'. Perhaps I desire for the Christians to become Hindus? God forbid! Or maybe it is that I desire for the Hindus or the Buddhists to become Christians? God forbid!*

*... Christians must not become Hindus or Buddhists; nor should they become Christians. But every religion must absorb the spirit of the other religions, while keeping however its own distinctiveness, so that it can grow according to its own laws..."*<sup>7</sup>

Now pay attention to the following:

*"In the end, the large religious communities will not disappear. No one will have the upper hand. The Judaizers will stay as Judaizers. The Muslims will stay as Muslims; and those who belong to the large Eastern religions will remain as Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists. Africa will continue to express its own perception of the world; China will keep its spiritual inheritance. As before, people will continue to*

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<sup>6</sup> It was put forth by Aleister Crowley who called himself "The great beast". These days there is a (Greek) book in circulation that projects and beautifies his persona, published by "Archetypo", publishing house of the esoteric magazine *Avaton*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. periodical *Dialogos* of the "Inter-Orthodox Association of Parents' Initiative"

*travel from East to West, from North to South and yet remain inside the Kingdom of God without thus having become Christians in the first place, like we have*<sup>8</sup>!

This last excerpt is not from Vivekananda but was contained in the official “Guide” which circulated before the General Assembly of the “World Council of Churches” (WCC) in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983. It shows in what way and how much that seed which the Hindu guru had planted 90 years ago found fertile ground to grow, yielding now fruits among self-proclaimed Christians.

We need to add that statements such as the one of the aforementioned Hindu guru do not express the real beliefs of the preachers of syncretism. Preaching “unity in diversity” is bait that aims to trap unsuspecting Christians in Eastern religions and New Age. The “masters” of New Age view Christians with condescendence mixed with contempt, for they believe that Christians are found in a lower evolutionary level, that of the Age of Pisces which is coming to an end, whereas they are found in a higher evolutionary level, that of the Age of Aquarius, of the much-advertised New Age which now begins. The following words (also taken from the Hindu guru Vivekananda) signify his (and that his of colleagues’) **insincerity**.

The following excerpt (taken from a speech given on his return to India from the USA – after the conclusion of the First Assembly of the “Parliament of the World’s Religions” – to students at Madras, who cheered him by giving him a huge welcome) is both revealing and characteristic: *“This is the great ideal before us, and each one of us must arm themselves for it: India taking over the world; nothing less than this; and all of us must arm ourselves and stretch every nerve [of our body] towards this goal... Get up, India, and take over the world with your spirituality ... The thing that must capture the West is spirituality...”*<sup>9</sup>.

Let us now see how this same New Age dogma of dogmatic pluralism is expressed in statements of basic representatives of Ecumenism. One of them is by the Most Reverend Mr. Damascene (former bishop of Switzerland). Let us listen to him. *“All religions”,* he says, are *“set paths from God for the glory of God and the salvation of their followers”*<sup>10</sup>.

*“Deep down, a church or a mosque aims at the same spiritual fulfillment for man”*<sup>11</sup>.

*“True religious liberty does not stop at mere tolerance, but [beyond this tolerance] it also includes the establishment of a positive recognition of a foreign religion as a genuine ability to meet the Divine”*<sup>12</sup>.

Let us also listen to His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew. During the “World Conference on Religion and Peace” in Riva Del Garda of Italy (4 November 1994) he declared that *“all of us, we must contribute to the promotion of the spiritual principles of ecumenism, brotherhood and peace. However this will only happen if we are united in the spirit of the one God, “creator of all things visible and invisible”. Roman Catholics and Orthodox, Protestants and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians, the time has come not only for a rapprochement, but also for an alliance and for a collective effort that aims to lead people away from the false prophets of extremism and intolerance”*<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Newspaper *Christianity Today*, April 1984, p.12 (translation of the related excerpt taken from the periodical *Orthodox Life*, no.5/September-October 1987, p.31).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. period. *Dialogos*, op. cit. p.16

<sup>10</sup> Metropolitan of Switzerland DAMASCENE, *Λόγος Διαλόγου (Reason for a Dialogue)*, p.156

<sup>11</sup> (Metropolitan of Switzerland DAMASCENE), in *Orthodoxy and Islam*, ed. H.M. of Devout Gregory, 1997, p.17

<sup>12</sup> Metropolitan of Switzerland DAMASCENE, in per. *Επίσκεψις (Visitation)*, p.426/1.10.1989,p.6

Similar views have been expressed by the deceased (*Ed* – he suddenly died on 23 July 1996 from a heart attack) Patriarch Parthenius of Alexandria and All Africa (†1996): “For me, the matter of figuring out whether Islam is a [divinely] inspired religion or not is non-existent: it is, of course, inspired ... Muhammad was a man of God, who made the Arabs of the desert to believe in the one God, able to pray, to fast and to love their neighbours and to work for the good. And that is a good thing”<sup>14</sup>.

Also: “Through the *Qur’an*, Islam speaks about Christ, about the Panaghia; so we too must speak about Muhammad with courage and boldness; to see His history and offer, His preaching of the one God, and the life of His disciples, who are disciples of the one God”<sup>15</sup>.

Professor Savvas Agourides (well-known for his views) would declare – after the commencement of his participation during the Second Conference of the “Conference of the World’s Religions” (San Francisco, 1990), which is one of the many organisations of the Korean false messiah Sun Myung Moon – that: “what it is that we have ‘real need of’ here in Greece, is an objective knowledge of Islam and of Judaism... These people are ... our neighbours and we must realise ... that we have a responsibility to get to know the religious tradition of our neighbours ...and to accept them as equals and similar to us”<sup>16</sup>.

And: “Judaism and Islam must become accepted by the Orthodox as equals and similar to Orthodoxy; and Buddhism, evidently other religions as well, constitute religious phenomena analogous to Orthodoxy”<sup>17</sup>(!)

The supporters of this view believe that there is one common God who is expressed in the various religions under different names and that we must “respect the God of our neighbour” (!)

According to the aforementioned syncretistic views, the various religions constitute **legal expressions of the religious phenomenon**. This view accepts that Christ is present in all religions outside Christianity and **considers the Holy Spirit as “the common denominator of all the religions”**<sup>18</sup>.

This novel theory was proclaimed in the most official possible manner during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in the Declarations of *Gaudium et spes*<sup>19</sup>, and particularly in the *Nostra Aetate*<sup>20</sup> “[on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions](#)”. According to the Pope, all religions are formed as concentric circles. Chiefly however, the Second Vatican Council declared that the three large monotheistic religions, as they call them (Christianity, Judaism and Islam), believe in the same God. This opening of the Vatican<sup>21</sup> to the world’s religions is immediately

<sup>13</sup> Cf. period. *Visitation*, no 511/30.11.1994, p.28 The entire speech of the Patriarch in English is published in the periodical *Ορθοδοξία* (*Orthodoxy*), issue October – December 1994, pp. 747-754

<sup>14</sup> In the collective tome *You Shall Be My Witness*, redaction and publication by G. Laemopoulos, ed. “Tertios”, Katerini 1993, p. 19

<sup>15</sup> Periodical Πάντανος (*Pantaenus*), no 1/January – April 1991, p.59

<sup>16</sup> Fr. ANTHONY ALEVIZOPOULOS, *Meditation or Prayer? An Orthodox approach*, (in Gk) Athens 1993, p.235

<sup>17</sup> Fr. ANTHONY ALEVIZOPOULOS, *ibid.* p.236

<sup>18</sup> This is an example of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit – *Ed*

<sup>19</sup> Joy and Hope – *Ed*

<sup>20</sup> In our age – *Ed*

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to read [fr. George Pap’s](#) revelation on the matter: “‘Today we have a new method’, explained Father Gabriel Savici, a lecturer at the Institute. Looking around the room, he continued, ‘Is your Orthodox colleague here? No! Fine, I can then interpret it honestly. Today, we are following the ecumenical method and we are against conversions. So, if one day, your Orthodox colleague came to me and told me that he had been converted by the wisdom and the righteousness of Catholicism, I would still refuse **and** advise him to return to Constantinople and to rise up through the ranks of the hierarchy. And when he reaches the highest level then, in my opinion, he should become a Roman

followed with full unity and close cooperation by the Protestants through the WCC but also by the Orthodox ecumenists. 1971 is a milestone as regards the inter-Christian “opening moves” of the WCC. In fact, the non-Christian religions are now (openly) called as “living faiths” and “living ideologies”.

Thus, bilateral and multilateral dialogues and meetings begin to emerge after the Second Vatican Council, leading to another milestone: the First Meeting of Assisi (1986), where representatives of all the religions gathered under the pope (named “religious world leader number 2”<sup>22</sup>) and prayed together for world peace. The so-called “spirit of Assisi” that was inaugurated there will continue to grow with ever-increasing syncretistic “opening moves” towards the world’s religions all the way to the present. Characteristic opening moves related to this spirit (which is not, of course, the Holy Spirit) are declarations made by the WCC where members of this Ecumenist Council express the need – as they say – to move beyond a theology that makes salvation dependent only upon Jesus Christ. They also declare that the same Spirit of God speaks in different traditions using different names, such as e.g. Sechina in the Judaic tradition, Holy Spirit to the Christians, Atman to the Hindus and Sikhs, Ruach (HaKodesh) to the Moslems!

We spoke of dogmatic pluralism. In reality, this is a great lie of New Age for it does not tolerate any different opinion even though it preaches pluralism on a theoretical level.

In this we find another common element between New Age and Ecumenism. While they supposedly teach tolerance, nevertheless they accuse anyone who may doubt their syncretistic model, i.e. dogmatic pluralism, as a fanatic. The tactics that they follow against those who exercise critique is defamation at first of the person calling him a fanatic. The attempt to ridicule him (they present the other person as a “quaint” character) and shutting him out come next. If he continues to bother them, they mobilise other means, such as threats. It is characteristic to note that in 2002, the US Congress prohibited every characterisation of the other ideologies and particularly of the religious groups as heretics and other similar expressions<sup>23</sup>.

We spoke about the lie of dogmatic pluralism, namely of the pluralism which reduces to a dogma. What however is a painful truth is **dogmatic minimalism**. In other words, the union of the “Christians” first and of all the religions next is aimed at being achieved based upon a minimum, a smallest possible number of confessions<sup>24</sup>. This way, though, Ecumenism denies the Gospel and the Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

## TACTICS USED TO ACHIEVE UNION

Let us now look closely at the inter-religious meetings and dialogues. We should first note that it would be more accurate to call them inter-religious meetings rather than inter-religious dialogues, since during these so-called “dialogues” we do not have mere dialogues or scientific talks (as would be the case e.g. in a scientific conference on religious science) but something much more, which is exactly what renders these “dialogues” problematic and harmful for the Church. In these meetings, syncretism is cultivated; and this syncretism relativises the evangelical truth<sup>25</sup>.

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*Catholic with his flock!*” – Ed

<sup>22</sup> Named such by the (foreign-controlled) Greek Press; “number 1” being the US President. – Ed

<sup>23</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.12a

<sup>24</sup> Or should we say concessions! – Ed

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Memorandum on Ecumenism*, ed. “Parakatatheke”, Thessalonica 2004, p.11

If we wish to search deeper, we shall find that the model for union that is presupposed and promoted by these inter-religious meetings is **anthropocentric** (humanist). Their prospect is fully centred on in-world materialism. Their aim (which not only is it not hidden but is openly proclaimed whenever the opportunity to do so arises) is for all religions, for all religious people around the world, to give a common witness “for the good of the world”, to get together in order to face (as they claim) atheism, materialism, war, terrorism, the pollution of the environment etc. The expression that the Ecumenical Patriarch uses in such meetings is characteristic. He speaks about “the people of religion”; about those “who believe in God”, whom he also praises<sup>26</sup>. Consequently, we have gone from a community of believers in Christ to a multi-religious community of believers. The thing that matters in this case is to believe in someone (or something); not **to whom** you believe in. Of course, there are those who believe in Satan or in their divine Self<sup>27</sup>. The latter belief is in fact the motto *par excellence* of New Age.

Unfortunately, the Orthodoxy that is represented in the inter-religious dialogues and meetings through Assisi-style common prayers is a secularised Orthodoxy. This can be clearly seen if we examine both the orientation taken and the methodology followed in these meetings.

As regards the **orientation** that these dialogues take (fully centred in the world, following a materialistic perception), the following statements are characteristic. The first belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew and refers to the inter-Christian dialogues specifically. We read: “*Within the political and economic sectors, the co-existence of European nations who belong to both Churches [note: he refers to the Orthodox Church and to the papist parachurch] will surely contribute to a greater rapprochement with each other and will help towards the restoration of the unity that existed before the schism*”<sup>28</sup>. And fr. Metallinos comments: “*The secular factors are mobilised in order to secure the internal, clearly ecclesiastical, preconditions [for union]...*”<sup>29</sup> The second statement belongs to the former bishop of Switzerland Mr. Damascene. He writes: “*The ‘planetary civilisation’ that is being gestated in our days has the need of both one and the other [he means the Christian and the Moslem perceptions on Man]; it necessitates the enlistment of our ultimately common humanist ideals*”<sup>30</sup>.

For the accomplishment of the dialogues’ aims, a completely secular **methodology** is adopted. Chiefly from the side of the Vatican, but also from the side of the powerful Protestants, we have met a “*cultivation of personal relationships and a climate of (secular) friendship between the theologians with all the available means at their disposal, but also the provision of financial support ... in order to deaden and to eliminate every disposition favourable to providing a witness or a confession [of faith]*”<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. periodical *Visitation*, no.490/31.3.1993, p.6 *Ed*: We should also not forget the distinction between religion and *thriskia* cf. <http://www.oodegr.com/english/thriskies/genika/ennoial.htm>

<sup>27</sup> When Harry secretly trains the young wizards and witches to defend themselves against Dark Magic (using ... Magic of course; as it happens in real life between those under the control of magic, as this is how the devil exploits people and keeps them under his influence) in the film “*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*”, he tells everyone that what is lacking is that they needed to believe in themselves. – *Ed*

<sup>28</sup> Newspaper *Kathimerini*, 16.6.2002

<sup>29</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.7b

<sup>30</sup> Cf. periodical *Visitation*, no.426/1.10.1989, p.8

<sup>31</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.8a

This way, the tactics of **infiltration**, **erosion** and **capture** of our own area from within are adopted together with the tactic of gradual **deformation** of the mindset and ethos of the Orthodox faithful.

We also find the method of **enforced guidance**. This has been flatly mentioned outright by His Grace the bishop of Achaia Mr. Athanasius, head of the office of the State Church of Greece in the European Union situated in Brussels. Going against the decision of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece who asked him not to participate in the inter-religious meeting that the pope had convened in Assisi of Italy in January 2002 (Assisi III), he stated: “[our effort is] *to prepare the world, to instruct them, so that they do not react* [he means: to the dialogues]; *to shape* [he means: to guide] *the people’s conscience*”<sup>32</sup>.

In general (as fr. G. Metallinos observes) the methodology followed during the course of the inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogues coincides with the Masonic methodology “*of transcending every ideology and faith in order to achieve unity; and in fact [unity] under the ruler of this world*”<sup>33</sup>.

## THE RESULTS

But what are the results of the various inter-religious meetings and dialogues that have taken place since the 1970s?

These meetings presupposed the altered (denatured) and secularised mindset of those who had set them up in the first place. In turn, these meetings and dialogues tend to shape a new “**inter-religious ethos**”. Dogmatic minimalism and the blunting of orthodox criteria have dangerously expanded in the ecclesiastical body, particularly in Diaspora areas<sup>34</sup>, with the emergence of an ever-increasing danger of transforming the Church into a “humanist religious club”.

As the professor of the Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessalonica (A.U.T.) fr. Theodore Zisis observes, on the occasion of the pan-religious meeting in Assisi in January of 2002, “*Assisi is regression; it takes us back to the times before Christ; it is the Galilee of the Gentiles, the land of Zebulon and the land of Nephilim, where according to the Holy Scriptures many religions and many civilisations would meet; a pan-religious and multicultural model, like the one being built today by the leaders of the New Age who use the Vatican as its driving force and the pope as the world’s religious leader*”<sup>35</sup>.

The result is that from the much-advertised inter-religious cooperation for the solution to the various social problems, we have reached the point of inter-religious syncretism, viz. the recognition of all religions as paths and ways to man’s salvation and to the worship of the same god. Already the demand for a “Universal Council of Religions” is being projected.

A characteristic example of how far inter-religious syncretism (which is being promoted **institutionally** – this is important) can go, is a 32-page document drafted by the “Conference of European Churches” (CEC), to which we Orthodox also

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<sup>32</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.11a

<sup>33</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.12a

<sup>34</sup> The term Diaspora is disliked by some Western Orthodox proponents (e.g. Frederica-Mathewes Green) although there is nothing condescending or insulting about it; it merely refers to the historical scattering of Orthodox in traditionally non-Orthodox countries. Hence, it is a far more accurate term to use when relating aspects of smaller numbers, uncanonical overlapping and so forth to difficulties present in these areas due to e.g. Ecumenism; particularly when one does not wish to refer to a specific jurisdiction or non-Orthodox country. – *Ed.*

<sup>35</sup> Newspaper *Orthodox Press* (*Ορθόδοξος Τύπος*), 8.2.2002

participate, that promotes the common prayers between Christians and Moslems in the same family, provided the spouses belong to these two religions! In fact, it gives model examples of common prayers utilising eating together and other family functions as opportunities to do so<sup>36</sup>.

The spirit which has dominated both the General Assemblies of the WCC (reaching its apex in the Seventh General Assembly in Canberra) as well as the inter-religious meetings of the past few years has been strongly animistic, i.e. pagan.

A characteristic example is an event for the environment that took place in November of 2000 in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, on the occasion of the 39<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) in cooperation with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), where representatives of eleven religions “offered sacred gifts to the Earth”. The Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew was present and he took part in the proceedings. He was the chief spokesperson and introducer to the conference and he offered a monastic plot of land in the area of the Dodecanese islands in Greece as a “sacred gift to the Earth”.

As the related Press release mentions, a collection of 26 “sacred gifts” were offered to planet Earth during the course of the ceremony “Journey to Kathmandu: Sacred Gifts to the Living Planet”. The King of Nepal Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Der, who is considered to be the incarnation of the Hindu false god Vishnu, announced the start of this special ceremony through the lighting of a traditional lamp. We should note that ceremonial lighting of small lanterns had taken place in Assisi III in 2002, but also in Assisi II. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and President of WWF International, received 26 different “sacred gifts” from the representatives of most mainstream confessions and church leaders from around the world, who symbolically offered gifts to “Mother Earth” during the course of the ceremony. On the first day of the proceedings, a ceremonial event took place in accordance with the religious rubric of the Sindoists (a ritual), during which the related Sindoist “blessings” to nature and men were given. In the afternoon of the same day, “blessings” were given according to the Zoroastrian rubric and afterwards the WWF conferred prizes to those who had contributed to the preservation of the environment<sup>37</sup>.

Turning once again our attention to the inter-Christian meetings and dialogues, we need to say that they have led to the Uniate recognition of Papism as a Church in the full sense of the word<sup>38</sup>. A “sister Church”, as a matter of fact<sup>39</sup>! A milestone in this road to recognition was the well-known Balamand agreement (1993). Already since 1971, as the late Patriarch Athenagoras<sup>40</sup> had revealed, his like-minded

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. [www.cec-kek.org](http://www.cec-kek.org) and [www.ccee.ch](http://www.ccee.ch). Ed: For the corresponding inter-Christian model, Fr. Charles Joanides provides the corresponding Ecumenist positions in *Orthodox Observer* (GOA, December 2009). See also [www.interfaith.goarch.org](http://www.interfaith.goarch.org) for more information.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. periodical *Parakatatheke*, t. 15 (Nov. – Dec. 2000) pp. 13-14 See also Archimandrite ASTERIOS S. CHADJINICOLAOU, *Orthodoxy in the tempest of modern syncretism*, ed. Brotherhood of Theologians “*Ο Σωτήρ*” (*The Saviour*), Athens 2002, pp.38-39 (Gk)

<sup>38</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.5a

<sup>39</sup> As a reminder to the reader: According to Orthodox Ecclesiology, if Papism is a sister Church then it is *the* True Church of Christ, since every local Church is *the* Catholic (= entire) Church and therefore *the* Orthodox Church too. – Ed.

<sup>40</sup> We should probably state here openly that Patriarch Athenagoras had definitely been a Freemason. Apart from the fact that Freemasons officially accept him as their brother, with evidence presented in fr. Vassilopoulos’ book on Ecumenism, we also know that they are not lying because *Orthodox Press* has published in the past photocopies of monetary contributions to his local Lodge. One way or another, Athenagoras is not someone to inspire us on matters of faith, and may God rest his soul. It is interesting however to note that the Ecumenists have a *Patriarch Athenagoras* prize today. Dare we ask why? – Ed.

proponents of Ecumenism would give Holy Communion to Papists and Protestants alike in the USA, in the UK and in France<sup>41</sup>.

## THE OBJECTIONS

Among the objections that one could bring against the commencement of the inter-religious dialogues in the way these are conducted today are the following:

1. There is a **lack of informing**. Not only the laity, but neither the clerics nor even our Orthodox bishops do they become informed on what goes on in these meetings and what decisions are taken. The topics discussed and the other matters pertaining to the dialogues are controlled by a few “technocrats of the dialogues” who in most cases I’m afraid that they do not express the ecclesiastical body and its self-conscience.
2. There is a **lack** of an essential (not “typical” or “formal”) **synodicity**. The participation of the Orthodox Churches in the inter-religious dialogues was decided in (**Pre-Conciliar**) Pan-Orthodox Conferences in Rhodes, Greece (1961, 1963 and 1964) and in Chambésy, Switzerland (1968 and 1976). As it was stated, these decisions will be placed under the judgment of a forthcoming Great Synod of the Orthodox Church (i.e. of a Pan-Orthodox Synod of Ecumenical Status). However, inter-religious syncretism rides hard (towards unification) without waiting for the Great Synod. After all, the critique that had been exercised by the ever-memorable professor John Carmiris on the manner that decisions would be taken during the course of the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference that took place in Rhodes (to which he personally took part) is well-known: both during the Third and during the other remaining Pre-Conciliar Conferences, the resulting decisions were not taken using transparent procedures but were practically imposed<sup>42</sup>.
3. The recognition of the other religions as paths to salvation results in the essential **abolition of the *kerygma* of repentance**, since truth and delusion can co-exist in harmony. This in turn results in the essential **abolition of holy mission (*hierapostole*)**, since in place of the *kerygma* of repentance we face the “great idea” of the common witness of the religions that aims, as they claim, at “serving man”.
4. Since those who (allege to) speak for the Orthodox in the dialogues end up pardoning Islam and the other religions, would it not be consistent on their behalf to also pardon – much more so, in fact – the ancient Christian heresies? Since we pardon Muhammad, why not pardon Arius or Macedonius etc.? Of course, the modern

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<sup>41</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.6b

<sup>42</sup> Archimandrite SPYROS BILALIS, *Orthodoxy and Papism*, tome II, p.360 (Gk)

heresies of Papism and Protestantism have already been pardoned, since they are considered to be “sister Churches”.

5. In the course of these dialogues, as well as in the inter-religious dialogues, the discussions centre around what unites us and not what divides us<sup>43</sup>. **The “uniting” topics, not the “dividing” ones.** As fr. Epiphanius Theodoropoulos of blessedness would note, when commenting to our dialogue with the papists, the methodology used and the thematic base of the subjects of discourse were insidious. During the course of the Ecumenical Synods (but also during the course of any dialogue between opposing sides) those matters that would divide us would be placed under discussion – after all that is the reason they were having a dialogue in the first place – and not those that would unite us.

### IS THERE A PLAN?

It appears however that there is a plan behind the insidious methodology used in the dialogues. The spiritual mother of New Age Alice Bailey, third-in-line President of the “Theosophical Society” (died in 1949), had (already since 1947) talked extensively in her book “[Problems of Humanity](#)” (pp. 102-137) on the need for the cooperation of religions for the emergence of the “new universal religion”, whose arrival – according to Bailey – “nothing can stop”<sup>44</sup>.

As everyone can easily deduce, the inter-religious dialogues, in the manner these are carried out, do not correspond to a “self-sown”, spontaneous, natural search for the ecclesiastical body<sup>45</sup>, or to a “loving outlet towards the others”, in order for us to (be in a position to attempt to) give a witness of Christ, but they are practices which are imposed from those above and from without. The fact that there is an attempt to use the religions in order to serve other expedencies (political, geo-strategic, New Order), and specifically in order to police the planet according to the interests of those in power around the world, can be seen more clearly after the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 in the USA<sup>46</sup>. In this context, we find an association with other activities that operate in parallel with other organisations and public media (e.g. inter-religious ecological symposia etc.)

At this point we need to stress a few points, which also substantiate the opinion that there is a deeper relationship between New Age and Ecumenism.

The inter-religious meetings (Assisi I, II and III) are summoned by the would-be religious world leader the pope or by the Ecumenical Patriarch; but they are also placed under the aegis of a powerful centre of political authority which promotes globalisation and New World Order, such as the European Union. For instance, this is exactly what happened with the three inter-religious ecological conferences which had been realised under the aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew but also of the Presidents of the European Commission Santer initially and Prodi later. Often, outstanding factors of the international political scene are present at these meetings,

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<sup>43</sup> The same holds for advice on inter-Christian and interfaith marriage: “*After marriage, try to avoid making your religious differences the central topic of your discussions whenever the topic of religion comes up. Instead, focus on the commonalities your religious traditions share with one another*”. (Fr. Charles Joanides, *ibid.* p.12) – *Ed*

<sup>44</sup> ALICE BAILEY, *Problems of Humanity*, p.115

<sup>45</sup> E.g. an inner genuine need for the non-Orthodox participants to seek once and for all where Christ’s Body lives. – *Ed*

<sup>46</sup> Fr. GEORGE METALLINOS, *The dialogues...*, p.10b

particularly from the USA and the EU. After all, the vivid interest of the foreign US policies on the promotion of an inter-religious cooperation in the name of confronting international terrorism is well-known.

Furthermore, as we read in a related release by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew went to Brussels “*in response to an invitation by the President of the European Commission Mr. Romano Prodi to discuss the course of the inter-religious dialogue between Christians, Jews and Moslems and [to support] its continuation*”.<sup>47</sup>

When current PM of Greece Mr. George Papandreou<sup>48</sup> used to be Head of Foreign Office, his cabinet had been intensely involved in organising and funding inter-religious meetings.

This happened primarily with the inter-religious meeting that the Ecumenical Patriarchate convoked in Brussels in December 2001, only a few months after the fall of the twin towers in New York. It should be noted that on the occasion of that fall, quite a few inter-religious common prayers took place for the victims of the twin towers (especially in the USA).

### **OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES: OBVIOUS QUESTIONS THAT ARISE AND COMMENTS**

We shall now attempt to reply to certain excuses promoted on the side of the Orthodox ecumenists in order to justify the ecumenist opening moves.

1. At first, the following view is presented: “**We are having a dialogue; we are not betraying our faith**”. The truth however is that not only do we have dialogues but common prayers too. That common prayers take place is not something hypothetical but can be proven from the facts. This also happens between us and the papists both in the context of the WCC meetings but also within the framework of Assisi-style gatherings.

In order to convince even the most sceptic reader, we present a rule of common prayer in the way that took place during the inter-religious meeting of Assisi in January 2002. The Christians<sup>49</sup> prayed together in Assisi at the lower Basilica of Saint Francis. The allodox were granted other areas for prayer. After the Entry of the Gospel, the pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch blessed the incense together. Two deacons (one papist and one Orthodox) incensed. The pope intoned the “Blessed is the Kingdom...” from the Liturgy. Readings from the Holy Writ were read, entreaties (i.e. liturgical Petitions) were chanted for peace and the common prayer ended with a common recitation of the Lord’s Prayer “Our Father...”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Wall calendar of the year 2003, ed. Ecumenical Patriarchate, month: November

<sup>48</sup> He is the son of the notorious late Andreas Papandreou. It appears that when the foreign-controlled government of New Democracy proved insufficient to support Western interests in the matter of Macedonia and AMBO, it fell and “little George”, as he is often called, came to power. The first thing he did when he became PM was to remove the name “Macedonia” from the old cabinet of Macedonia and Thrace. Now it is clear that he will also attempt to make changes to Greece’s contract with the AMBO pipeline in order to support US interests in the area. However, for us what matters is that the issue of the name “Macedonia” is intricately related to Romanity and this aspect is of direct importance to our understanding of the difficulties that Orthodox countries face in the Balkans. It also explains why certain US professors may support the name “Macedonia” for the Skopje regime against the obvious historical truth and why it falls to the hands of organisations such as AHEPA to defend the Roman position. Give us the oil money, fight with each other, and do not remind yourselves that you used to be Romans. Money talks; but God watches... – Ed

<sup>49</sup> The term here is used in the ‘generic’ sense of ‘Orthodox and non-Orthodox’. – Ed

The ecumenists also claim: “We do not talk about dogma (about matters of faith) but we talk about matters of a purely practical nature”. The answer to this is that dogma and ethos are connected. Their dissociation is a symptom of secularisation.

2. We also find the excuse that all these things (dialogues, meetings) take place because “**this is what the times demand**”. They claim that our age is the age of dialogue; we cannot deny having dialogues. Of course, the Church has never refused and she does not refuse having a dialogue with all those who ask to do so in a well-meaning manner. Pastoral dialogue, particularly on a personal level, with those who wish to learn Orthodoxy, heterodox and allodox alike, always was and is within the priorities of Orthodox pastors, those of course who are able to respond to such an undertaking. The problem is that present-day inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogues do not fall under this category but are enforced from without and from above, as we already mentioned before.

Certain questions arise effortlessly: Who are those who (allege to) represent the Orthodox Church in these dialogues and what mindset (*phronema*) are they driven by? What are the criteria and the presuppositions based upon which the dialogues will be conducted? Are they Orthodox or could it be that they have been adulterated? Do they serve expediencies or do they not?

Since for us Orthodox Christians the Church is authentically expressed through her Saints, we should examine what her Saints did in analogous circumstances. The holy apostles and martyrs did not set up inter-religious conferences with the representatives of their era’s religions. On the contrary, they were dragged to the courts of the lawless ones because they insisted in confessing that salvation exists **only** in Jesus Christ. Why should we act any different today? Is it perhaps the case that we are wiser or perhaps more holy than the holy martyrs were?

Saint Gregory Palamas – whose name the present-day participants in the dialogues from the Orthodox side are wrong to appeal to – would converse with the Ottoman Turks under conditions of harsh captivity and yet he did not hesitate – putting his life in danger – to say the truth and to criticise their *plani* (delusion). Do

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<sup>50</sup> Of course, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The interested reader may watch the following series of *YouTube* videos on what takes place during the Ecumenist meetings with a **serious warning** that the people who present these videos are often Zealotists and/or Conspiracy Theorists. As regards the former, Zealotism is at the antipodes of Ecumenism; so it is not surprising to see this situation. Thus we often meet Zealotists exploiting the problem of Ecumenism in order to present their Old Calendarist and other fallacies as valid; and for the latter, the Ecumenists, but also other enemies of the Church e.g. the Press (cf. December 2009 edition of *National Geographic* about Mount Athos), to exploit the presence of Zealotism in order to present any Orthodox who disagrees with them as a Zealotist so they can continue their work. Conspiracy Theorists usually touch upon some real issue but live in half-truths and fantasies. They are a great asset to the New Order because whenever you even use the term New Order they ridicule you, pointing to the Conspiracy Theorists. We should also point out that these videos mention the names of some clergy who participated in the ecumenist symposia with the aim of spilling their image. That is most certainly improper, for we do not know who went there to do what. E.g. both fr. Romanides of blessed memory and fr. Metallinos (who fought against Ecumenism) have gone to such meetings not to pray of course but to see if they can provide any help. It would be unfair and sinful to call them Ecumenists for this. On the other hand, those priests and hierarchs who openly participate in common prayers and even ritual ceremonies are and can be called as Ecumenists. The following videos are by some Greek Zealotists, it appears. You only need to have a quick look at the videos, since no translation is actually required; it all speaks for itself...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEZOVClpu8Q> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nZV7XbBW5s&feature=related> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4PDkoS3c6Q&feature=related> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9w0MG5Zb2ME&feature=related> – Ed

we speak the truth today? Do we give a witness of Jesus Christ crucified or do we associate with the secular spirit of this world?

At any rate, the argument brought that “this is what the times demand” is not theological but *kosmiko* (secular). The Church’s accommodation to every era’s reality as well as how she manages to utilise the era’s available potential and its new capabilities are always measured by an important precondition and criterion: not to alter, not to adulterate the content of her teaching. This way we find that there are certain **boundaries** set, beyond which she cannot and she must not proceed to push forward. Our main problem today is that we ourselves do not respect these boundaries.

3. It is well-known that the powerful world rulers put pressure for a religious unification in the context of the devastating globalisation that levels everything in its path. But it is in this that our ethical and spiritual quality and our love for Christ will show how many “carats” our “gold” is worth. Was it the case that during the years of the Turkish oppression and slavery we had less pressure than we have today? Then we had the gallows, which we do not have to face today. Why then did the Orthodox not surrender in those times to the pressures exerted and today we must give in? Why should we also not follow the example of saints such as Maximus the Confessor or Gregory Palamas? Why should we alter what they handed down to us? Could it be that we are more holy or wiser than they are? The question that inexorably comes to our lips is this: Why did the Church not adopt these practices for 2000 years now? Why did the holy apostles and the martyrs through the centuries not set up inter-religious meetings and conferences with the representatives of the religions of their era instead of being dragged to the tyrants’ courthouses to face martyrdom?

Would there be any Orthodoxy left today had the saints of ages past and present applied the modern practice of inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogues? Were the saints not interested in the good of mankind, in peace or in cooperation? After all, let the proponents of the dialogues tell us: how many heterodox and allodox have approached and converted to Orthodoxy through these meetings and these dialogues? The answer is: not one! Those who become Orthodox today in traditionally heavily non-Orthodox populated areas become so either because they came to know some God-inspired Elder or because they read some book such as the “Philokalia”; and not because they had been inspired by the dialogues. The prevailing spirit in the inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogues not only does it not help but it even prevents someone from becoming Orthodox. We present the witness of a US citizen, former Protestant Frank Schaeffer, who became an Orthodox. He writes: “*The wave of the recent protestant proselytes did not come to the Church thanks to their kind attempts at “dialogue” but thanks to the eternal patristic and apostolic witness.*”<sup>51</sup>

4. Because the attempt to promote inter-Christian and inter-religious syncretism often puts on the cloak of love, we must underline that the patristic stance (which adheres to the truth of the faith and tells the truth to those outside the Church with pain, love and discernment) is precisely the charitable stance *par excellence*, for essentially it helps the deluded person come to knowledge and repentance, whereas the other stance (the humanist and agapological one) leaves him helpless in his illness.

After all, true love, which is fruit of the Holy Spirit, always walks together with the Truth, Christ Himself; otherwise we are not talking about true love or truth.

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<sup>51</sup> FRANK SCHAEFFER, *Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religion*, from Gk transl. by Archimandrite Augustine of Myra, ed. “Makriyiannis”, Kozani 2000, p.506

The peaceful coexistence in a multicultural and multi-religious society is not secured by damaging downfalls from the Truth. Professor Stylianos Papadopoulos rightly observes: “*It appears*”, he says, “*that the ultimate goal, the thing that matters most to the Ecumenical Movement today, in whose bosom we find various Dialogues conducted, is tolerance. This however is not a genuine Christian virtue, a genuinely positive measure. It is only a human measure. The divine measure here, the Christian virtue is love, which is the only one able to transcend the boundaries of hatred and disdain. To the detriment of the Ecumenical Movement, however, which today absorbs tremendous spiritual powers, love cannot ever be one of its achievements since love depends only on truth; it is born only out of truth. Only the ones who fight for the revealed truth; only the ones who live the truth with consistency; these only are in a position to actualise the virtue of love.*”<sup>52</sup>

## UNYIELDING QUESTIONS PLACED WITH LOVE AND PAIN OF HEART

After all we have presented in brevity, in our attempt to present such a huge topic of such great importance, we place the following questions to those who follow the dead end of syncretistic inter-Christian or inter-religious Ecumenism:

1. If there is a possibility for salvation “in someone else too”, namely a possibility for theosis outside Christ, then what was the point of the revelation in Christ? For what reason was Christ inhumanized, crucified, risen and became the founding cornerstone of the Ecclesia if Buddha and Muhammad can also save man?
2. If the so-called monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) have a common Father, then was Saint Cyprian of Chalcedon, who expresses the teaching of the entire Orthodox Ecclesia through the ages when he writes that “*the one who does not have the Ecclesia as his Mother cannot have God as his Father*”<sup>53</sup>, wrong?<sup>54</sup>
3. Is it lawful for the Ecumenists to appeal to the holy Canons of our Church selectively? Can they invoke the Canons when they deal with matters of jurisdiction (in other words *exousia*, power) and to ignore the holy canons that expressly forbid common prayers?<sup>55</sup>
4. In the end, since the Ecumenists themselves confess the tragic dead end to which the WCC has come, having been reduced to a Club of religious people who do not even have to be Christians – the shrewd observation

<sup>52</sup> STYLIANOS PAPADOPOULOS, *Orthodox path – Church and Theology in the third millennium*, News Books and Magazines Ltd, Athens 2000, p.118 (Gk)

<sup>53</sup> K. N. DRATSELLAS, *Library of Latin Ecclesiastical Fathers*, Athens 1968, t. 1, p.34, St. Cyprian *On the unity of the Catholic Church*. The original Latin text: S. Cypriani, *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, VI, Migne PL, tom. IV, col. 503A

<sup>54</sup> During Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew’s recent visit to the Park East Synagogue of New York City, NY, USA (2009), he ended his speech with the following words: “*Let us hold our hands not only in prayer but also in solidarity with one another. We owe it to our God, to our common Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to each other and to the world*”. How is this statement of His All-Holiness the Patriarch reconciled with the explicit statement of the gospel that “*whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*” (1 John 2:23)? If non-Christian “monotheistic religions” have the same God as we do then the evangelist who writes that whoever denies Christ is a “*liar*” while the one who denies the Father and the Son is an “*antichrist*” (1 John 2:22), is himself a ... liar and is ... evidently part of the problem that appears to concern the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew the most, namely that of “*rising fundamentalism and fanaticism in religious circles*”! – Ed

<sup>55</sup> See also <http://www.eastern-orthodoxy.com/EcumenismBartholomew.htm> - Ed

belongs to the late Archbishop of Greece Mr. Christodoulos<sup>56</sup> – how is it that instead of withdrawing on the contrary they choose instead to continue their detrimental dialogues and common prayers? And since Ecumenism is a heresy – the words also belong to His All-Holiness the late Archbishop Mr. Christodoulos<sup>57</sup> – then why don't they denounce it?

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we could say that we are not afraid of dialogues with the heterodox and allodox but we must be aware of and respect the boundaries set by the Fathers of the Church via the decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods and via their writings. It is needful for us (esp. those who represent the Orthodox Church) to walk upon the solid ground of the Orthodox Hagiopatristic Tradition and most definitely not become instruments that will consciously (or even unconsciously) accommodate evil (cunning) expedencies.

This solid ground had been described 2000 years ago by the disciple of love himself, the Evangelist John the Theologian, with the following words: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”*<sup>58</sup>

The problem is not that we commence dialogues but that through our common prayers we legalise and accept the heterodox that have been cut off from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Ecclesia as a sister Church in the full sense of the term.

The proper stance that Christians should adopt opposite New Age parachurches such as the “Parliament of the World’s Religions” (Chicago 1893 and 1993 and Melbourne 2009), Assisi (1986 ff.) and other similar organisations (which operate within the framework of New Age dogmatic pluralism demanding dialogue of everything with everyone and the adoption of their model, accusing however those who will not comply of being fanatics and intolerant), is described in the book “Dealing with heresies” by the ever-memorable fr. Anthony Alevizopoulos of blessed memory, inspirator and founder of the Pan-Orthodox Conferences on matters concerning heresy, which the State Church of Greece holds on an annual basis, with the following words:

*“Para-religious groups of this type have been likened by a foreign researcher (Gerd Meyer, Berlin) to mafia organisations. What sort of ‘dialogue’ can one have with such groups? In such cases, the duty of the Church and of her shepherds is not to conduct ‘religious dialogues’ but to expose these groups’ true face that is hidden*

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. periodical *Church of Piraeus*, t. 4/March 1991, pp.58-59 (Gk)

<sup>57</sup> Cf. excerpt from an interview given to reverend protopresbyter fr. Constantine Strategopoulos (radio program “Radio Shack”, Radio Station of the Church of Greece) aired on 24.5.1998: *“Truly, Ecumenism, in the way this term has come to be denominated, is of course heresy, for it means denial of basic features of the Orthodox Faith, such as for example the acceptance of the branch theory, namely that every church has a portion of truth and all churches we must unite together, to put together on the table all the pieces of truth in order for the whole to come together. We believe that Orthodoxy is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. End of story, one cannot have a further discussion on this topic. Consequently anyone who professes the opposite can be called an ecumenist and is therefore a heretic”*, in *Memorandum on Ecumenism*, op. cit. p.49

<sup>58</sup> 1 Jn. 4:1-3

*behind whichever mask they happen to be wearing. Christ warned the Church's shepherds, asking them to watch over the sheep against those wolves that come in sheep's clothing. He did not tell us to commence dialogues with them, but to reveal their true face so that people may recognise them early on for who they are and thus protect themselves from them.*"<sup>59</sup>

In conclusion, we would like to place the following question: At the end of the day, do we give an Orthodox witness in the Ecumenist forums or do we tumble towards a dangerous syncretism? We believe that the answer would be as self-evident as it is bitter.

#### EDITOR'S APPENDIX A

The reader is now in a position to "decipher" Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's speech given at the Synagogue. The complete transcript follows with red highlights showing points of particular interest:

"Rabbi Arthur Schneier dearly beloved friend,  
Your Excellencies ambassadors and representatives of the world's nations  
Distinguished leaders of the Jewish community and other faith communities  
Beloved children  
**Shalom**

It is indeed a real joy for us to be afforded the opportunity to visit this **blessed** East-Park Synagogue in the heart of this extraordinary city. We are familiar with your spiritual leaders. We are acquainted with your religious and social programmes and we admire your diverse educational initiatives for the formation of your faithful. More particularly however, we are aware of the extraordinary work for religious freedom by Rabbi Shnyer through the Appeal of Conscience foundation for which our dear friend has deservedly received the Patriarch Athenagoras human rights award of the Greek Orthodox Archons in America from the hands of our beloved Exarch, Archbishop Demetrius. Yet our visit here is more than simply a formality. It transcends a mere courteous visit of a Christian leader to a Jewish leader. Even as **the successor of Saint Peter, our brother His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI** visited here last year, we also come as the successor of Peter's earthly brother, the first-called Apostle Saint Andrew, inspired by our fervent conviction that the most urgent task that lies before all faith communities is our **global cooperation** for the promotion of greater **tolerance** and understanding among the people's races and **the religions** of our planet. This is why accompanying us today is His Eminence the Metropolitan Emmanuel of France who facilitates and chairs the International **Academic** Consultations between Orthodox Christianity and Judaism **initiated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate** since the mid-1970s. We are pleased that the 7<sup>th</sup> Academic Consultation between Judaism and Orthodoxy will convene two weeks hence in Athens, Greece. The title of the Consultation *The World in Crisis: Ethical Challenges and Religious Perspectives* is indeed timely given the **ecological**, social, financial and political upheavals in our world today. We personally had attended a previous academic conference in Thessaloniki between Christian Orthodox and Jews. And we visited then the monument of the Holocaust in the city. There is no doubt in our mind that **interfaith dialogue** is a **responsibility** and **obligation** for **all religious leaders of our time**. For not only do we have **common ground that unites us** such as the sacred scriptures that we cherish, as well as the Patriarchs and Prophets that we venerate, but we also have common issues that we face in our world. Foremost among these crucial issues is the preservation of God's creation, the natural environment that we are commanded to till and keep (Gen. 2:15) as priestly stewards of the earth. As you are aware we have just completed our 8<sup>th</sup> ecological symposium on the Mississippi river in New Orleans where we raised awareness to the vast **ethical** and **social problems** intimately related to the devastation of the world's natural resources as a result of human arrogance and greed. From the outset of our environmental initiatives, we recognised the importance of working together with other disciplines, such as scientists and policy-makers, as well as other confessions and religions, **for the environment surely transcends the doctrinal boundaries**. It is something for which we are collectively responsible. It is something that we can only address together and not in isolation. **The faith communities** in the United States have an increased responsibility and obligation to educate their faithful about the great impact of first-world nations on the planet's capacity for survival. Other issues of common concern for **the world's faith communities** include the rising **fundamentalism and fanaticism in religious circles** as well as **the escalated racism and terrorism** in the world. That is why we enjoin with Rabbi Shnyer and we continue to work with the Appeal of Conscience Foundation to encourage **greater understanding** and **tolerance** among religions and **when necessary** to speak the truth in love and to declare as was first declared in Vern, Switzerland, and re-affirmed in Istanbul, 'a crime committed **in the name of religion** is a crime against religion'. We owe it, as Jews and Christians, to our common heritage to imitate **our forefather** Abraham who received the unexpected visit of the three strangers under the shade of the oak trees in Mamre, as described in Genesis 18. Israel's Patriarch did not consider these strangers a threat or danger to his way or to his possessions. He was not accursed by xenophobia, the fear of the stranger, but rather he was consumed by philoxenia, the love of the stranger. Philoxenia, a beautiful Greek word. Instead he spontaneously shared with them his friendship and his food extending such general hospitality that the just treatment and compassionate care of strangers is enshrined in the Torah and in the Orthodox Christian Tradition. This scene has been interpreted and identified with the life of God. Dear friends, we are called to become prophetic communities of transformation in a world of stagnation, prophetic communities of peace in a global society that is threatened by war, prophetic communities of dialogue in a culture characterised by conflict and prophetic communities of reconciliation with God's creation at a time when the earth's future is at risk. We all have great exemplars to follow: for us Christians, we shall never forget the heroes of Bulgaria and Greece, who, during the Second World War risked their own lives to save their Jewish friends and neighbours from the outrageous horror of the Holocaust. Tomorrow we are going to visit our dearly beloved friend **Muhtar Kent**<sup>60</sup> in Atlanta, the number one of Coca-

<sup>59</sup> Cf. fr. ANTHONY ALEVIZOPOULOS, *Dealing with heresies, Examination and Strategy*, Athens 1996, pp.200-201

<sup>60</sup> Of course, the Ecumenical Patriarch offered him a copy of the Qur'an as a symbolic gift, which however he called "**the Holy Qur'an**", this way proving his indirect acceptance (absorption) of the

Cola worldwide. He is a very good friend of ours. His father used to be a Turkish diplomat who worked very strongly in a compassionate way to protect Jewish Turkish citizens and not only. A few years ago the Jewish community in Istanbul organised a very moving celebration to venerate the father Kent's service, generosity to the Jewish community during the Second World War. And for **you Children of Abraham**, we have those **heroes** who against all odds **established a new nation to save for God the tradition of the people of Israel**. Neither of these efforts was perfect. Only a handful was saved, and today we behold how difficult it is to establish security and justice for all in the Middle East. Nevertheless, we are not dismayed; we are emboldened to continue our common struggle. A few years ago we paid an official visit to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the then-President of Israel Viceman received us in his office and he said: 'your All-Holiness, you know, I am an officer and as such during my whole life I made either war or peace. I worked for either war or for peace. And from my own experience, I can assure you that making peace is much more difficult than making war'. Let us face these tasks together. **Let us hold our hands not only in prayer** but also in solidarity with one another. We owe it **to our God, to our common Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, to each other and to the world. Thank you."

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spirit of the Islamic faith (cf. Appendix B for more 'revealing' statements he has made in the past). He thus ended his 2009 'historic' US visit by communicating in an appropriately ecumenist manner with representatives of all three major "monotheistic religions" (Orthodox Ecumenists, Jesuits, Judaizers and Moslems). It is perhaps not strange given the circumstances that even though he is the Bishop of the Holy Mountain he did not visit any of the 17 Holy Monasteries of Elder Ephraim (15 situated within US soil and 2 in Canada), not even the main monastery in Arizona. His intentions are now clear to all Orthodox Christians and we know that whether it happens in this life or the next, whether a True forthcoming Pan-Orthodox Synod will be something we live to see or not, he will one day be known in ecclesiastical history as a fallen bishop, an Ecumenist, stricken from the Orthodox diptychs on Heaven and Earth. His only chance is to leave his position and to retire for the rest of his life in the desert to find repentance after officially renouncing Ecumenism. He still has this chance, to save his soul. Let us all pray that he repents and remembers that money, glory and power are all ephemeral. In the history of our Church we find many leaders who fell. There were times when almost the entire Church leadership had fallen into some *plani*. However, the bishops and priests still have the gratis of Priesthood, and God does not remove that until such a time when a Holy Synod convenes and defrocks the deviant priests or when (God forbid) death finds them unrepentant. One way or another, the reader can perhaps appreciate once again and glorify the Lord that the Orthodox Church is not dependent on any leader. Can one imagine where we would be today if we considered the Ecumenical Patriarch as 'infallible ex cathedra'? Can we? At the same time, God always provides and ensures that saintly elders and mothers always exist, even in the most troubled Patriarchate, Church or jurisdiction. Despite the general downfall of GOA in our times, it has spiritual pillars such as Elder Ephraim and many of the monks in the monasteries he has established who come from the Holy Mountain. We have the heroic nuns in Wisconsin, for instance, who work hard to bring Orthodoxy to us with their prayers and efforts. Even in the most troubled of times God does not and will not abandon us. He will always send people of holiness even in the darkest of times. We knew such times were coming, and we may even have to choose one day between a more open form of persecution and salvation. Remember that God knows our strengths. But let us dear readers also prepare ourselves; not just because Lent is approaching but because we need to learn to live in a frugal manner. One day we, our children or our children's children may be cast out of their homes. One day we may be asked to put on the mark. In the eyes of the world we are already the "religious fanatics", part of the "rising fundamentalism". But let us not despair or run to the world. This life is almost over. Let us pray and let our tears of repentance help the deceived Ecumenists return to Christ. So neither fear – for Christ is at the helm of the Church (and not any Patriarch) – nor despair, for a multitude of Saints, living and asleep, the Panaghia, are ready by our side to support us in our struggle and prayers with their intercessions and efforts. In the end, the enemies of the Church only end up doing God's will. Right at the moment when the Devil thought he had beaten one of his worst enemies, Christ, he had his greatest defeat. And this is the important message: Christ is risen! The important thing for our salvation has been already worked out! Everything else is truly insignificant! All the heresies in the world cannot harm us if we do not follow them. Do not let these events scare you but face them with bravery. Learn so that you can warn others against Ecumenism, of course. Try to visit more traditional parishes, where possible, but ensure you do not fall into the trap of Zealotism, which is the other side of the same coin! A glorious Paradise to all!

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## EDITOR'S APPENDIX B



1) "God is pleased when people coexist peacefully, particularly those who worship Him irrespective of the differences which exist in the faiths of the three large monotheistic religions".

(Excerpt taken from a message sent by Ecumenical Patriarch Mr. Bartholomew to the Muslims around the world on the occasion of their religious feast of Ramadan. Reportage by journalist Mr. Nick Papadimitriou, "Flash" station, 16.12.2001)

2) "We ought to keep the political arena separated from the religious one in order not to confuse the things that take place under political orders with those that our three monotheistic religions teach. For this reason, I warmly plead each one of us and one another to hand the pacifying message of the one and only true God, Who has gathered us here in His love, unadulterated to our faithful people and to the entire world.

[...]

We, the ones who believe in one personal God, have the experience of His love and of the peace that takes up residence in our soul that fulfills and calms it whenever the communion of the personal beings of the humble man with that of the great God is restored."

(From his speech on the occasion of the "First Inter-religious Meeting of Brussels", addressing representatives of the three 'monotheistic religions'; periodical "Visitation" of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, issue 603, 31.12.2001)

St. Nicodemus the Haghiorite replies: "They [the Martyrs of old] went through martyrdom for the faith of the Holy Trinity; and these [Neo-martyrs] did the same. The former shed their blood in the name and the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; the latter did the same. Or should I say that [the Neo-martyrs] have done that bit more than the [older martyrs] have. For [the older ones] fought against polytheism and idolatry which is an evident impiety while [the new Martyrs] fought against the One-Person Monotheism of the allodox, which is a hidden impiety that can easily mislead the nous" ("*New Martyrologion, viz. Martyrdom of the newly appeared Martyrs who appeared after the Fall [of the City and Roman Empire, 1453] ...*", Athens 1961, publishing house "Aster" p.12)

