

ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES ON ECUMENICAL
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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The Ecumenical Movement in the Theological
Education and in the Life of Orthodox Churches

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Contents

Contributors list.....	9
Introduction.....	13
Message of His Eminence Laurențiu, Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Ardeal.....	15
Message of the General Secretary of World Council of Churches..	17

Section I Studies

Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima

The Ecumenical Movement and the Theological Thinking in the life of Orthodox Churches. "The Style and Ethos of being Orthodox in the Ecumenical Movement" ..	21
--	----

Georges Lemopoulos

Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the role of theological education: A few questions in the form of Introductory Thoughts	40
---	----

Revd. Prof. Dr. George M. Kondothra

Theological Education in the Oriental Orthodox Tradition and the Ecumenical Movement ..	52
--	----

Revd. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ioniță

The Consultation Process between European Theological Faculties (the Graz Process).	63
--	----

Revd. Prof. Dr. John A. Jillions

The Future of Orthodox Ecumenical Engagement: Traditionalist, Mainstream or Prophetic? ..	73
--	----

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ciprian Streza

Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna and the Imperatives of Religious Education in the Nineteenth Century Transylvania... ..	98
---	----

Revd. Dr. Dietrich Werner

Ecumenical Perspectives in Theological Education in Orthodox
Contexts – Perspectives from ETE/WCC. 116

Revd. Assist. Prof. Dr. Daniel Buda

World Council of Churches' efforts to improve ecumenical theological
education in Orthodox Theological institutions – a short survey and
some critical remarks.. 131

Section II Reports

Metropolitan Seraphim Kykkotis

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa: Comments on
the Topic of Ecumenical Movement in Africa. 147

Deacon Prof. Porphyrios (Fadi) Georgi

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Ecumenical
Perspective in Theological Education.. 149

Revd. Dr. Vladimir Khoulap, Revd. Dr. Cyril Hovorun

Teaching other theological traditions in Russia..... 156

Revd. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Moşoiu

Romanian Orthodox Church: Considerations Regarding the Ecumenical
Theological Education in Romania 160

Prof. Dr. Ivan Dimitrov, Dr. Stefka Kancheva

Orthodox Theology in Ecumenical Context in Bulgaria ... 183

Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia and Ammochostos

The Church of Cyprus and the Ecumenical Movement 190

Prof. Dr. Stylianos Tsompanidis

Church of Greece: How the Ecumenical Studies
are taught in Orthodox Theological Schools... 195

Revd. Andrzej Kuzma

Ecumenical education in the Orthodox Church in Poland200

Bishop Nikolaos Hyda

The Theological Education in
Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania..202

Revd. Dr. George Kourie

The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education & in the Life of
Orthodox Churches. The position of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of
Antioch & All the East.....206

Dr. Haddis Yeshanew

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church213

World Council Of Churches International Inter-Orthodox
Consultation on The Ecumenical Movement in Theological
Education and in the Life of Orthodox Churches
Sibiu, Romania, 9-12 November 2010. Communique220

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Introduction

This volume encapsulates the contributions presented in the conference entitled The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education and in the Life of the Orthodox Churches that took place in Sibiu, Romania, between 9th -12th November 2010. The idea of this conference came out of the necessity to discuss and analyze anew the role of the theological institutions in ecumenical and theological formation at different levels of Orthodox Churches as well as the ecumenical engagement of the Orthodox Churches for unity. All Orthodox member Churches of the World Council of Churches were invited to send at least one representative in order to reflect on: (1) how ecumenical studies are taught in different Orthodox Churches; and (2) the future of ecumenical studies and ecumenical engagement in the Orthodox Churches.

The scopes of the conference, as mentioned in its concept paper, were:

- to discuss how is ecumenical studies are taught and shared on different levels within the Orthodox Churches, either in theological institutions or through other channels like conferences, church media, pastoral courses etc;
- to observe the evolution of ecumenical studies as a study discipline in the orthodox theological education;
- to reflect on other ways of sharing the results of ecumenical work at different levels of the Church;
- to begin developing a common concept of ecumenical studies for the orthodox theological institutions;
- to strengthen the relationships between theological institutions and professors from all Orthodox Churches;
- to offer the possibility of sharing and experiencing the ecumenical realities in different Orthodox Churches.

The conference tried to reach its goals by:

- offering key papers reflecting on the points mentioned above;
- asking the representative of every Orthodox Church to make a short description of the situation of Ecumenical studies in the theological institution(s) of the Churches he/she represents;

- organizing working groups in order to reflect on the issues that have been discussed;
- offering the possibility to worship together with the local Orthodox Church, organizing visits to its significant locations, facilitating contacts with the students and local clergy.

Eight key-note papers and eleven reports were presented during the conference and these are now published in this volume. As their content emphasizes, the keynote papers focused on different subjects such as the style and ethos of being orthodox in the ecumenical movement; thoughts about Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the role of theological education; future engagement of Orthodox in the efforts for churches unity based on previous ecclesiological concepts; ecumenical theological education in India, the Graz process and the participation of the Orthodox Churches with their theological institutions at this project, educational and ecumenical heritage of Metropolitan Andrei Saguna in Transylvania; review of previous efforts of the WCC, especially of the Ecumenical Theological Education department for improving ecumenical-theological education within the Orthodox Churches. The keynotes were used as starting points for discussions around the subjects proposed. Two keynotes (those of Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima and of Prof. John A. Jillions) were presented in the form of public lectures, attended by a large audience of students, professors, theologians and the general public from Sibiu that were interested in ecumenical-theological matters - these were followed by lively discussions. The reports aimed to briefly present the situation of ecumenical-theological education in each Orthodox Church represented. Their content is very diverse and their authors responded in different ways to the questions raised to the reporters in the concept of the conference. The editorial team published the reports in the form they were delivered by their authors, respecting entirely the in which they were delivered. They therefore differ significantly in term of form, content and size. The final communiqué is a detailed review of the conference. It recommends concrete "proposals and suggestions" for the follow-up of this conference.

It is the hope of the editorial team that this publication will serve to assist a continuation of the reflection on the themes and issues it contains.

Editorial team

Message of His Eminence Laurențiu, Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Ardeal

*Honoured moderator of the consultation on the ecumenical movement in
theological education and in the life of the Orthodox Churches,*

Your Eminences and Graces,

Honoured participants,

It is a great privilege and spiritual joy for us – as Metropolitan of Ardeal and dean of the Orthodox theological faculty from Sibiu – to greet you all here in Sibiu in our capacity as the local organizer and host of this conference. Ardeal (Transylvania) and the Orthodox theological school of Sibiu represent a rich theological and ecumenical tradition. Among our predecessors as Metropolitans of Ardeal, we have had numerous hierarchs with great ecumenical vision and a sincere openness for Christian unity, expressed in a courageous and visionary way. In 19th century, Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna re-founded the Orthodox Metropoly of Ardeal, promoted a brave initiative to present the treasures of Orthodoxy to other Christian traditions and looked for a way of life (*modus vivendi*) with them, as brothers in our common faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ. At the beginning of 20th century, and before the foundation of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan participated in several ecumenical events and pleaded openly for active participation of the Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement, speaking against confessional isolationism. Our predecessor, Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală of blessed memory, was recognized by all Orthodox as a strong personality of the ecumenical movement. He participated actively in the life and activities of the WCC and the Conference of European Churches.

Many theological professors from Sibiu – and here I only mention Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae – contributed significantly in formulating and promoting the concept of unity from the Orthodox perspective. In the recent past, Sibiu proved once again its ecumenical engagement by organizing here, in collabo-

ration with other sister churches, the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in September 2007.

Your presence here in Sibiu with this special inter-Orthodox gathering both honour and oblige us. We hope that over the years this conference will be spoken of as an important starting point for reflecting on how our efforts for unity can be formulated, and expressed from the Orthodox perspective.

Thanking you all again for your presence, we wish you a blessed and successful conference.

Yours in Christ,

Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Laurențiu Streza
Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Ardeal

Message of the General Secretary of World Council of Churches

Your Eminences,

Respected participants at the international conference The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education and in the Life of the Orthodox,

I greet You all in the name of the Triune God, we all worship!

I am glad that the World Council of Churches in collaboration with the Orthodox Theological Faculty Andrei Saguna of Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, Romania, took the initiative and organized an international conference on the role of ecumenical-theological education in the life of Orthodox Churches. Ecumenical-Theological education has been a priority for the World Council of Churches since its foundation. The Council, in collaboration with its member churches, with universities, theological seminars and other institutions have worked constantly to improve ecumenical-theological education at different levels. Collaboration between the World Council of Churches and its Orthodox member Churches in the field of education has a long and fruitful history. Both the Council as a global ecumenical organization and the Orthodox Churches with their theological-educational institutions have given and received much in this collaboration. I am sure that this new conference which is aimed at discerning the status on ecumenical-theological education in the Orthodox Churches and looking for future perspectives will bring a new input allowing an even deeper and more fruitful collaboration in the future.

I am very glad that this conference takes place in Sibiu - a city with a long and rich theological and ecumenical tradition. I had the opportunity to visit Sibiu in 2007 during the Third European Ecumenical Assembly and I hope that the future will offer me the opportunity to visit it again in my capacity as General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

Thanking all of you, organizers and participants at this international conference, I wish you a successful meeting and wait with great interest for the its results!

Yours in our common Lord Jesus Christ,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary
World Council of Churches

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
International Inter-Orthodox Consultation
on

The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education
and in the Life of Orthodox Churches
Sibiu, Romania, 9-12 November 2010

COMMUNIQUE

...Love should be rekindled and strengthened among the churches, so that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and "fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ" (Eph. 3:6).

Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1920):
"To the Churches of Christ Everywhere"

At the initiative of the of the World Council of Churches, with the blessing of H.B. Patriarch Daniel of Romania and the gracious hospitality of H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Laurentiu of Ardeal, with the collaboration of the Orthodox Theological Faculty "Andrei Saguna" of Sibiu and with H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) serving as moderator, representatives from various Eastern Orthodox Churches (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarchate of Antioch, Moscow Patriarchate, Patriarchate of Romania, Patriarchate of Bulgaria, Church of Cyprus, Church of Greece, Church of Poland, Church of Albania and the Orthodox Church in America), from Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church), from the Conference of European Churches (CEC)

and theological institutions met in Sibiu to reflect on and make proposals concerning "The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education and in the Life of Orthodox Churches."

The main purpose of the meeting was to consider how the Orthodox Churches and theological schools have been involved in the modern ecumenical movement from its very beginning, and what steps forward they might take today.

Indeed theological institutions through their professors, educators and graduate, have played a crucial role for the Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement, and they have contributed significantly in:

- (a) developing an ecumenical ethos within the Orthodox Churches, by participating in ecumenical gatherings as representatives of their Churches;
- (b) articulating an Orthodox theological discourse responding to the major issues and challenges included in the ecumenical agenda;
- (c) assessing the developments within the ecumenical movement and keeping their Churches, their colleagues and their students regularly informed; and
- (d) teaching ecumenical studies in educational institutions at different levels.

Theological educators are entrusted by the Churches with the ecumenical-theological formation of the next generations of clergy, church leaders and experienced staff involved in ecumenical work. The future involvement of Orthodox Churches in the ecumenical movement largely depends on the methods, levels and—most crucially—inspiration that theological education will equip future generations.

Thirty hierarchs, priests, university professors, and lay men and women, gathered at the Orthodox Theological Faculty "*Andrei Saguna*" in Sibiu, Romania, 9-12 November 2010 to address this topic.

Conference Proceedings

The Consultation opened in the Chapel of the Orthodox Theological Faculty "*Andrei Saguna*" with a Te Deum service celebrated by H.E. Metropolitan Laurentiu and with the participation of all members, including the professors and the students of the faculty. Metropolitan Laurentiu then welcomed the Consultation very warmly. He underlined the important role

COMMUNIQUE

played by the historical Theological School with its predominant academic and spiritual personalities and teachers of ecumenical theology such as the late Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, the late Metropolitan Antonie, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Fr. Ioan Bria, all of blessed memory, and many others. He spoke as well about the faculty's contribution to ecumenical theology and learning over many decades.

Metropolitan Gennadios conveyed the paternal wishes and patriarchal blessings of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and wholeheartedly thanked Metropolitan Laurentiu for his generous hospitality. He greeted the participants and expressed the hope that this encounter would become another occasion to further strengthen the existing fraternal links between the Orthodox Churches and that it would enable them to act and speak in a coordinated way as they reflect on the issue of ecumenical education and the deeper participation of the Orthodox Churches in the ecumenical movement. In addition, he mentioned that we are gathered in a historical place, Sibiu, which three years ago as one of the cultural capitals of Europe- a crossroad of cultures and history, a bridge between East and West- had the great privilege to host the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007. The Metropolitanate of Ardeal has a long history of hosting ecumenical gatherings and meetings due to the fact that it has always been open to promoting and facilitating dialogue among the Christian Churches. Metropolitan Gennadios concluded by pointing out that regardless of the unresolved difficulties the Churches face in ecumenical dialogue concerning issues of an ecclesiological, theological and moral nature, they should deliver a clear common witness to the world and to secularized society. This could be done on the basis of the common denominator that is faith in the Triune God and in the saving action of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way Churches could become agents for renewal and co-builders for the construction of society in whatever part of the world God has placed them.

Along with the discussion and various presentations, the program included prayer and visits to the famous museums of traditional glass icons.

The conference opened with presentations by Mr George Lemopoulos (Deputy General Secretary, WCC) on "Orthodox Participation in the Ecumenical Movement: Some Questions to Theological Education for Today and Tomorrow," Very Rev. Prof. Dr Viorel Ionita (Interim General Secretary of CEC) on "The Graz Process and the Implications for Orthodox Theological Institutions," Rev. Dr Dietrich Werner (Ecumenical Theological Education

coordinator, WCC) on "Ecumenical Perspectives in Theological Education in Orthodox Contexts," and Rev. Dr. K.M. George on "Theological Education in the Oriental Orthodox Tradition and the Ecumenical Movement," (presented in his absence).

On the last day in the main Hall of the Theological Faculty two keynote addresses were presented by H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassi-sima "*The Ecumenical Movement in the Life of the Orthodox Churches*" and Very Rev. Dr. John Jillions (Orthodox Church in America), "*The Future of Orthodox Theological Engagement: Traditionalist, Mainstream or Prophetic?*", with the participation of professors of theological faculties teaching ecumenical studies from all over Romania. The session raised challenging questions for discussion and further reflection.

Input From Participants

The Consultation invited participants to present a reflection on the following questions:

1. *how are ecumenical studies taught in different Orthodox churches?*

There are different ways of teaching ecumenical studies in Orthodox theological institutions. In some countries, ecumenical studies are taught as an independent discipline, while elsewhere they are combined with other theological disciplines (e.g. Dogmatics, Mis-siology) or are included as part of Church history.

The conference also explored different teaching models in order to learn from each other, but also suggested the development of a common model for teaching ecumenical studies.

Each church is the arena where the results of the ecumenical movement are shared, thought about and debated. The Consultation considered how participation of the Orthodox Churches in the ecumenical movement is presented at the different levels of the Church. This includes how it appears in the church press and other publications, and how the ecumenical commitment of Orthodox churches is determined by their contextual reality and "local ecumenical involvement".

2. *the future of ecumenical studies and ecumenical engagement in Orthodox Churches.* There has been an Orthodox involvement in the modern ecumenical movement for approximately one century. This involvement provides a certain ecumenical experience that helps us to look to the future. At the same time, there are new and burning

COMMUNIQUE

challenges facing the Orthodox churches as well as the ecumenical movement.

Participants presented the position and experience of their church in responding to these questions, and this was followed by discussion.

Observations and Suggestions

Inter-Christian and interfaith issues are at the heart of a lively debate within the Orthodox Churches and touch many aspects not only of theological education, but of global, national, communal, familial and parish life. While these debates can become polarized, they also reveal a healthy tension between faithfulness to what has been received from Holy Tradition in the past and discerning where the Holy Spirit may be leading the Churches in the present and future. However, while the reports and discussions demonstrated a number of positive developments in the Orthodox Churches and theological schools concerning relations with other Christians and other faiths, there remain serious gaps to address.

1. There is a broad official agreement among the Orthodox Churches concerning the general direction of Orthodox ecumenical engagement. However, at many levels of church life there is a wide diversity of opinion among the Orthodox concerning inter-Christian and interfaith issues. This demonstrates that there is as yet no unanimous Orthodox theological understanding of how to relate to other Christians and other faiths. Orthodox Churches should use their theological faculties and seminaries as academic laboratories to generate discussion on acute issues debated in ecumenical circles. An attempt should be made to engage all Orthodox voices in this, especially those who may be most opposed to dialogue. Synergy between church leadership and theological schools is necessary for the meaningful and credible witness of our churches in society today.
2. Adopting a self-critical approach to its own ecclesial life, in a spirit of humility, is essential for authentic Orthodox dialogue and engagement with other Christians and the faithful of other religions.
3. The Orthodox Churches have profoundly benefitted from the ecumenical movement. It has allowed them to overcome possible temptations to isolation, to meet other Christians and each other and to strengthen fraternal relations, to be introduced to the living thought

COMMUNIQUE

of other Christians, to explore their own Orthodox mind and voice, to engage in reflection on major global events and social changes, to follow developments in Christian missions worldwide, and to engage in common work for the material and moral betterment of humanity as a whole.

4. In order to improve the level of inter-Christian and interfaith studies in Orthodox theological schools, to promote understanding and eradicate prejudice, the general level of theological studies must be raised. It is through an objective academic approach and critical analysis that the aims of the ecumenical movement can be better understood and received by Orthodox students of theology. High-level Orthodox theological education was emphasized as testimony to the catholicity of Orthodoxy and a corrective to sectarianism.
5. It was agreed that the study of other Christian churches, other faiths and the ecumenical movement only in the framework of comparative or even polemical apologetics, although still widely practiced, is insufficient for an academically balanced understanding.
6. There is a clear need to develop appropriate, fair-minded, non-polemical Orthodox resources and methodologies for teaching about other Christian churches, other religions and the ecumenical movement.
7. Orthodox theological schools should seek out faculty members from the theological schools of other Christian churches and other religions to present their own perspective on their faith and to interact, dialogue, discuss and debate with Orthodox students and faculty. Visits of Orthodox theological students to the places of worship and theological schools of other churches and faiths should be encouraged.
8. Careful analysis of the particular inter-Christian and interfaith issues facing Orthodox Churches in specific contexts will mean that the exact shape of ecumenical education will differ from place to place. Even within a single Orthodox Church there can be vastly differing needs in this regard.
9. The importance of including theological students as future pastors and teachers of the church in the process of ecumenical theological reflection, education and exposure was underlined.

COMMUNIQUE

10. It is necessary to prepare an essay book about the history of the ecumenical movement from the Orthodox point of view to be introduced as a part of the teaching curriculum in our theological schools and seminaries.
11. The activities of the WCC, regional ecumenical organizations, national councils of churches and bilateral dialogues must be publicized more thoroughly in local church publications, TV and radio stations, websites etc.
12. Conferences and seminars about inter-Christian and interfaith dialogue should continue to be organized on national, local, regional and continental levels with attention paid to more effective communication about these meetings to the clergy and faithful of the churches.
13. Initiatives are needed for the training of Orthodox teachers, clergy and laity to be involved competently and with dedication in inter-Christian and interfaith conversation and activities on behalf of the local Orthodox Churches.
14. Theological institutions should be encouraged to support events on a local and parish level that engage as many people as possible in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and other inter-Christian and interfaith initiatives, including visits to other places of worship. They should also encourage initiatives in organizing common Christian and interfaith ministries addressing social problems and protecting human rights and democracy.
15. More opportunities should be created for Orthodox from as many local Churches as possible to serve in staff positions in ecumenical organizations.
16. The ground-breaking 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, *"Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere"* made special mention of the role that theological schools could play in promoting greater mutual understanding:
by relationships between the theological schools and the professors of theology; by the exchange of theological and ecclesiastical reviews, and of other works published in each church.

COMMUNIQUE

by exchanging students for further training among the seminaries of the different churches.

This encyclical was produced in collaboration with the faculty of the Patriarchal Theological School at Halki. The consultation expressed the hope that Halki would soon be re-opened so that it could be allowed to once again make a contribution to efforts of inter-Christian and interfaith collaboration and reconciliation.

17. The Consultation strongly recommends that the WCC in collaboration with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Boston, USA) coordinate a meeting in the near future to bring together representatives of all Orthodox theological faculties and schools and seminaries of theology to continue to make progress on collaboratively addressing these issues of ecumenical education.