

CEMES
15

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ORTHODOX
ECUMENICAL
REFLECTIONS

CEMES PUBLICATIONS

To His Beatitude
Archbishop ANASTASIOS
of Tirana, Durres and All Albania

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PREFACE

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church has clearly declared that “the Orthodox Church has a common awareness of the necessity for conducting inter-Christian theological dialogue... and it deems it important for all Christians, inspired by common fundamental principles of the Gospel, to attempt to offer with eagerness and solidarity a response to the thorny problems of the contemporary world, based on the prototype of the new man in Christ. The Orthodox Church is aware that the movement to restore Christian unity is taking on new forms in order to respond to new circumstances and to address the new challenges of today’s world. The continued witness of the Orthodox Church to the divided Christian world on the basis of the apostolic tradition and faith is imperative” (Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World, § 23-24).

This clear affirmation, stressed also in the Message (§ 3) and the Encyclical (§ 20) of the Synod, was further underlined with regard to its implementation in its Mission Statement, demanding that this task “must be carried out not aggressively or by different forms of proselytism, but in love, humility and respect towards the identity of each person and the cultural particularity of each people” (The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World,” Preamble).

This conciliar affirmation, experienced so far in the local context of most of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches with much ambiguity – and in some cases even with suspicion – has encouraged me to publish in one book my earlier Orthodox ecumenical reflections, published separately or delivered during my ecumenical service, originally as a youth intern in the ecumenical center of WCC in Geneva, Switzerland, later as an Orthodox Commissioner of WCC/CWME, delegated by the Church of Greece, and finally as an ecumenical assistant at the Volos Academy of Theological Studies.

Chapter 1, “The Future of Faith and Order from the Perspective of the Young Generation,” was originally presented on August 25, 2002, in Lausanne, at the official celebration of the 75th anniversary of “Faith and Order.”

Chapter 2, “Ecumenical Movement: Realities and Expectations: A Critical Analysis from a Youth Perspective,” was presented in an international seminar on “The Nature and Goal of the Ecumenical Movement,” held at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in July, 2003.

Chapter 3, “The Significance of the Holy Spirit for Mission,” was my contribution to the Memorial Volume of the late Fr. Ion Bria (still under publication), based on my keynote address at the international consultation of Young Missiologists, held in Rome,

Italy (January 19 - 25, 2005), at the Centro Internazionale Animazione Missionaria.

Chapter 4, "Discerning the Spirit of Athens," was my presentation at the 14th World Mission Conference of CWME/WCC, held in Athens in May 2005, and it was published in IRM 94 October (2005), pp. 435-439.

Chapter 5, "Mission in Europe at the End of the 20th Century: Reception and Crisis of the Enlightenment. An Orthodox Point of View," was my response to the paper by G. Davie on the recent trend in Europe of "believing without belonging", presented at the 3rd European Missiology Conference (Paris, August 24-28, 2006).

Chapter 6, "Ecumenical Formation and the Renewal and Transformation of the Church," was presented at the Section on "New Models of Ecumenical Formation" of the 9th General Assembly of WCC, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil (February 2006).

Chapter 7, "An Orthodox Reflection on the Centenary of Edinburgh 1910 World Mission Conference," published in P. Vassiliadis (ed.), Orthodox Perspectives on Mission, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series 17: Oxford 2013, pp. 187-189.

The last two chapters represent in some way the application of these reflections in my local context. They were originally written in Greek during my service as an ecumenical assistant at the Academy of Theological Studies of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros of the Church of Greece. Here are both published in English.

Chapter 8, "The Eucharist as a Christian Witness," was presented to the annual series of lectures of the afore-mentioned Academy of Theological Studies, on the theme "Eucharist, Church, and World" (March 29, 2008), the proceedings of which are under publication.

Chapter 9, "Orthodoxy and the Future of Multilateral Dialogue," first appeared in the eight-volume collective work 'The History of Orthodoxy', Athens 2008, pp. 370-413.

I am extremely grateful to the Center of Ecumenical, Missiological and Environmental Studies for including this humble contribution of mine to its series of CEMES Publications.

Christmas 2017

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