



# The Council of Crete and its Perception of other *Churches*



**Dr. Alexandru-Marius Crişan**

# 1. Orthodox ecclesiological self-understanding related to ecumenism according to the documents of the Holy and Great Council

*I think the question is fundamental and capital, because it is directly linked with our ecclesiological consciousness. I could ask the question differently: do we have the consciousness that we have to possess, as members of the Orthodox Church? What are we? **That's what we have to say before asking ourselves who are the others!***

(Archbishop Cristodoulos in 1986 at the Third Panorthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference)

# The II<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of the Document on Ecumenical Relations

The Orthodox Church founds **the unity of the Church** on the fact of her establishment by our **Lord Jesus Christ**, and on the **communion** in the **Holy Trinity** and in the **sacraments**. This unity is expressed through the **apostolic succession** and the **patristic tradition** and is lived out in the Church up to the present day. The Orthodox Church has the mission and duty to transmit and preach all **the truth** contained in **Holy Scripture** and **Holy Tradition**, which also bestows upon the Church her catholic character.

## The unity of the official Dialogue. The Orthodox Church or the Churches in Dialogue?

*(...) all Orthodox should present themselves during different dialogues sharing together common points of view, so we should not become a spectacle before the other confessions, by revealing certain disagreements among ourselves.*

*(Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală of Transylvania in 1986 at the III<sup>rd</sup> P.P. Conference)*

# *Church, Churches and the WCC status*

*The Orthodox Churches – members of the WCC – accepts its Constitutional Basis, as well as its aims and goals. They firmly believe that the ecclesiological presuppositions of the Toronto Statement (1950) on The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches are of paramount importance for the Orthodox participation in the Council. It is therefore self-understood that the WCC is **not and must never become a super-Church.***

*(The 6<sup>o</sup> paragraph of the 1986 Document on WCC)*

III<sup>rd</sup> Conference

Proposal of Metropolitan  
Savvas

WCC is not and *must*  
never become a super-  
Church

WCC is not and *can*  
never become a super-  
Church

# Final Document on Ecumenism and WCC

The Orthodox Churches that are members of the WCC regard as **an indispensable condition** of their participation in the WCC the foundational article of its Constitution, in accordance with which its members may **only be those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ** as God and Savior in accordance with the Scriptures, and who **confess the Triune God**, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in accordance with the **Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed**.

# The name – source and indication for the perception of *the other*?

In accordance with the ontological nature of the Church, her unity can never be perturbed. In spite of this, the Orthodox Church accepts the **historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions** that are not in communion with her, and believes that her relations with them should be based on the most speedy and objective clarification possible of the whole ecclesiological question, and most especially of their more general teachings on sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession. (6° paragraph, *Document on Ecumenical Relations*)



# The evolution of the most contested formulation of the Crete Document on Ecumenical Relations

1971: First Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission	1986: Third Preconciliar Panorthodox Conference	2015: Fifth Preconciliar Panorthodox Conference	2016: Final version signed during the Council of Crete
The Orthodox Church recognizes the <b>ontological existence</b> of all these Christian Churches and Confessions.	The Orthodox Church recognizes <b>the existence de facto</b> of the Christian Churches and Confessions.	The Orthodox Church acknowledges the <b>historical existence</b> of other Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her.	The Orthodox Church accepts <b>the historical name</b> of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her.

recognizes the **ontological existence**

recognizes **the existence de facto**

acknowledges the **historical existence**

accepts **the historical name**

# Mixed Inter-Confessional Marriages and the relevance for the Ecumenical Perception of the Council of Crete

## Second P.P. Conference 1982

Concerning mixed marriages contracted between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, on one hand, and between Orthodox and non-Christians, on the other hand:

1. Marriage between Orthodox and heterodox is forbidden according to canonical *akribeia*. Nevertheless, it can be performed by dispensation and love, on the condition that the children born of this marriage will be baptized and raised within the Orthodox Church. The local Orthodox Churches may take decisions concerning the use of the economy in given cases and for particular pastoral needs.
2. Marriage between Orthodox and non-Christians is absolutely forbidden in accordance with canonical *akribeia*. Nevertheless, the local Orthodox Church can decide regarding such a marriage, and make use of *economy* for the Orthodox partner, keeping in mind the particular pastoral needs

## Crete Council 2016

Concerning mixed marriages of Orthodox Christians with non-Orthodox Christians or non-Christians:

1. Marriage between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians is forbidden and is not blessed in the Church, according to canonical *akreibia* (Canon 72 of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council). However, such a marriage can be blessed by dispensation and out of love, on the condition that the children born of this marriage will be baptized and raised within the Orthodox Church.
2. Marriage between Orthodox and non-Christians is categorically forbidden in accordance with canonical *akreibia*.

## Orthodox Ecclesiological understanding

The Orthodox Church finds the unity of the Church on the fact of her **establishment by our Lord Jesus Christ**, and on the **communion** in the **Holy Trinity** and in the **sacraments**. This unity is expressed through the **apostolic succession** and the **patristic tradition** and is lived out in the Church up to the present day. The Orthodox Church has the mission and duty to transmit and preach all the truth contained in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, which also bestows upon the Church her catholic character.

## The World Council of Churches

The Orthodox Churches that are members of the WCC regard as an indispensable condition of their participation in the WCC the foundational article of its Constitution, in accordance with which its members may only be those who **believe in the Lord Jesus Christ** as God and Savior in accordance with the **Scriptures**, and who confess the **Triune God**, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in accordance with the **Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed**.

## Other Churches and Communities

The Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her, and believes that her relations with them should be based on the most speedy and objective clarification possible of the whole **ecclesiological question**, and most especially of their more general teachings on **sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession**.

## Christian and Inter-confessional marriage

Concerning mixed marriages of Orthodox Christians with non-Orthodox Christians or non-Christians:

- i. Marriage between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians is forbidden according to canonical akribeia (Canon 72 of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council).

Total inclusiveness (*branches ecclesiology*), total  
exclusiveness (*Unam Sanctam*)  
or something else?

Thank you!