

The Bilateral Dialogues of the Orthodox Church

Problems arising from the Reception of their Agreed Statements*

by Georges Tsetsis, Geneva

A. Introduction

Originating from the greek word »dialogos«, which is made up of the preposition »dia« (through, by) and the noun »logos« (word, speech), dialogue denotes the articulate and meaningful conversation between two persons, who by means of words seek to understand each other. The nature of dialogue greatly depends from the intentions of those who engage in it. Thus there is a »dialogue of communication«, taking place between two persons or groups having different perceptions of their beliefs, with the ultimate aim to obtain a mutual agreement. But there is also a »dialogue of communion«, presupposing a common opinion of the conversing partners, which enables them to articulate an agreed perception of truth.

It can be said that the bilateral dialogues the Orthodox Church undertook with a variety of sister Churches from the East and the West in the last 25 years, aim precisely at the creation, through a »dialogue of communication«, of a better understanding between Churches, in order to achieve eventually the visible unity of Christendom, in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, through a »dialogue of communion«.

The Third Panorthodox Preconciliar Conference of 1986 articulated in the clearest possible way the reasons which prompted the Orthodox Church to embark in theological discussions with the non-Orthodox Churches and Denominations. »The Orthodox Church«, the Conference said, »recognizes the real existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions. At the same time, she believes that her relations with these Churches and Confessions must be based upon the clarification, as quickly and objectively as possible, of the ecclesiological question and, particularly, of issues concerning their teaching about sacraments, grace, priesthood and apostolic succession.«¹

It is precisely in this spirit that the Orthodox Church, on the basis of a Panorthodox decision taken in 1961 (First Panorthodox Conference of Rhodes), inaugurated in the 70's and 80's theological dialogues with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Old Catholic Church, the Lutheran

* Paper presented to the »Sixth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues«, held at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, 8–13 October 1994, under the general theme: »The process of responding to and receiving the insights of ecumenical dialogues«.

¹ *Episkepsis* 17, N° 369 (15.12.1986) 9.

World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, while she started some preliminary theological conversations with the World Methodist Council and she is about to explore possibilities of conversing with the Baptist World Alliance.

The above dialogues are conducted with a varying degree of success, according to the circumstances and to their historical context. Some of them aim at the mutual acquaintance and better understanding of the theology, life and witness of Churches having no particular historical link. Others, especially those conducted in local level, seek cooperation and common action in the resolving of pastoral problems, as they arise in the day to day life and witness of the Churches, in a given local context. While others point to the restoration of the full union of those Churches, which, once constituted the One undivided Church, but in the course of history, found themselves alienated and separated. In this last category belong, no doubt, the dialogues of the Orthodox with the Roman Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. And it could be said that these dialogues, from a different ecclesiological and historical perspective, have the same importance as the dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church, with the Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed Churches, given the fact that these Churches, until the 16th century, were integral part of the Western Church, but they were separated from her in the aftermath of the Reformation.

B. The present state of the bilaterals of the Orthodox Church

1. The Orthodox/Oriental Orthodox dialogue

Although the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches belong to the same roots and in many respects have a common tradition, paradoxically this dialogue is one of the most recent ones. The **Joint Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Theological Commission** had its first official plenary meeting only in December 1985, in Chambésy, (Geneva), and worked out the methodology, as well as the agenda of the dialogue. Quite naturally, Christology and ecclesiology were chosen as the main objectives of this dialogue. The second plenary of this Commission met in June 1989 at Amba Bishoy Monastery in Egypt and elaborated a first common text on the christological dogma and nominated a sub-Committee to deal with pastoral issues, the Churches are today facing, particularly in the Middle East region. The third and decisive plenary of the Commission met again in Chambésy, in September 1990, and reviewed two reports, on theological and pastoral concerns. On the basis of the Amba Bishoy document, the Chambésy plenary, unanimously declared that both Church traditions, though they may have used christological terms in different ways, »have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox christological faith and the unbroken continuity of the Apostolic Tradition«. It further stated that »this common faith and continuous loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition, should be the basis of unity and communion between Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox«. Consequently the Joint Commission recommended the lifting of the mutual condemnations and the anathemas, pronounced in the context of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon.

A further important step in this dialogue, constituted the meeting of the Joint Commission in November 1993 at Chambésy, which on the basis of the 1989 and 1990 Agreed Statements, worked out proposals on the lifting of the anathemas and on restoring full communion between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, given the fact that the two parties »have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological doctrine and the unbroken continuity of the Apostolic Tradition«.

According to the Joint Commission »The lifting of the anathemas should be made unanimously and simultaneously by the Heads of the respective sides, through the signing of an appropriate ecclesiastical Act, the content of which will include acknowledgement from each side that the other is Orthodox in all respects«, and it should imply:

»a) that the restoration of full communion for both sides is to be immediately implemented;

b) that no past condemnation, synodical or personal, against each other is applicable any more;

c) that a list of Diptychs of the Heads of Churches be agreed upon and used liturgically;

d) that a liturgical committee be appointed by both sides in order to examine the liturgical implications arising from the restoration of communion and propose appropriate forms of concelebration;

e) the matters relating to ecclesiastical jurisdiction be worked out by the local Churches according to common canonical principles«².

No doubt, the consensus achieved in this dialogue is remarkable indeed. It should be admitted, however, that in reaching rapidly a theological convergence, particularly on the christological doctrine, the Joint Commission was greatly helped by the findings of the informal conversations, theologians of the two traditions had in Aarhus (1964), Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970) and Addis Ababa (1971), through the good services of Faith and Order.

2. The Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogue

This dialogue was inaugurated in 1980 in Patmos/Rhodos with great hopes and expectations. Among its major achievements was the adoption of joint documents on »The Mystery of the Church and of Eucharist, in the light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity«, on »Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church« and on »The Sacrament of ordination in the sacramental structure of the Church«. This particular text contained chapters about »Christ and the Holy Spirit«, »Priesthood in the divine economy of Salvation«, »The ministry of the Bishop, the Presbyter and the Deacon« and »The Apostolic Succession«.

Unfortunately, after the resurgence of the Uniate problem in Central and Eastern Europe, the Joint International Commission, both in its Valamo (1988) and Freising (1990) plenaries, was compelled to deal extensively with this particular issue. In its Freising plenary, the Commission considered **Uniatism** as an urgent problem, »to be treated

² *Episkepsis* 24, N° 498 (30.11.1993) 6.

with priority over all subjects», while recognizing that as a method of unity, is in opposition to the common Tradition of the two Churches, and that wherever it was employed as a method, Uniatism not only failed to achieve its goal of bringing the Churches closer together, but on the contrary, provoked new divisions. The Freising plenary emphasized that »dialogue, which is the most suitable way to work for unity, is also the most appropriate form to confront problems, particularly that of **Uniatism**«, and pleaded for the continuation of the Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogue, since this obstacle of Uniatism »has in fact to be overcome, if we wish to continue our progress towards unity«.

After a suspension of its work for about two years, the Joint Commission resumed its work at Balamand (Lebanon) in June 1993 and dealt again exclusively with the issue of the Eastern rite Catholic Churches.

Even if the Balamand plenary was not attended by a number of local Orthodox Churches (Jerusalem, Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Poland), the Joint Commission was in a position to elaborate a text which, in a way, tried to initiate the beginning of renewed relationships between the two Churches. Carrying the title »**Uniatism, method of union of the past, and the present search for full communion**«, the document reiterates the positions of Freising, but also it makes new statements which could be considered as an ecclesiological breakthrough. Thus, it is recognized that what Christ has entrusted to his Church, namely Apostolic faith, sacraments, ministry and the Apostolic succession of Bishops, cannot be considered as exclusive property. Therefore in this perspective the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches recognize each other as **Sister Churches**, responsible together for maintaining the Church of God in fidelity to the divine purpose, more especially in what concerns unity. In this spirit, and in an endeavour of promoting Christian unity, the document concludes that »in the search for re-establishing unity there is no question of conversion of people from one Church to the other in order to ensure their salvation. There is a question of achieving together the will of Christ for his people and the design of God for his Church by means of a common quest by Churches for a full accord on the content of the faith and its implications. This effort is being carried on in the current theological dialogue. The present document is a necessary stage in this dialogue«³.

3. The Orthodox/Anglican dialogue

Discussions with Anglicans started already in the 19th century and continued in the first quarter of the 20th century, particularly in the context of the recognition of the Anglican Orders. The dialogue was revived in the mid 60's. After some years of stagnation, however, the **International Commission of the Anglican/Orthodox Theological Dialogue**, under new leadership, started a second round of conversation in Finland, in the year 1989.

Scripture, Tradition and Councils, ecclesiology, epiclesis, faith and worship, communion of saints, ordination of women, image, symbol and language in relation to the Holy Trinity, the Holy Trinity as Communion, and the Filioque clause were among the sub-

³ »Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and Present Search for Full Communion«, *Ecumenical Trends*, December 1993, p. 174.

jects dealt by this Joint Commission. It is interesting to note that at the above mentioned meeting in Finland, the International Commission recommended that Anglicans consider dropping the Filioque clause in future liturgical revisions. This was an encouraging development. Indeed the resolving of the Filioque controversy, which for many centuries affected negatively the East-West relationships, is of outmost importance and if the Provinces of the Anglican Communion were to restore the Nicene creed to its original form, as the last Lambeth Conference wished (1988), there is no doubt that a major difficulty in Anglican-Orthodox relations would have been removed.

Presently, conversations concentrate on the doctrine of the Person of Jesus-Christ, his relationship to the Holy Spirit, to creation, to humanity and to the Church. The International Commission met between 16–23 October 1994, in Chambésy, and dealt with points of agreement reached so far by Anglicans and Orthodox⁴.

4. The Orthodox/Old Catholic dialogue

This is one of the oldest bilaterals of the Orthodox Church, which started already in the 19th century, in the aftermath of the First Vatican Council. The dialogue took an official character in 1965 after a decision taken by the Third Panorthodox Conference of Rhodes (1964). A variety of theological issues, have been debated and agreed upon in 7 plenary meetings of the Mixed Orthodox/Old Catholic Theological Commission. These issues were the Doctrine of God, Christology, Mariology, the Church and her nature, authority, infallibility, Scripture and Tradition, Apostolic succession, Ecumenical Councils, the Sacraments of Penitence, Holy Unction, Priesthood and Marriage, as well as eschatology and ecclesial communion. The dialogue was concluded after the last meeting of the Mixed Commission, held in Kavala (Greece), in October 1987, and according to the established procedures, its overall results were communicated to the Ecumenical Patriarch and to the Archbishop of Utrecht, in order to officially declare the conclusion of this dialogue.

Needless to say that the conclusion of the Orthodox/Old Catholic conversations does not automatically mean that sacramental unity between the two Churches can be restored. On the one hand, one has to see how the common theological understanding, contained in the agreed statements, is going to be incorporated in the official teaching of the two Churches and expressed in worship and catechism. And on the other hand, one has to wait for an Old Catholic reaction to the Orthodox warning that the sacramental communion of Old Catholics with Anglicans, Lutherans and other Protestant Confessions, constitutes an impediment for the establishment of full communion between the two Churches. It goes without saying that another matter complicating further the anticipated union, is the recent practice of some local Old Catholic Churches to ordain women to priesthood. The green light given by the Old Catholic International Congress in August 1990 to dioceses, allowing them to ordain women at their discretion, certainly will not facilitate the relationships.

⁴ *Episkepsis* 24, N° 510 (31.10.1994) 3.

5. *The Orthodox/Lutheran dialogue*

The work of the **Orthodox-Lutheran Joint Commission** was inaugurated in 1981. After some exploratory meetings in order to fix the topics of the dialogue and the methodology to be followed, this Commission produced a first joint text during its Allentown, USA, meeting (May 1985) on the »Divine Revelation«. The text in a way determined the content of the discussions that followed. Thus the Crete plenary of the Joint Commission (May 1987), dealt with »Scripture and Tradition«, the Bad Segeberg encounter (September 1989), produced an agreed statement on »The Canon and the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture«, while the Moscow plenary (1991) explored the theme »Authority In and Of the Church«. The same topic was further elaborated by the Joint Commission in its Aarhus meeting (July 1993) with special emphasis on Councils. The outcome of the discussions was an agreed statement on »Ecumenical Councils and Authority In and Of the Church«, regarded as a necessary first step towards a more elaborate Joint Statement on Authority. The next plenary meeting scheduled for 1995, will be dealing with »The Lutheran and Orthodox Understanding of Salvation in the light of the Ecumenical Councils«.

In this way the exploratory contacts between Orthodox and Lutherans started already in the 16th century, shortly after the Reformation begun, took a concrete form in our days, helping the two partners to be better acquainted with each other and find at least a common theological vocabulary.

6. *The Orthodox/Reformed dialogue*

The official **dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Churches of the Reformation** (represented by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches) was inaugurated at Leuenberg (near Basel) in March 1988. During this exploratory meeting participants after an exchange of views about the historical past of the two Churches, had a first theological discussion on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, with particular emphasis to its relevance and interpretation today.

The second Orthodox-Reformed meeting took place in Minsk (Byelorussia) in October 1990, and dealt with »The Biblical and Patristic doctrine on the Trinity« and »The Trinity in the worship of the Church«.

The third Orthodox/Reformed encounter took place in March 1992 in Kappel-am-Albis, near Zürich. Extending its earlier conversations on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the meeting dealt with »The theological implications of the Incarnation«.

The fourth plenary of the Orthodox/Reformed Joint Commission met at Limassol (Cyprus) in January 1994. Its agenda included the following themes: »The Holy Trinity in Creation and Incarnation«, »Antidosis (communicatio) Idiomatum and Theosis (Deification) of Human Nature« and »The Christ of Revelation and the Christ of History«. On the basis of discussions on the above presentations, the Joint Commission produced a Common Statement on »The Doctrine of Christology«, which was sent to the Orthodox and Reformed Churches for study and further discussion.

7. The Orthodox/Methodist dialogue

This dialogue is in a process of preparation. A Planning Committee met in July 1992 in Oxford for an initial presentation of the historical and theological selfunderstanding and ecclesiology of each side.

The Planning Committee met again at the Headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in July 1993, and dealt with the topics: »Tradition and the Spirit of Faith in a Methodist Perspective« and »Preaching the Gospel and the Unity of the Church in the Contemporary World«. The Planning Committee, while recognizing that the ultimate goal of full organic unity is at this stage no more than a distant hope, believed that Orthodox and Methodists have much to gain by coming to know each other better. This is why it recommended the opening of an official international dialogue between Orthodoxy and Methodism. The Preparatory Committee will meet again in 1995 in order to prepare the first official meeting, to be held hopefully in 1997, subject to approval by the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, in concertation with the Ecumenical Patriarch, and by the Assembly of the World Methodist Council in 1996.

8. The Orthodox/Baptist dialogue

The Orthodox/Baptist dialogue is presently in an exploratory stage. Interest for an encounter of the two Churches was manifested by the Baptist World Alliance, after the recent political changes in Central and Eastern Europe and the tensions between the Orthodox and Baptists which followed. A Baptist delegation visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate in October 1994, established a first contact and discussed further plans with the Synodical Committee for Interchurch relations.

C. The issue of »reception« in the Orthodox Church today

The Fifth Forum on bilateral conversations, speaking about »reception«, had made reference to Newman's idea that »the ultimate test of doctrine is whether it is taken up and lived out in the life of the Church«⁵. Indeed the term »reception« denotes the process by which the people of God, guided by the Holy Spirit, accept new answers to emerging issues in the life of the Church, provided they do not contradict the apostolic faith and they are in continuity and harmony with the teaching of the universal Church. This process was applied in the early Church, when doctrinal teachings, canons and resolutions of Ecumenical and Regional Councils were shared with the local Churches, not only for information, but also for their implementation in the daily life of the faithful. In this process Christians were able to recognize in these new answers a continuity with the faith and tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Reception is, however, a continuing process. As Archbishop Keshishian remarks, every succeeding generation must receive and re-receive, interpret and re-interpret, for-

⁵ Fifth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, Report, (Faith and Order paper Nr. 156), p. 42.

multate and re-formulate the teachings of the Councils in the light of its own understanding of the apostolic faith and vis-à-vis its particular situation⁶.

Can this be achieved today with the bilateral conversations taking place in the context of the wider Ecumenical Movement? The answer could be affirmative, with the proviso, however, that the conversing partners, while recognizing the objective difficulties towards Christian unity, could adopt a methodology which will enable them to articulate the common Christian faith, affirmed by the Ecumenical Councils of the One undivided Church. A methodology which, from an »ecumenism in space«, aiming at agreements between Churches as they exist presently, will shift to an »ecumenism in time«, to an ecumenism »in agreement with all ages«. This shift is of paramount ecclesiological importance for the Orthodox Church, for the simple reason that »the common ground of the existing denominations must be sought in the past, in their common history, in that common ancient and apostolic tradition, from which all of them derive their existence«⁷.

Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamos pertinently remarks that »the catholicity of the Church is not simply a matter of bringing together existing cultures and nations in their present state of concerns«, but a matter of uniting »historical identities and traditions, so that they may be transcended in the unity of the body of Christ«⁸.

Seen from this perspective therefore, the problem of receiving the outcome of a bilateral dialogue appears to be closely linked with the problem of ecclesiology. This is why in debating the issue of the reception or acceptance of agreed statements, one has to have in mind the concept of the Church.

What is today the Orthodox perception of »reception« so far as the agreed statements of the bilaterals are concerned?

Reacting to the Lima Document on »Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry« (BEM) and with reference to its »reception«, an ad-hoc inter-Orthodox symposium (Boston 1985), pointed out that »the notion of reception of the BEM document is different from the classical Orthodox understanding of the reception of decrees and decisions of the Holy Councils«, adding that »reception« in the framework of modern Ecumenical Movement, »is a step forward in the process of our growing together in mutual trust, towards doctrinal convergence and ultimately towards communion with one another, in continuity with the apostles and the teachings of the Universal Church«⁹.

It goes without saying that the same could be affirmed with regard to the outcome of the bilateral dialogues. For the agreed statements they produce are by no means »confessions of faith«, but only steps of an evolving process, leading to unity. This is particularly true with the dialogues of Churches coming from different theological horizons and having different historical backgrounds. In this case, »reception« primarily signifies recognition of the existence of the »others«, a discovery or re-discovery of the beliefs and traditions of our interlocutors, within a deliberate effort however to manifest the oneness of the Church and her saving ministry.

⁶ A. Keshishian, Conciliar Fellowship, A Common Goal, Geneva 1992, p. 84.

⁷ Orthodox Statement at the Third Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi 1961, in: C. Patelos (ed.), The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement, Geneva 1978, p. 98.

⁸ John of Pergamos, Action and Icon ..., in: Th. Wieser, Whither Ecumenism?, Geneva 1986, p. 63.

⁹ G. Limouris (comp.), Orthodox Visions on Ecumenism, Geneva 1994, p. 106.

The unity we seek in the Ecumenical Movement, be it in the context of Faith and Order or in the framework of the bilateral dialogues, cannot be the product of the convergence documents, such as BEM, or of agreed statements, like those emanating from our theological encounters. Certainly such encounters are needed and they should be of serious and high quality. Their aim however should be directed towards the understanding of the existential significance of the Church, particularly of her visible structure, which provides human beings with the possibility of entering into new and saving relationships with God and the world.

D. Problems arising in the »reception« process

Without minimizing the value and utmost importance of the dialogue with Churches emerged in the course of the Reformation movement, it could be affirmed that the bilaterals of the Orthodox Church with the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church have a particular significance. Not only because of the common heritage of these churches, but also because, at a certain moment of history, they were protagonists of the painful schisms of the 5th and the 11th centuries, and therefore they have today a debt towards the Lord, namely to restore his broken body.

The agreement reached between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches on the christological doctrine, undoubtedly eliminated the most important obstacle in the way towards the full union of these two Sister Churches of the Christian East. Presently, the convergence document forwarded by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the local Orthodox Churches, is under study, particularly so far as the lifting of the anathemas is concerned.

Most of the Orthodox Churches have welcomed with satisfaction this historical breakthrough, while recognizing that there are important ecclesiological questions to be resolved before the full union between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches is proclaimed. The final authority to receive the agreed statement and apply its contents is of course a Panorthodox Council. Yet, there are indications that at least some local Orthodox Churches, having experienced in the past schisms in their own body, will be reluctant to receive the agreed statement, with the understandable argument that no Church can afford an eventual split in her own body, for the sake of union with another Church.

The same could be affirmed with regard to the dialogue of the Orthodox with the Roman Catholic Church, particularly so far as the Balamand document is concerned. At this stage it appears that it will be premature to expect the »reception« of its contents, because of a rejection, coming not only from some Orthodox quarters, accusing the Orthodox members of the Joint Commission as betrayers of their faith, after having recognized the reality and existence of the Uniate Churches today, but also from Uniate circles, particularly in Ukraine and Transylvania, who blame the Roman Catholic members of the Commission for jeopardising their future.

Hence the question: What is the value of the Balamand document, if on the one hand Catholic Churches of Eastern rite intend to go their own way and on the other, some Or-

thodox reject it, in a deliberate effort to irritate the pleroma against the Roman Catholic Church?

A third problematic area concerning »reception«, relates to the agreed statements produced by the Orthodox – Old Catholic dialogue. This dialogue was successfully concluded eight years ago, but no action was been taken so far by the Orthodox. The »orthodoxy« of the documents signed in this dialogue, is not questioned whatsoever. What prevents, however, the reception of these documents, is the nature of the affirmations the Old Catholics make in their dialogues with non-Orthodox, being in total contradiction with the affirmations they make when they converse with the Orthodox. Another factor for the Orthodox reluctance to officially declare the conclusion of the dialogue, is the full sacramental communion of the Old Catholics with the Anglican Church, the Philippines Independent Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany, namely with Churches not in communion with the Orthodox Church.

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The outcome of the bilaterals is periodically evaluated by the Orthodox Church, in order to have a comprehensive idea about their orientation and development and make sure that they are in conformity with the directives given by the Third Panorthodox Preconciliar Conference. Such an evaluation took place on August 30 and 31, 1994, at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, during a meeting of the Synodical Committees on Inter-orthodox and Inter-christian Affairs with the Orthodox co-presidents and secretaries of the various Joint Theological Commissions. This was an occasion to receive a detailed account of the progress made so far in the bilaterals and to discuss plans so far as their future agenda is concerned.

One interesting development in this meeting was the conclusion that the evaluation of the Orthodox bilaterals could not be productive without a parallel indepth study of the agreed documents, our dialogue partners sign when they meet among themselves. The more so, as they also deal with issues which are on the agenda of their bilaterals with the Orthodox. Hence the move of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to appoint a Theological Commission with the mandate to study the documents of the bilaterals of Sister Churches, detect, if any, their contradictions and bring them to the attention of the members of the Inter-orthodox Commissions for appropriate action.

E. Concluding remarks

In view of the proliferation of bilateral dialogues in our days, what is imperative is to ensure a coherence both in their orientations and in their anticipated results. And, the most important, to avoid contradictions. A bilateral dialogue is above all a dialogue of truth. It is in this sense that the Orthodox Church conceived her dialogues 25 years ago and inaugurated theological conversations with a variety of Churches and denominations, with the sole aim to facilitate the common journey towards our union. If however, participants in these dialogues formulate contradicting positions in order to ensure, out of

ecumenical courtesy, some convergence with the theological tradition of the interlocutor of the moment¹⁰, then not only they fail to manifest the truth, but also they hinder the common search of Christian unity, which is precisely the main goal of our theological dialogues.

¹⁰ As the late W. A. Visser't Hooft was pointing out quite pertinently, »Ecumenical dialogue, which for reasons of politeness or opportunism conceals the real issues, does far more harm than good. We need maximum ecumenism, in which each church brings the fullness of its conviction, not minimum ecumenism in which we are left with a meagre common denominator«. *W. A. Visser' t Hooft*, *The Ecumenical Movement, from Amsterdam to Geneva (1948–1966)*, in: *The welcome and the Speeches of Dr Visser't Hooft and E. C. Blake at the University of Athens*, Athens 1967, p. 33.