Basic Principles Of The Attitude Of The Russian Orthodox Church Toward The Other Christian Confessions

adopted by
the Jubilee Bishops’ Council
of the Russian Orthodox Church
August 14, 2000
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Orthodox Brotherhood Of Apostles Saints Peter And Paul
Orthodox Fellowship of All Saints of China
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1. The unity of the Church and the sin of human divisions

1.1. The Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ established by our Lord and Saviour Himself, the Church confirmed and sustained by the Holy Spirit, the Church about which the Saviour Himself has said: “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” ¹. She is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the keeper and provider of the Holy Sacraments throughout the world, “the pillar and ground of the truth” ². She bears full responsibility for the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s Gospel, as well as full power to witness to “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” ³.

1.2. The Church of Christ is one and unique (St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church). The unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, is based on the fact that she has one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ ⁴, and that working in her is one Holy Spirit Who gives life to the Body of the Church and unites all her members with Christ as her Head.

1.3. The Church is the unity of a “new humanity in Christ”. By His incarnation the Son of God “commenced afresh the long line of human beings” ⁵, creating a new grace-bearing people, the spiritual posterity of the Second Adam. The unity of the Church is above

¹ Mt. 16:18  
² Tim. 3:15  
³ Jude 3  
⁴ Eph. 5:23  
⁵ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses, 3, 18
every human and earthly union, for it has been given from above as a perfect and divine gift. The members of the Church are united in Christ like vines, rooted in Him and gathered in one eternal and spiritual life.

1.4. The unity of the Church overcomes all barriers and frontiers, including racial, linguistic and social differences. The message of salvation is to be proclaimed to all nations in order to bring them into one fold, to unite them by the power of faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

1.5. In the Church, enmity and alienation are overcome, and humanity, divided by sin, is united in love in the image of the Consubstantial Trinity.

1.6. The Church is the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the fullness of uninterrupted grace-filled life and spiritual experience. “Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace.” This unity of grace-filled life is the foundation of the unity and changelessness of the Church’s faith. Always and without change “the Holy Spirit teaches through the holy fathers and doctors. The Catholic Church cannot transgress or even err or utter falsehood instead of truth: for the Holy Spirit, who always acts through the faithfully serving fathers and doctors of the Church, guards her against every mistake.”

1.7. The Church is universal, but she exists in the world in the form of various Local Churches. This does not diminish the unity of the Church in any way. “The Church, illumined with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body

6 Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8
7 Eph. 4:3
8 St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses, 3, 24
9 The Letter of Eastern Patriarchs
10 St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church
She spreads her branches, laden with fruit, over the whole world. He freely flowing streams extend to the farthest regions, and yet throughout all this her head is one, her source one, and she is one mother, rich in the abundance of her fruitfulness 10”.

1.8. Church unity is bound up inseparably with the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which the faithful, partaking of the one Body of Christ, are really and truly joined in the one and catholic Body, in the mystery of Christ’s love, in the transforming power of the Spirit. “Indeed, if ‘we are all partakers of that one bread’, then we all comprise one Body 11, for Christ cannot be divided. That is why the Church is called the Body of Christ, while we are ‘members in particular’, according to the understanding of the apostle Paul12 13”.

1.9. The One, Holy, Catholic Church is the Apostolic Church. Through the divinely instituted priesthood the gifts of the Holy Spirit are communicated to the faithful. The apostolic succession of the hierarchy, beginning from the holy apostles, is the basis of the communion and unity of grace-filled life. Any deviation from the lawful Church authority is a deviation from the Holy Spirit, from Christ Himself. “See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. <...> Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude of the people also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church 14”.

1.10. It is only through relationship with a particular community that each member of the Church realises his communion with the whole Church. By breaking
canonical relations with his Local Church a Christian damages his grace-filled unity with the whole Church body, tearing himself away from it. Any sin distances a person from the Church to a greater or lesser degree, but it does not cut him off from her altogether. In the understanding of the Early Church, excommunication was exclusion from the eucharistic assembly. Those excommunicated, however, were never re-admitted to Church communion through re-baptism. Faith in the indelible nature of baptism is confessed in the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed: “I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sin”. Apostolic Canon 47 reads: “Let a bishop or presbyter who shall baptise again one who has rightly received baptism... be deposed”.

1.11. In this way the Church bore witness that those who have been excommunicated retain a certain “seal” of belonging to the people of God. By accepting them back the Church brings back to life those who have already been baptised by the Spirit into the one Body. Even while excommunicating one of her members, sealed by her on the day of his baptism, the Church hopes for his return. She considers excommunication itself to be a means of spiritual rebirth for such person.

1.12. Throughout centuries Christ’s commandment of unity has been repeatedly violated. Contrary to the catholic unanimity enjoined by God, differences and divisions have arisen in Christianity. The Church has always shown a strict and principled attitude towards those who have challenged the purity of her saving faith and those who have brought division and confusion into the Church: “Why are there strifes, and tumults, and divisions, and schisms, and wars among you? Have we not [all] one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? And
have we not one calling in Christ? Why do we divide and tear to pieces the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own body, and have reached such a height of madness as to forget that we are members one of another? 15”

1.13. Throughout Christian history, not only individual Christians but also entire Christian communities moved away from the unity with the Orthodox Church. Some of them have perished in course of history, while others have survived through the centuries. The most fundamental divisions of the first millennium, which have survived to this day, took place after the Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils, when some Christian communities refused to accept their decisions. As a result, the Assyrian Church of the East and the non-Chalcedonian Churches, including the Coptic, Armenian, Syrian Jacobite, Ethiopian and Malabar Churches, are separated even today. In the second millennium, the separation of the Roman Church was followed by internal divisions in Western Christianity, brought about by the Reformation, which resulted in the continual formation of different Christian denominations outside of communion with the Roman see. There were also breakaways from the unity with Local Orthodox Churches, including the Russian Church.

1.14. Delusions and heresies result from a person’s desire to assert himself and set himself apart. Every division or schism implies a certain measure of falling away from the plenitude of the Church. A division, even if it happens for non-doctrinal reasons, is a violation of Orthodox teaching on the nature of the Church and leads ultimately to distortions in the faith.
1. The unity of the Church and the sin of human divisions

1.15. The Orthodox Church, through the mouths of the holy fathers, affirms that salvation can be attained only in the Church of Christ. At the same time however, communities which have fallen away from Orthodoxy have never been viewed as fully deprived of the grace of God. Any break from communion with the Church inevitably leads to an erosion of her grace-filled life, but not always to its complete loss in these separated communities. This is why the Orthodox Church does not receive those coming to her from non-Orthodox communities only through the Sacrament of Baptism. In spite of the rupture of unity, there remains a certain incomplete fellowship which serves as the pledge of a return to unity in the Church, to catholic fullness and oneness.

1.16. The ecclesial status of those who have separated themselves from the Church does not lend itself to simple definition. In a divided Christendom, there are still certain characteristics which make it one: the Word of God, faith in Christ as God and Saviour come in the flesh 16, and sincere devotion.

1.17. The existence of various rites of reception (through Baptism, through Chrismation, through Repentance) shows that the Orthodox Church relates to the different non-Orthodox confessions in different ways. The criterion is the degree to which the faith and order of the Church, as well as the norms of Christian spiritual life, are preserved in a particular confession. By establishing various rites of reception, however, the Orthodox Church does not assess the extent to which grace-filled life has either been preserved intact or distorted in a non-Orthodox confession, considering this to be a mystery of God’s providence and judgement.

16 1 Jn. 1:1-2; 4, 2, 9
1.18. The Orthodox Church is the true Church in which the Holy Tradition and the fullness of God’s saving grace are preserved intact. She has preserved the heritage of the apostles and holy fathers in its integrity and purity. She is aware that her teaching, liturgical structures and spiritual practice are the same as those of the apostolic proclamation and the Tradition of the Early Church.

1.19. Orthodoxy is not a national or cultural attribute of the Eastern Church. Orthodoxy is an inner quality of the Church. It is the preservation of the doctrinal truth, the liturgical and hierarchical order and the principles of spiritual life which, unchangeably and uninterruptedly, have been present in the Church since apostolic times. One should not yield to the temptation to idealize the past or to ignore the tragic shortcomings and failures which marked the history of the Church. Above all the great fathers of the Church themselves give an example of spiritual self-criticism. The history of the Church in the IV-VII centuries knew of not a few cases when a significant proportion of believers fell into heresy. But history also reveals that the Church struggled on principled terms with the heresies that were infecting her children and that there were cases where those who had gone astray were healed of heresy, experienced repentance and returned to the bosom of the Church. This tragic experience of misunderstanding emerging from within the Church herself and of the struggle with it during the period of the ecumenical councils has taught the children of the Orthodox Church to be vigilant. The Orthodox Church, while humbly bearing witness to her preservation of the truth, at the same time remembers all the temptations which arose during her history.
1. The unity of the Church and the sin of human divisions

1.20. Due to the violation of the commandment of unity which has led to the historical tragedy of schism, divided Christians, instead of being an example of unity in love in the image of the Most Holy Trinity, have become a source of scandal. Christian division has become an open and bleeding wound on the Body of Christ. The tragedy of divisions has become a serious visible distortion of Christian universality, an obstacle in the way of her witness to Christ before the world. For the reality of this witness of the Church of Christ depends to a considerable degree on her ability to live up to the truths preached by her in the life and practice of Christian communities.
2. The quest for the restoration of the unity

2.1. The essential goal of relations between the Orthodox Church and other Christian confessions is the restoration of that unity among Christians which is required of us by God. Unity is part of God’s design and belongs to the very essence of Christianity. It is a task of the highest priority for the Orthodox Church at every level of her life.

2.2. Indifference to this task or its rejection is a sin against God’s commandment of unity. According to St. Basil the Great, “all who are really and truly serving the Lord should have this one aim – to bring back into union the Churches that have been severed from one another”.

2.3. Nevertheless, while recognising the need to restore our broken Christian unity, the Orthodox Church asserts that genuine unity is possible only in the bosom of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. All other “models” of unity seem to us to be unacceptable.

2.4. The Orthodox Church cannot accept the assumption that despite the historical divisions, the fundamental and profound unity of Christians has not been broken and that the Church should be understood as coextensive with the entire “Christian world”, that Christian
unity exists across denominational barriers and that the disunity of the churches belongs exclusively to the imperfect level of human relations. According to this conception, the Church remains one, but this oneness is not, as it were, sufficiently manifest in visible form. In this model of unity, the task of Christians is understood not as the restoration of a lost unity but as the manifestation of an existing unity. This model repeats the teaching on “the invisible Church” which appeared during the Reformation.

2.5. The so-called “branch theory”, which is connected with the conception referred to above and asserts the normal and even providential nature of Christianity existing in the form of particular “branches”, is also totally unacceptable.

2.6. Orthodoxy cannot accept that Christian divisions are caused by the inevitable imperfections of Christian history and that they exist only on the historical surface and can be healed or overcome by compromises between denominations.

2.7. The Orthodox Church cannot recognise “the equality of the denominations”. Those who have fallen away from the Church cannot re-unite with her in their present state. The existing dogmatic differences should be overcome, not simply bypassed, and this means that the way to unity lies through repentance, conversion and renewal.

2.8. Also unacceptable is the idea that all the divisions are essentially tragic misunderstandings, that disagreements seem irreconcilable only because of a lack of mutual love and a reluctance to realise that, in spite of all the differences and dissimilarities, there is suf-
icient unity and harmony in “what is most important”. Our divisions cannot be reduced to human passions, to egoism, much less to cultural, social and political circumstances which are secondary from the Church’s point of view. Also unacceptable is the argument that the Orthodox Church differs from other Christian communities with which she does not have communion only in secondary matters. The divisions and differences cannot all be reduced to various non-theological factors.

2.9. The Orthodox Church also rejects the assumption that the unity of Christendom can only be restored through common Christian service to the world. Christian unity cannot be restored through agreement on earthly matters, in which case Christians would be united in what is secondary but still differ in what is fundamental.

2.10. It is inadmissible to introduce relativism into the realm of faith, to limit unity in faith to a narrow set of necessary truths so that beyond them “freedom in what is doubtful” may be allowed. Even a position of tolerance towards differences in faith is unacceptable. At the same time, however, one should not confuse unity of faith and the form of its expression.

2.11. The division of Christendom is a division in the experience of faith itself, not just in doctrinal formulations. Formal doctrinal unity does not exhaust what is meant by the unity of the Church, though it is one of its essential conditions.

2.12. The unity of the Church is first of all a unity and communion in the Sacraments. True communion in the Sacraments, however, does not have anything to
do with the practice of so-called “inter-communion”. Unity can be realized only in an identical grace-filled experience and life, in the faith of the Church, in the fullness of sacramental life in the Holy Spirit.

2.13. The restoration of Christian unity in faith and love can come only from above as a gift of Almighty God. The source of unity is in God, and therefore merely human efforts to restore it will be in vain, for “except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it 3”. Only our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has commanded us to be one, can give us the power to fulfill his commandment, for He is “the way, the truth, and the life 4”. The task of Orthodox Christians is to be co-workers with God in the task of salvation in Christ. As the holy fathers have said: God saves us, but not without us.

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3 Ps. 126 (127):1

4 Jn. 14:6
3. Orthodox witness before the non-Orthodox world

3.1. The Orthodox Church is the guardian of the Tradition and the grace-filled gifts of the Early Church. Her primary task, therefore, in her relations with non-Orthodox confessions is to bear continuous and persistent witness which will lead to the truth expressed in this Tradition becoming understandable and acceptable. According to the Third Pre-Conciliar Panorthodox Conference (1986): “The Orthodox Church, in her profound conviction and ecclesiastical consciousness of being the bearer of and the witness to the faith and tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, firmly believes that she occupies a central place in matters relating to the promotion of Christian unity within the contemporary world…It is the mission and duty of the Orthodox Church to transmit, in all its fullness, the truth contained in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, the truth which gives to the Church her universal character. The responsibility of the Orthodox Church, as well as her ecumenical mission regarding Church unity, were expressed by the Ecumenical Councils. These, in particular, stressed the indissoluble link existing between true faith and sacramental communion. The Orthodox Church has always sought to draw the different Christian Churches and confessions into a joint search for the lost unity of Christians, so that all might reach the unity of faith…”
3. Orthodox witness before the non-Orthodox world

3.2. The task of the Orthodox witness is entrusted to every member of the Church. Orthodox Christians should clearly realise that the faith they preserve and confess has a global and universal character. The Church is not only called to teach her children, but also to witness to the truth before those who have left her. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 1”. The duty of Orthodox Christians is to bear witness to the truth that has been entrusted to the Church for ever, since, according to St. Paul, “we are labourers together with God 2”.

1 Rom. 10:14

2 1 Cor. 3:9
4. Dialogue with the non-Orthodox

4.1. The Russian Orthodox Church has carried on theological dialogue with non-Orthodox Christians for over two centuries. This dialogue has been characterised by the combination of a principled dogmatic approach and a fraternal love. This principle was formulated in the “Response to the Letter of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate” [?] (1903) as a method of theological dialogue with the Anglicans and the Old Catholics. With regard to non-Orthodox confessions, it was said, “there must be fraternal readiness to help them by explanations, normal consideration for their best wishes, all possible forbearance towards their natural perplexities, given the age-old division, but at the same time the firm confession of the truth of our Universal Church as a sole guardian of Christ’s heritage and a sole saving ark of divine grace... Our task with regard to them should be... without putting before them unnecessary obstacle for union by being inappropriately intolerant and suspicious... to interpret for them our faith and unchangeable conviction that it is only our Eastern Orthodox Church, which has preserved intact the entire pledge of Christ, that is at present the Universal Church, and thus to show them in fact what they should consider and decide upon if they really believe that salvation is bound up with life in the Church and sincerely wish to be united with her...”
4. Dialogue with the non-Orthodox

4.2. Characteristic of the dialogues conducted by the Russian Orthodox Church with other Christian confessions is their theological nature. The task of theological dialogue is to explain to her partners in dialogue the ecclesial consciousness of the Orthodox Church, the foundations of her doctrine, canonical order and spiritual tradition, and to dispel perplexities and existing stereotypes.

4.3. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church conduct dialogues with non-Orthodox confessions on the basis of faithfulness to the apostolic and patristic Tradition of the Orthodox Church and the teaching of the Ecumenical and Local Councils. Any dogmatic concessions or compromises in the faith are excluded. No document or paper adopted in theological dialogues and talks is obligatory for any of the Orthodox Churches until it is adopted by the Orthodox Church as a whole.

4.4. From an Orthodox perspective, the way to reuniification for the non-Orthodox lies through the transformation and healing of their dogmatic consciousness and experience. Along this path, the issues discussed in the era of the Ecumenical Councils should be thought through once more. An important part of the dialogue with the non-Orthodox confessions is the study of the spiritual and theological heritage of the holy fathers, the mouthpieces of the faith of the Church.

4.5. Witness cannot be a monologue, since it assumes the existence of listeners and therefore of communication. Dialogue implies two sides, a mutual openness to communication, a willingness to understand, not only an “open mouth”, but also a “heart enlarged”1. That is why the problem of theological language, compre-

1 cf. 2 Cor. 6:11
hension and interpretation should become one of the most important issues in the dialogue of the Orthodox theology with other confessions.

4.6. It is gratifying and inspiring that non-Orthodox theological thought, as expressed by its best representatives, has shown a sincere and profound interest in studying the patristic heritage and the faith and order of the Early Church. At the same time, it must be admitted that between Orthodox and non-Orthodox theology there are still many unsolved problems and differences of opinion. Moreover, even the formal similarities existing in many aspects of the faith do not point to authentic unity, since the doctrinal elements are given different interpretations in the different theological traditions.

4.7. Dialogue with non-Orthodox confessions has revived the understanding that the one catholic truth and norm can be expressed and embodied in a variety of cultural and linguistic contexts. In the course of dialogue it is essential for Orthodox theologians to be able to distinguish between a specific context and an actual deviation from catholic plenitude. It is also necessary to investigate the question of the limits of diversity in the one catholic tradition.

4.8. Joint study centres, groups and programs should be established within the theological dialogues. It is important that joint theological conferences, seminars and scholarly meetings, exchange of delegations, exchange of publications and information as well as joint publishing projects should be held on a regular basis. The exchange of experts, teachers and theologians is also of great significance.
4. Dialogue with the non-Orthodox

4.9. It is especially important for the Russian Orthodox Church to send her theologians to the major centres of non-Orthodox theological scholarship. It is also necessary to invite non-Orthodox theologians to the theological schools and other educational institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church to study Orthodox theology. The theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church should pay more attention in their curricula to study of the progress and results of theological dialogues and to the non-Orthodox confessions.

4.10. Along with theological themes proper, dialogue should also be conducted on a wide range of problems involved in the relationship between the Church and the world. Among the important areas in the development of relations with the non-Orthodox confessions is joint work in the service of society. In situations where it does not come into conflict with Orthodox faith and spiritual practice, joint programs of religious education and catechism should be developed.

4.11. The bilateral dialogues conducted by the Russian Orthodox Church differ from her multilateral relations and participation in inter-Christian organisations in that they are structured in size and form as she thinks most suitable at the time. The yard-stick and criterion here is the success of a dialogue itself and the readiness of the partner in dialogue to consider the position taken by the Russian Orthodox Church on a broad (not only theological) range of ecclesiastical and social problems.
5. Multilateral dialogue and participation in the work of inter-Christian organisations

5.1. The Russian Orthodox Church conducts dialogues with non-Orthodox confessions not only on a bilateral but also on a multilateral level, while also participating in pan-Orthodox delegations and in the work of inter-Christian organisations.

5.2. With regard to her membership in various Christian organisations, she adheres to the following criteria. The Russian Orthodox Church cannot participate in international, regional or national Christian organisations in which (a) the constitution or rules require the renunciation of the doctrine or traditions of the Orthodox Church; (b) the Orthodox Church has no opportunity to bear witness to herself as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; (c) the decision-making process does not take into account the ecclesiological consciousness of the Orthodox Church; and (d) the rules and procedures make a “majority opinion” obligatory upon the members.

5.3. The level and forms of the Russian Orthodox Church’s participation in an international Christian organisation should take into account its internal dynamics, agenda, priorities and general nature.
5. Multilateral dialogue and participation in the work of inter-Christian organisations

5.4. The scope and extent of the Russian Orthodox Church’s participation in an international Christian organisation is determined by the Church authorities on the basis of its usefulness for the Church.

5.5. While stressing the great importance of theological dialogue and discussion concerning the norms of faith, Church order and the principles of the spiritual life, the Russian Orthodox Church, like the other Local Orthodox Churches, considers it possible and beneficial to participate in the work of various international organisations in such spheres of service to the world as diakonia, social service and peacemaking. The Russian Orthodox Church maintains co-operation with various Christian denominations and international Christian organisations in the task of common witness before secular society.

5.6. The Russian Orthodox Church maintains working relations on the level of membership or co-operation with a wide variety of international Christian organisations, as well as with regional and national Councils of Churches and Christian agencies specialising in diakonia, youth work and peacemaking.
6. Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church with the non-Orthodox on her canonical territory

6.1. The relations of the Russian Orthodox Church with non-Orthodox Christian communities in the CIS and Baltic states should be carried out in the same spirit of fraternal co-operation in which the Orthodox Church works with other traditional confessions in order to co-ordinate social work, promote social harmony and put an end to proselytism on the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church.

6.2. The Russian Orthodox Church maintains that the mission of the traditional confessions is possible only if it is carried out without proselytism and not at the expense of “stealing” the faithful, especially with the aid of material benefits. The Christian communities in the CIS and Baltic countries are called to unite their efforts for reconciliation and the moral revival of society and to raise their voice in the defence of human life and human dignity.

6.3. The Orthodox Church draws a clear distinction between the non-Orthodox confessions which declare their faith in the Holy Trinity and the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ, on the one hand, and the sects which
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reject fundamental Christian doctrines on the other. While recognising the right of non-Orthodox Christians to witness to their faith and conduct religious education among the population groups that traditionally belong to them, the Orthodox Church is against any destructive missionary activity on the part of sects.
7. Internal tasks in relation to dialogue with non-Orthodox confessions

7.1. While rejecting views which are erroneous from the point of view of the Orthodox doctrine, the Orthodox are called to treat with Christian love those who confess these views. In their relations with the non-Orthodox, the Orthodox should bear witness to the holiness of Orthodoxy and to the oneness of the Church. In bearing witness to the Truth, however, the Orthodox should be worthy of their witness: causing offence to non-Orthodox Christians is inadmissible.

7.2. It is essential to give the members of the Church competent and trustworthy information about the progress, tasks and prospects of the contacts and dialogue of the Russian Orthodox Church with non-Orthodox confessions.

7.3. The Church condemns those who, by using inauthentic information, deliberately distort the task of the Orthodox Church in her witness before the non-Orthodox world and consciously slander the Church authorities, accusing them of the “betrayal” of Orthodoxy. These people, who sow seeds of temptation among ordinary believers, should be subject to canonical sanctions. In this regard, guidance is given by the decisions
of the pan-Orthodox meeting in Thessaloniki in 1998: “The delegates unanimously denounced those groups of schismatics, as well as certain extremist groups within the local Orthodox Churches themselves, that are using the theme of ecumenism in order to criticise the Church leadership and undermine its authority, thus attempting to create divisions and schisms within the Church. They also use non-factual material and misinformation in order to support their unjust criticism. The delegates also emphasised that the Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement has always been based on Orthodox tradition, on the decisions of the Holy Synods of the local Orthodox Churches, and on Pan-Orthodox meetings... The participants are unanimous in their understanding of the necessity for continuing their participation in various forms of inter-Christian activity. We have no right to withdraw from the mission laid upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the mission of witnessing the Truth before the non-Orthodox world. We must not interrupt relations with Christians of other confessions who are prepared to work together with us… During Orthodox participation of many decades in the ecumenical movement, Orthodoxy has never been betrayed by any representative of a Local Orthodox Church. On the contrary, these representatives have always been completely faithful and obedient to their respective Church authorities, and acted in complete agreement with the canonical rules, the Teaching of the Ecumenical Councils, the Church Fathers and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church”. A threat to the Church is also presented by those who participate in inter-Christian contacts, speaking on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church without the blessing of the Church authorities, as well as by those who bring temptation into the midst of Orthodoxy by entering into canonically inadmissible sacramental communion with non-Orthodox communities.
Conclusion

The twentieth century now drawing to a close has been marked by the tragedy of divisions, enmity and alienation, but in it divided Christians have shown a desire to achieve unity in the Church of Christ. The Russian Orthodox Church has responded to this desire with a readiness to conduct a dialogue of truth and love with non-Orthodox Christians, inspired by the call of Christ and by the goal of Christian unity as ordained by God. And today, on the threshold of the third millennium after the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Orthodox Church again lovingly and persistently calls all those for whom the name of Jesus Christ is above all other names under heaven\(^1\) to seek blessed unity in the Church: “Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged\(^2\)”.  

\(^1\) cf. Acts 4:12  
\(^2\) 2 Cor. 6:12
在任务

七、与非正教基督教派对话相关的内

正教反对那些在正教信理观而言是错误的观点，但正教也蒙召对那些宣认这些观点的教派持有基督徒的爱德。在与非正教基督教派相处时，正教应为正教的神圣性与教会的唯一性作见证。但是，在为真理作见证时，正教应经得起他们的见证：不允许冒犯非正教基督徒。

有些人利用不真实的信息，故意歪曲正教会在非正教世界前作见证的责任，蓄意诽谤教会的当局，指责教会当局一出卖一正教。对于这种人教会予以谴责。这些人起誓在普通信徒中散播诱惑的种子，他们应受到教会法的制裁。5588年在德撒洛尼亚召开的泛正教会议通过的决议对此做出了指引：一与会代表一致谴责那些裂教团体，
六、俄罗斯正教会与在其它圣统区域内
的非正教基督教派的关系

俄罗斯正教会与其他传统的基督教派合作，共同开展社会工作，促进社会和谐，并在俄罗斯正教会圣统区域内消除劝人改宗的现象。在与独联体及波罗的海各国的非正教基督徒团体之间的关系中应实践出同样的兄弟般的合作精神。

俄罗斯正教会坚决称各传统基督教派不应劝人改宗，也不应该“偷盗”信教。唯有如此，俄罗斯正教会才支持其在俄罗斯的传教活动。在独联体和波罗的海各国内的基督教团体都被召一起致力于社会各阶层的新修和与社会道德的复兴，呼吁社会保卫人类的生命与尊严。

正教会清楚地区分那些宣讲至圣圣三与耶稣基督的神人本性的非正教基督教派与那些不接受基督徒的基本信理的教派之间的差别。正教会承认前者“非正教基督徒”具有见证他们的信仰，以及在传统上属于他们的信众团体中进行宗教教育的权利。
加入该组织的范围与程度。

俄罗斯正教会的教会当局根据参加一国际基督徒组织对教会所具有之利益来决定

在俄罗斯正教会更在强调对信仰的规范，教会的组织以及灵修生活的原则进行神学对话与研讨的同时，对于参加不同国际组织在诸如服务社会、谋求世界和平等服务世界领域的内工作，俄罗斯正教会也与其它的正教地方教会一样，认为这是可行而有益的。俄罗斯正教会保持与不同的基督宗派和国际基督徒组织在世俗社会前共同做见证的合作。

俄罗斯正教会广泛地与各个国际基督徒组织以成员的身份保持工作关系或合作关系，同时，也和各地区与国家的教会公会议与基督徒机构共同在服务世界、从事青

年事工及谋求世界和平方面进行深入研究。

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关于俄罗斯正教会与泛正教基督教会派的对话并不仅限于双边对话，也包括在多边的层面上进行交流，同时也加入泛正教代表组织，参加宗教派之间的宗派组织的工作。
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10. 只要沒有違反法律規定，歷屆中華民國政府都享有國家的最高權威，各項議案必須由立法院審議通過。
在忠于正教会的使徒及教父传统与历次普世及地方大公会议的训导的基础上，俄
罗斯正教会与非正教基督教派进行对话。任何对信仰教义上的步与妥协的
独在神学对话中与这些非正教基督教派签署任何协定或文献。

正如正教教父的观点而言，对于非正教基督教派，重新合一的途径在于转变并治疗他们
的信理意识与经验。由此，七次普世大公会议时代所讨论的议题应被再次加以认真
思考。与正教基督教派的对话的一个重要内涵即是学习使徒及
神学遗产，因为教父是教会信仰的代言人。

作见证不能是一个人的独白，因为它预设了听众的存在，因此彼此之间存在着交
流。对话意味着双方相互敞开内心扉进行交流，并愿意彼此了解。对话不
仅要一张
开印，还要“敞开心”。为此，有关神学所用的语言、对神学的理解及阐释的问
题必须成为正教神学与其它基督教派交
谈最为重要的主题之一。

令人感到欢喜鼓舞的是，正如由非正教基督教派最优秀的代表所表达的那样，在
研究教父的遗产与初期教会的信仰与组织上，非正教基督教派的神
学思想对此表
现出一种真诚而深刻的兴趣。与此同时，必须承认在正教与非正教基督教派的神
学之
间仍有许多尚未解决的问题与意见上的分歧。而且，即使是那些表达形式上极为相
同的
...
四、与非正教基督徒的对话

俄罗斯正教会与非正教基督徒之间的对话历时已超过二个世纪之久。这一对话既有极其原则性的信理取向的特征，又是怀着兄弟之爱的。1963 年的《对普世牧首区神圣主教会议的书函所作的回应》表达了这一原则，以作为与安立甘宗与老天主教之间进行神学对话的方式。它在论及非正教基督教派时这样说写道：『应以兄弟之爱做好准备，通过解释说明来帮助他们，应考虑他们最美好的愿望，尽可能容忍他们自身因历史上分裂所产生的混乱。但是，与此同时，必须坚定不移地宣认我们普世教会的真理，教会被基督在世上的遗产的唯一保管者，是唯一拥有上帝恩宠的救世方舟』。我们对于他们的任务应该是：『和他们之间没有由于不适当的不能包容和猜忌而产生的不必要的障碍』。向他们解释我们的信仰和坚定的信念，只有我们东方正教会保存着最完整的基督誓言，是现在的普世教会，因此要向他们表明如果我们真的相信救恩是和教会中生命密切相关并真心希望和她合一，就应该考虑这些并作出决定』。
三、正教在非正教世界前的见证

正教会是初期教会的传统与满有恩宠的赐予的保护者与见证者。因此，在她与非
正教基督教派关系中，她的首要任务是肩负起为此作见证的使命，引人进入在此传
统中所表达的真理，使世人理解并接受这一真理。按照教会在所举行的历史性会议的筹备会议的决议：正教会作为信使且意识到她是唯一、神圣、大公、传自
使徒的教会的信仰与传统的持有者与见证者，她坚定不移地相信自己在当今世界促
进基督徒合一的事务上占有重要的地位。正教会的使命与职责就是：在其本身之
圆满无缺之中，传扬圣经与圣传中所含有的真理，将上帝赐予教会的真理传给她的
全体子女。历次普世大公会议所表达的就是正教会的这一职责，将上帝赐予教会的真理传给她的
普世使命。这尤其强调了存在于真信仰与圣传共融之间的不可分割的联系。正教
会一直追求与不同基督徒的教会与教派共同探究已经失落的基督徒之间的合一，以
使大家能达信仰上的合一。
在最重要的问题上却有着充份的合一共识。这样的观点也是不能接受的。我们

正教会亦不同意这样的假设，即认为只有藉着基督徒共同服务于世界，才能重建基
督教的合一。不可能通过彼此在属世事务上的协议来重建基督徒的合一。这只能使
基督徒在次要的问题上联合，但在根本问题上却仍是不同的。

我们也不同意在信仰领域内引入相对主义，将在信仰上的合一定在一小部份
必要的真理上。在除此之外，则允许对有疑问的问题自由处理。即便彼此容忍信
仰上的差异——这一立场也是不可接受的。但是，与此同时，不应混淆信仰上的合
与外在表达方式上的统一。

基督徒的分裂是其本身信仰经验的分裂，并非只是信理表达上的分裂。尽管相
同的信理表达是教会合一的基本条件之一，但教会所说的合一并不仅仅只是信理表
达的统一。
二、寻求重建合一

正教会与其它基督教派关系的基本目标是在基督徒中间重建合一，这合一是上帝命令我们必须达成的。合一是上帝在生活中的各个领域内最先完成的任务。

然而，正教会在意识到需要和与我们分离的基督徒重建合一时，也断言真正的合一只有在唯一、神圣、大公、传自使徒的教会内才有可能实现。其它所有「模式」的合一在我们看来都是不可接受的。

正教会不能接受下面这种假设，即认为历史上的分裂并没有破坏基督徒之间根本而深刻的合一，教会应被理解为是整个「基督徒世界」的共同体，基督徒的合一超

书信 11

(若 17:21)
正教并非只属于东方国家和文化的教会。正教是教会的内在本质。她保存着教义真理、礼仪、圣规、圣像以及灵修生活的原理，这一切从使徒时代起就毫无变更，从不中断地存在于教会之中。但是，人不可陷入一种诱惑之中，试图将过去的理想化，或忽略教会历史上所犯的过失与失败。教会的诸圣教父本身就树立了灵性的自染着她的子女；历史也告诉我们要在基本的信仰原则上与异端抗争，这些异端存在于那时正感

次普世大公会议期间与异端抗争的经验，教导正教会的子女应该时刻警醒。正教会怀教改革而重回教会的怀抱。这一由教会本身所显露出来的错误经验，这一在历史

由于违背了合一的命令，导致了历史上分裂的悲剧，彼此分裂的基督徒没有成

为在圣圣三肖像内爱的共融的榜样，分裂的悲剧以有形可见的方式严重歪曲了基督徒共同体的形象，成了教会在世上为基督作见证的障碍。在现实生活中，基督的教会所

做的这一见证，在相当程度上取决于她在基督徒团体的生活与实践中遵循她所教导

的真理的能力。
正教会。尽管教会的合一受到破坏，但在这些教会与教会之间仍存在着某种不完全的联系，以确保其回归教会的合一共融，重获大公教会的圆满性与独特性。

教会以不同的礼规接纳非正教基督徒加入教会（籍着浸礼、傅圣膏、忏悔等方式），这表明正教会以不同的方式与不同的非正教基督教派之间有着联系。评判的标准依照某一特定教派保存信仰、教会的体制以及基督教派之间的联系。评判的标准依

管正教会制定了不同的教义非正基督教宗派加入正教会的礼规，却并不评判在非正教基督教派内保存或歪曲那些满有教义的教义的程度如何，而是将它视为上帝的上智

灵修实践与教义的宣讲和初期教会的传统完全一致。
在基督徒的历史中，不仅个别的基督徒脱离了正教会，甚至整个基督徒的团体也从正教会分裂出去。他们中的一些随着历史的发展而湮没无闻，但另一些经过许多世纪仍继续存在着。第一个千年内最主要的分裂发生在第三、第四两次普世大公会议期间，一些基督徒拒不接受公会议的决议，这一分裂延续至今。结果东方的亚述教会与非加尔西顿教会（包括科普特教会、亚美尼亚教会、叙利亚的雅科弗教会）、埃塞俄比亚教会与马拉巴尔教会。 {}

11 正教会和圣教父的观点说：人惟有在基督的教会内才能获得救恩。但是，与此同时，正教从来不认为那些脱离了正教的团体完全没有上帝的恩宠。任何团体脱离教会，都不可避免地使其满有恩宠的生命受到伤害，但却并不完全丧失这一生命。为此缘故，正教会并不总是只以圣浸圣事接纳那些非正教基督教派的信徒加入。
教会却不能以再次为被定罪者施行浸礼的方式接纳他重回教会。教会相信浸礼具有永久性，不可磨灭的特性，尼西亚・君士坦丁堡信经上这样宣称：“我确认赦罪的圣浸，只有一个。”使徒法典第六条写道：“若有主教或司祭为已真正受过浸礼的人再次施浸，……应处以停职之罚。”

许多世纪以来，基督要求基督徒之间合一的命令屡遭破坏。与上帝所命令的大公教会内彼此意见一致相反，在基督信仰的团体内产生了差异与分裂。对于那些挑战教会得救之信仰的纯洁性，以及那些带给教会分裂与混乱的人，教会一贯表现出严厉而又极具原则性的态度：为何在你们中会有冲突、混乱与分歧，分裂与斗争？难道我们不都敬拜同一个上帝，同一个基督吗？难道我们在基督内不是同蒙一个召叫吗？为何我们要彼此分裂，将基督的肢体撕得粉碎，挑起冲突反对自己的团体呢？我们为何要达到如此疯狂的程度，以致竟忘记了我们彼此互为肢体呢？

罗马的圣克利托人书一节，

[9]
教会的合一与圣体血圣事紧密相关，不可分割。在这件圣事内，信友共同领受同一基督的圣体，真正确实地加入了唯一大公教会。他们在圣体内的结果是，组成一个身体。因此，如果一个圣徒从大公教会离开，就如同从一个身体内割去一个肢体。圣徒们在教会里的共融，就是他们与基督共融的体现。教会的每个成员都受教会在圣事的恩典，因此是教会的一部分。教会的成员就是那些在教会内领受圣事的人。
教会的合一超越一切障碍与界限，包括种族、语言与社会的差异。爱的信息被宣布于万国，为带领众人进入同一羊栈，籍着信仰的大能与圣灵的恩宠将他们合而为一。在教会内，人与人彼此之间没有敌意与疏离，因罪而分裂的人类在爱内合一于同一本元的圣三的肖像内。

教会是以和平的联系在圣灵内的合一，是连续不断、满有恩宠的生命与属灵经验的满全。哪里有教会，哪里就有上帝的圣灵；哪里有圣灵的恩宠，哪里就有教会及各种恩宠。教会信仰的一贯性与不变性的根基就是这满有恩宠的圣灵，那里就有教会，始终如一地藉着诸圣教父与圣师施行教导。公教会不会违背真理，更不会走入歧途或彻底迷误而相反真理；因为圣灵总是藉着那些服务于教会的忠信的教父与圣师工作，引导她不犯任何错误。教会是普世的，但她却以不同地方教会的形式存在于世上。尽管如此，教会的合一并未受到任何削弱。主的荣光照着教会，她教会亦向整个世界放射光芒，但是那普照各处的光是同一道光，彼此分离的团体却仍合而为一。她的枝条硕果累累，伸展到世界各地。她仿佛一道溪流，川流不息，无远弗届。然而在她所到的各地，她只有一个头，一个源泉。她是一个子女众多的母亲。

玛特泰福音
第 19 章
19:19-21：玛尔
克福音
略

致腓所书
4:13
使徒行实
1:8
一、教会的合一与世人分裂之罪

正教会是基督的真教会，她是由我们的主、救主亲自建立的，圣灵坚定并保护着她。救主自己这样论及教会说：『我要建立我的教会，阴间的门决不能战胜她。』她是唯一的、神圣、大公、传自使徒的教会，是世界各地所举行之圣事的保管者与分施者，是真理的柱石和基础。她肩负着宣扬基督福音真理的全部责任，也具有见证那一次而永远传与圣徒的信仰的能力。

教会是『新人类在基督内』的合一。上帝之子以祂的降生成人，再次开创了人类长久的『新』时代，创造了一个全新的满是恩宠的民族，第二阿达穆灵性的子孙。教会的合一超越任何一个属人或属世的联盟，是一份由上所赐的圆满而神圣的礼物。教会的全体成员就像藤一样在基督内合一，根源于他并聚拢于一个永恒的灵性生活中。

太/玛 16:18

玛特泰福音/

里昂的圣伊里奈

唆里安，论教

会的合一

卢勒，释彼

至艾弗所人书

每章 18

3:15

儒达书信

迦太基的圣

致提摩泰书

6
教会的合一与世人分裂之罪

二、寻求重建合一

三、正教在非正教世界前的见证

四、与非正教基督徒的对话

五、多边对话与参加基督教派之间的超宗派组织的工作

六、俄罗斯正教会与在其圣统区域内的非正教基督教派的关系

七、与非正教基督教派对话相关的内在任务

结论

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若你在北美，你也可以与正教会中华诸圣会 (Orthodox Fellowship of All Saints of China) 的主席 Mitrophan Chin 联系。

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俄罗斯正教会对待其它基督教派信徒的基本原则

香港圣彼得圣保罗教堂
正教会中华诸圣会
2009
俄罗斯正教会对待其它
基督教派信徒的基本
基本原则

俄罗斯正教会禧年
主教公会议
2000年8月14日
批准颁布