## Unity of the Church

### А. Definition of and Basis for Church Unity

The unity of the Church has been the hope of God’s people for many generations. We see it emphasized in the Old Testament as well: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” (Ps 133:1) Yet, instead of brothers and sisters in Christ living together in harmony, the Church is divided among various movements and denominations, some of which barely fellowship with one another.

In the beginning of Church history, only one Christian confession existed.[[1]](#footnote-1) In the eleventh century, the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholics parted ways. Since that time, especially in the West, many more divisions have occurred.[[2]](#footnote-2) At the present time, the number of separate Christian confessions number about 1000.

Nelson recalls unsuccessful attempts in the past to unify the Body of Christ.[[3]](#footnote-3) Efforts failed to reconcile Eastern and Western Christianity at the Councils of Lyons (1274), Ferrara (1438), and Florence (1439). Negotiations between Catholics and Protestants also deadlocked in Regensburg (1541). Luther and Zwingli met to resolve differences (1529), but Luther left in disgust with the parting words, “You are of another spirit than we.”[[4]](#footnote-4) In the early nineteenth century, Thomas Campbell began a movement to unite all Christendom. Instead, his movement turned into yet one more new denomination – the Disciples of Christ.

Divisions in the Church cause much embarrassment before unbelievers. Voltaire once said,

The shameful quarrels of divided Christians have done more mischief under religious pretenses, made more bad blood, and shed more human blood, than all the political contentions which have laid waste France and Germany under pretense of maintaining the balance of Europe.[[5]](#footnote-5)

However, unlike the history just surveyed above, the ecumenical movement has made more progress in the twentieth century than ever before.[[6]](#footnote-6) We can mention the merger of Canadian Methodists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians to form the United Church of Canada. The same three joined with the Congregationalists to form the Church of South India.[[7]](#footnote-7) In 1999, Catholics and Lutherans cosigned the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. How should we understand these recent developments and the question of church unity in general?

First, we must tackle the question of what church unity is. “Unity” implies agreement, harmonious interrelationships, and cooperation. “Church” is the sum total of all born again believers. Therefore, church unity involves agreement, harmonious interrelationships, and cooperation between all true believers in Christ.

At the same time, church unity does not mean the unification of all people without regard to faith. Divisions between believers and unbelievers do not nullify the unity of the Church. It is interesting to note the historical situation after the flood of Noah, when all humanity joined in a unified effort to build the Tower of Babel as an expression of their independence from God. This type of unity, however, was not pleasing to the Lord, and He divided the peoples by their languages. The Bible predicts that there will be another future attempt by Antichrist to unite the world under himself. Therefore, although church unity is desirable, world unity is threatening, even dangerous.

Regarding God’s Old Testament people, several factors unified Israel: a common homeland, law, place of worship, administration, covenant with Yahweh, and history.[[8]](#footnote-8) Malachi calls God’s Old Testament people to treat one another fairly due to their unity in Yahweh: “Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?” (Mal 2:10).

The Church is also God’s people (Eph 2:19; 1 Pet 2:9) and the place of God’s habitation (Eph 2:22; 1 Pet 2:5).[[9]](#footnote-9) Yet, there is a more powerful unifying factor at work here than in the Old Covenant: rebirth into God’s spiritual family. All believers are brothers and sisters, joined together by a spiritual union in Christ.

Ephesians 4:4-6 lists the fundamental factors that unify Christians: one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one calling, one hope, one Lord, one Father. Still other passages of Scripture highlight other aspects of Christian unity: one Body in Christ (1 Cor 12:12), one flock of God (Jn 10:16), one foundation (Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 3:11), and a sharing together of one bread (1 Cor 10:17).[[10]](#footnote-10) The Holy Trinity serve as a model for unity: “…that they may all be one; even as You, Father, {are} in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us” (Jn 17:21).

Bromiley rightly stresses Christ as the basis for our unity.[[11]](#footnote-11) We are joined together with Him in death and resurrection. He is the object of our common faith. We share a common life in Him. He is the Savior of us all. In His death, all divisions were abolished: “This unity in Christ is an invincible unity in face of human disunity because it has been accomplished for us by the act of God Himself.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Along with this, the Holy Spirit is active in the Church to realize this unity.

However, church unity does not lead to a monolithic state. The Spirit distributes to believers various gifts (1 Cor 12:4-6). Even God’s Old Testament people consisted of 12 different tribes, and in their early years, no centralized government ruled over them. Nelson entertains the idea that monotony is not unity, and variety is not divisiveness. Diversity enhances and enriches the spiritual experience of the Church.[[13]](#footnote-13)

### B. The Dilemma of Division

**1. Call to Unity**

Although in one sense, God’s people are already one in Christ, it is vital for believers to make this unity visible. Jesus described Himself as a Shepherd who gathers His flock (Jn 10:16; 11:52), and He prayed that the Father would unify His disciples for the sake of effective evangelism (Jn 17:20-21). Additionally, Jesus praised the peacemakers (Matt 5:9) and spoke against divisions (Lk 11:17). Reconciliation between parties is part and parcel of the Good News of the gospel.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The apostles laid stress on the importance of harmony among believers as well. Unity is part of a life “worthy of the gospel” (Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27). Christians must be “diligent” to preserve the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:3). The book of Acts gives us a great picture of what unity looks like (see chps. 2 and 4). In its early days, the Church enjoyed unity in all respects: doctrinal, spiritual, emotional, and material. Of note is that the Spirit fell on the disciples when they were all together and of one mind (Acts 1:14; 2:1).

The Old Testament contains several fine examples of unity among God’s people as well. The tribes of Israel worked together to conquer the Promised Land. The tribes that inherited the lands East of Jordan left their inheritance to assist the other tribes gain their lands (Josh 1:12-15). All the tribes crossed the Jordan together, gathered twelve stones from the river bed representing the twelve tribes, and built a common altar (Josh 4:1-7). Additionally, when the tribes East of Jordan returned, they also constructed an altar so that in future times, the other tribes would not exclude them from the congregation of God’s people (Josh 22:21-29).

The Bible not only endorses unity, but also decries divisions among God’s people. Among the things the Lord “hates” is “…one who spreads strife among brothers” (Prov 6:16-19). Scripture also graphically describes the true nature of those causing discord – they are “fleshly” (1 Cor 3:3-4), “perverted and sinning” (Tit 3:10-11), “worldly-minded, void of the Spirit” (Jude 19).

From a historical point of view, Nelson comments that during times of persecution, believers in Christ are more ready to cooperate with one another. Difficult times show “the frailty of many of the causes for division which are normally defended with passion.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Nelson summarizes the attitude of true Christians toward church unity: “We may not agree what the church is, or what kind of unity it ought to have, or what are the conditions of its attainment, or how it is to be sought, but we all agree that the church ought to be one.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

**2. Types of Division**

Scripture unquestionably maintains that believers must attain harmony in interpersonal relationships. They must love one another (Jn 13:35), be patient with one another (Eph 4:32), and live in harmony (Eph 4:2-3; 1 Pet 3:8). Aside from harmony in personal relationships, the Bible teaches believers to hold the same values and strive for the same goals (Phil 2:2; 4:2; 2 Cor 13:11). Humility is essential to achieve this (Rom 12:16; Phil 2:3).

Divisions by race or societal status are also unlawful. God’s people are an international community without over attachment to national patriotism (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; Eph 2:14; Rom 15:5-9). The Church must also not divide over preference for one preacher over another, as was the case in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12). This leads to jealousy and strife (1 Cor 3:3-4). Believers must work together as a team. We recall how Jesus’ disciples tried to forbid a certain “preacher” who was not in their company and received a rebuke from the Lord (Lk 9:49-50).

The Old Testament presents us with many instances of unlawful divisions. For example, Israel engaged in civil war because Jephthah failed to invite the tribe of Ephraim to the battle against Ammon (Judg 12). Moreover, from the time that the Northern Kingdom separated from the Southern Kingdom (2 Chr 10:16) these kingdoms were frequently at war with one another.[[17]](#footnote-17)

When divisions concern doctrinal questions, though, a resolution is more evasive.[[18]](#footnote-18) One must first distinguish petty doctrinal questions from vital ones that effect a person’s salvation. Excommunication from the Church for heresy is in no way a violation of church unity. The apostles never hesitated to expel false teachers from the congregation (Rom 16:17; Gal 1:8; 2 Jn 10; Tit 3:10-11). In the Old Testament, an individual was “cut off from his people” for violation of fundamental commandments. We also recall instances where Israel fought among themselves in order to expel apostates (Ex 32:25-28; Judg 20).

Nelson counsels us regarding doctrinal purity, “Unity must never be sought by neglecting Christian truth, as though unity were more important than truth. Christ who is the truth is also the one in whom there is unity.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

There has always been false teaching in the Church (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 2:1; Matt 7:15). According to Jesus’ parable, tares and wheat will coexist in God’s kingdom until the end (Matt 13:24-30; 37-43; 47-52). 1 Corinthians 11:19 gives us insight into how God works this into His plan: “For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.” God allows heresies to arise to test His people – can they distinguish false teaching from truth (see Deut 13:1-3)?

The Old Testament records examples when God’s people were infected with false belief or practice. Cordial relations between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms sometimes led to the latter being misled by the error of the former (2 Chr 28:2-4; Mic 1:9; 2 Kin 17:19; Ezek 16:46). It reached the point where Yahweh forbade cooperation between the groups (2 Chr 20:35-37; 25:5-10). This reminds us of the New Testament injunction that the Church should not fellowship with heretics. The opposite, though, can also occur – the Southern Kingdom at times was able to introduce reform into the North (2 Chr 11:13-16; 15:9; 30:1ff; 31:1).

If the doctrinal issues are trivial in nature, believers must bear with each other to preserve the unity of the faith. In such cases, harmony between brethren takes priority over individuals defending their views (Rom 14:1-8). A certain seventeenth-century Lutheran pastor, who called himself “Meldenius,” coined the famous saying: “In all things necessary, unity; in things not necessary, liberty; in all things, charity.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

Besides vital and trivial doctrinal differences, some teachings may not involve actual heresy, but they can still be potentially harmful to faith and warrant concern. Conscientious church leaders may be unwilling to allow such views to be voiced. In such cases, Jesus’ counsel on administering church discipline will come into play (Matt 18).

According to proper church discipline, one should attempt to resolve the matter by personal interview with the “offenders.” Only when this fails should the matter be addressed publically. A failure at this level may well lead to a church division. However, if the dispute is not vital to Christian faith or salvation, the two groups should grant each other mutual recognition as legitimate expressions of the Church and seek to maintain positive relationships as long as the matter remains unresolved. Here we apply Paul’s principle, “Do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thes 3:15).

### C. Restoration of Unity

**1. The Hope of Unity**

Although at present, divisions over doctrinal questions are sometimes necessary and unavoidable, Christians hold out hope for a future reconciliation of all genuine Christian confessions. Unity in doctrine and practice is a process in the life of the Church. Ephesians 4:10-16 speaks of “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” as future events when the Church attains “to a mature man.” Clearly, the closer each Christian confession is to the Head, Christ, the closer they will be to one another.

Church leaders and teachers play a leading role in this quest for unity. They are gifts to the Church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith” (Eph 4:12-13). To the degree that all members of Christ’s Body, especially its leaders, are open to an intensive and honest examination of God’s Word, they can move toward doctrinal unity: “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him who is the head, {even} Christ” (Eph 4:15). The Church’s goal should be to fulfill Paul’s charge to the church in Corinth:

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor 1:10).

Besides hope in the future reconciliation of Christian confessions, the question remains as to what can be done at present. Five primary approaches have been recommended.[[21]](#footnote-21) First, believers can simply acknowledge the already existing spiritual unity between all true believers (i.e., all true believers are already members of the Universal Church) and not be concerned about making that unity visible. Second, local churches can take the initiative to build relationships with other local congregations, visit their worship services, and cooperate on common projects without any formal merger.

The third “level” of unity is forming Christian denominations, which local congregations voluntarily join, holding to like doctrines and submitting to denominational leadership. A fourth degree of involvement is forming interdenominational fellowships, in which separate denominations engage in fellowship and undertake common projects without merging into a single confession or changing their beliefs. The final and most exhaustive step in organizational unity, in which all Christian confessions merge into a single union with the same beliefs and under the same leadership.

**2. Acknowledgement of Spiritual Unity**

Let us look more closely at the simplest and least demanding form of Church unity – recognizing that all true believers are already one in Christ. From a human perspective, it appears to us that there are many churches. They function mostly independent from one another and sometimes conflict among themselves. From God’s point of view, however, He sees only one Church, since He knows which members of these Christian confessions are truly His. This factor requires us to acknowledge that all true believers regardless of denominational affiliation are equal members of the Universal Church, even though they belong to different ecclesiastical organizations.

Acknowledging the spiritual unity of the Church is the most fundamental expression of Christian unity. Hans Küng expresses well the concept of spiritual unity: “The unity of the church is a spiritual unity. It is one and the same God who gathers the scattered from all place and all ages and makes them into one people of God. It is one and the same Christ who through his word and Spirit unites all together in the same bond of fellowship of the same body of Christ.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Some picture the Church as a growing organism that undergoes various stages of development. It is thought that the historical confessions, i.e., Catholicism and Orthodoxy, make up the first and least mature stage of development. After them, the first Protestants became the next phrase of growth. In our day, the Church is continuing to mature, and, consequently, more highly developed Christian confessions emerge, such as the Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Charismatics.[[23]](#footnote-23)

However, we also must keep in mind that God’s will is for the Church to attain a *visible* unity. Therefore, it is not sufficient to simply recognize that God’s people are one in a spiritual sense. The Church must strive for a more practical expression of harmony. Bromiley warns that embracing unity only on this level reduces it to a mystical, emotional, platonic, and spiritual concept that is incapable of solving ongoing issues in Christ’s Body.[[24]](#footnote-24) Additionally, Bromiley appeals to the incarnation of God’s Son – since He became physical and historical, we must have a physical and historical expression of His Body.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**3. Interchurch Fellowship**

The second level of expression for church unity is mutual congregational fellowship. Local church can voluntarily build bridges between themselves to engage in fellowship and shared ministry without the expectation that they will merge into a single congregation or denomination. They visit each other’s worship services, they cooperate in evangelistic or humanitarian projects, their pastors meet for prayer, etc. Here we see a visible demonstration of the Church’s unity. Some feel that this level of engagement is adequate, while others seek a closer relationship through formation of concrete denominations.

**4. Denominationalism**

A third level of visible church unity is when individual Christian congregations voluntarily join together under one leadership and embrace one doctrine to form a Christian confession or denomination. In such a system, it often occurs that individual congregations retain the right to choose their own pastor, determine congregational order, and organize their own worship services.

Protestant denominations differ from Orthodoxy and Catholicism in that the former regard membership in the union as voluntary, and if a congregation decides to leave the association, yet maintains true Christian doctrine, they are still considered part of the Universal Church. On the other hand, Catholics and Orthodox consider themselves to be the only true Church. Therefore, according to their understanding, a congregation must belong to their organizations to be a true local church in the full sense of the word.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Unlike the opinion of many, Nelson opposes denominationalism. He compares it with what Paul condemned in 1 Corinthians 1:12: “Each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’” He states,

It is perfectly clear that according to the Bible the Church exists on two levels only. There is the one Church Universal on earth and in heaven. And there is the local congregation which is the focal point of the Church. In between here are no communions or denominations, as we know them now.[[27]](#footnote-27)

**5. Interdenominational Fellowship**

Interdenominational fellowship involves separate Christian denominations connecting between themselves and participating in common projects, yet maintaining their distinct beliefs and leadership. This type of fellowship can happen without any formal organizing body. Any denomination at any time can take initiative to connect with another Christian group for the purpose of fellowship and cooperation. This level of visible unity disturbs some since it involves association with groups that may have a significantly different doctrinal position. This may create the false impression to outsiders that these confessions hold to the same teachings.

Interdenominational fellowship can be facilitated by formal organizational bodies. At the present time, there exist two main organizations that perform that function: the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

Let us trace the history the WCC.[[28]](#footnote-28) The idea for such an organization arose in the nineteenth century in connection with world missions. Missionaries understand how important unity is for evangelization – division hinders the preaching of the one Christian message. The modern ecumenical movement, then, traces back to the Edinburg Missionary Conference of 1910 and similar missionary conferences that took place subsequent to it. A participant in the Edinburg meetings, Charles Brent, organized another conference on the theme of Church faith and order in Geneva in 1920. A third movement arose distinct from these, devoted to the life and work of the Church. In 1948, the last two groups merged to form the WCC. The Edinburg Conference joined them in 1958.

The early participants in the WCC expressed their aim of unity in a statement made at the 1961 conference in New Delhi:

We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people. It is for such a unity that we believe we must pray and work.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Other feature of the WCC are worth noting. The Council consists of 352 Christian denominations from 120 nations of the world. Catholicism is not an official member of the union, but has close ties to it. The statement of faith of the WCC reads as follows:

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The WCC pursues the following goals. First, it seeks to visibly express the unity of the Christian faith. Second, its members participate in humanitarian and evangelistic missions. Third, the WCC promotes justice and world peace. Fourth, a special committee studies doctrinal questions that divide the Church. Dialog occurs not only between Christian confessions, but also with non-Christian groups. WCC does not seek to unite all confessions organizationally, but respects the autonomy of each member group.

The WCC “is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ. It seeks to advance towards this unity, as Jesus prayed for his followers, ‘so that the world may believe.’”[[31]](#footnote-31)

The Council has certain requirements for its members. First, they must accept the statement of faith of the WCC. Second, they must participate in and work to advance the ecumenical movement. Third, they are expected to participate in WCC sponsored projects. Additionally, members are expected to show regard for official announcements made by the WCC. They must also refrain from proselytizing members of other Christian confessions. Finally, members of the WCC are obliged to defend women’s rights.

On the one hand, it appears that the WCC stands for much that is good and honorable. However, some Christians, especially those of Evangelical faith, refrain from participation in the WCC for several reasons. The statement of faith does not address many vital Christian doctrines, especially in regard to salvation. Some observe a leaning toward liberalism in the member denominations. Finally, some feel the WCC is more engaged in politics than spiritual matters.

Because of these concerns, another interdenominational union was formed in 1951 – the World Evangelical Alliance.[[32]](#footnote-32) The WEA embraces 420 million believers from various denominations, and their members reside in 127 nations of the world. As a rule, each nation hosts a national evangelical alliance. The goal of the WEA is as follows:

The WEA affirms and seeks the biblical unity of Christ’s body, the Church, celebrating the diversity of practices and theological emphases consistent with the WEA Statement of Faith, recognizing the existing dynamic tension between undeniable unity and marvelous diversity.

The WEA affirms the following beliefs:

- The Holy Scriptures as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

- One God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- Our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and his personal return in power and glory.

- The Salvation of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ.

- The Resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We can mention one other Evangelical organization that is less prominent than the WEA – the International Council of Christian Churches, founded by Carl McIntire.[[33]](#footnote-33) This union holds its general conferences just before the WCC and in the same city. It considers the WCC to be an apostate movement and stands in opposition to it. This association feels that true unity exists only between true believers in Christ and is actualized not organizationally, but spiritually.

Excerpts from the goals of the ICCC:

- To provide a worldwide fellowship of evangelical churches and people for mutual encouragement and help in the things of the Lord;

- To encourage all member bodies to foster a loyal and aggressive revival of Bible Christianity over all the world;

- To seek to awaken Christians everywhere to the insidious dangers of Modernism and call them to unity of mind and effort against all unbelief and compromise with Modernism of every kind, and against Roman Catholicism – in the hope that with the blessing of God this effort may result in a genuine 21st century Reformation, in the spirit of the 16th century Reformation.

- To undertake to do for the bodies belonging to this Council the things which they can better do in cooperation than by themselves.

- To arouse other Christian churches throughout the world to participate in this Council;

- To seek by every proper means to facilitate the missionary work of member bodies;

- To advocate steadfastly the Christian mode of life in society at large, in the hope that we may be able to do something to retard the progress of atheistic and pagan ideologies under any name, of loose morality, and of godlessness which have become such alarming threats to the Christian method of life in our times.

**6. Organizational Unity**

By “organizational unity,” we mean a merger of all Christian confessions into a single organization under one leadership and holding to one doctrine. Since Catholics and Eastern Orthodox consider themselves to be the only true Church and seek to incorporate all Christendom in themselves, they stand opposed to an equal “merger.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

Most already existing Christian denominations fear that such a merger would force them to compromise some of their fundamental doctrines and practices. Bromiley adds the thought that forcing a merger would repel some groups and thus exclude some genuine believers from the organization. He also argues that the Church is not a historical, but a spiritual institution. The irreplaceable element in the true Church is the presence of Christ, which cannot be forced.[[35]](#footnote-35)

On the other hand, some writers support this plan. Charles Morrison, author of *The Unfinished Reformation*, claims that our goal should be “to bring the Church of Christ into an empirical existence so that we *can* see it, *can* lay hold of it.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Samuel feels that, although the official position of the WCC does not advance this plan, many of its participants dream of the merger of all Christian groups, “even if they feel the goal is still a long way off.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

### D. Attitudes toward Ecumenism

**1. Eastern Orthodoxy**

Eastern Orthodoxy’s view of church unity in not monolithic. At the WCC conference of 1974, the former Patriarch of Moscow, Pimen, confirmed this.[[38]](#footnote-38) Nonetheless, we can cite several statements that may shed light on the general Orthodox opinion.

In 1961, the Russian Orthodox Church joined the WCC for the purpose of, according to Piman, “restoration of Christian unity and ministry to humanity.”[[39]](#footnote-39) Piman also stated, “We are absolutely convinced that Orthodoxy… can and must make a positive, and I even say definitive contribution to restoring Christian unity.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

More specifically, the Russian Orthodox Church did not actually join the Council, but entered into an “ongoing cooperative relationship” with the representatives of other churches in the Council.[[41]](#footnote-41) We must remember that Orthodoxy considers itself the only true Church. Limouris describes the Orthodox attitude toward ecumenism in the following words:

The Orthodox Church is not a confession, one of many, one among many. For the Orthodox, the Orthodox Church is just the Church…. She finds herself in an unbroken and continuous succession of ministry, sacramental life, and faith…. The Orthodox Church, by her inner conviction and consciousness, has a special and exceptional position in the divided Christendom, as bearer of, and witness to, the tradition of the ancient undivided Church, from which all existing denominations stem, by way of reduction and separation.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The Orthodox hesitate to join any union of confessions since they consider themselves the preservers of God’s truth. Nikodim writes,

Orthodox doctrine in unchangeable in its essence, which may be defined as the sacred, living Tradition of the Church. The Church faithfully guards and explains (without marring it) the Apostolic and revealed heritage of the faith entrusted to it.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Therefore, true unity must be accomplished in the context of Eastern Orthodoxy. In his address to the WCC in 1968, Metropolitan Nikodim explained, “Only the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, which is the full, healthy foundation of the Body of Christ, possesses the true and full unity, because it is obedient to the voice of divine Truth.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

Consequently, Orthodoxy’s goal is that the denominations belonging to the WCC would eventually join Orthodoxy. Nikodim hints at this when he expresses the desire that “all the Churches belonging to the World Council of Churches (would) hold the faith which was the faith of the ancient undivided Church.”[[45]](#footnote-45) Patriarch Pimen adds that only the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church performs the Eucharist in the fullest sense.[[46]](#footnote-46)

In Nikodim’s words, true unity consists of “intimate communion with Him through faith and through participation in the sacramental life, especially in the true Eucharist, on condition that full obedience is paid to the fullness of the divine revelation.”[[47]](#footnote-47) So then, the intention of the WCC should not be to “create” unity between churches, but rather to recover it.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Moreover, Pimen insists that this unity must embrace: (1) the baptism of both adults and infants, (2) belief in the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist, which is a sacrifice for sins, (3) ordination according to apostolic succession, and (4) the teaching function of the Church.[[49]](#footnote-49) Other Orthodox theologians insist that doctrinal unity be based on the Trinitarian doctrine and union with Christ.[[50]](#footnote-50)

According to Orthodox thought, the WCC cannot be or become the Church. It also cannot fill the role of a church council authorized to define Christian faith. It can only function as a forum for discussion. As soon as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is restored, the WCC will have accomplished its purpose and will no longer be needed.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Orthodoxy hierarchy do not always endorse all that the WCC does. Patriarch Pimen made the statement that the decisions of the WCC actually have little effect on the life and faith of the Church. In 1991, The Orthodox Church offered the following criticism of the WCC:

We miss from many WCC documents the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the world’s Saviour. We perceive a growing departure from biblically-based understandings of (a) the Trinitarian God; (b) salvation; (c) the ‘good news’ of the gospel itself; (d) human beings as created in the image and likeness of God; (e) the Church.[[52]](#footnote-52)

On the other hand, the Orthodox sometime praise the work of the WCC when it overlaps with their own agenda. For example, Nikodim was pleased to see appeals to the Church Fathers in the discussions of the WCC.[[53]](#footnote-53) Also laudable was the position of solidarity the WCC takes with the Church of the past.[[54]](#footnote-54)

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the Orthodox Church itself failed to maintain unity within its own ranks. In the former Soviet Union alone, besides the Moscow Patriarchate, there exist: the True Orthodox Church, the Old Believers, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Patriarchate of Kiev, and the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church. Other Orthodox bodies might be considered deviants from conventional Orthodoxy as well: the Orthodox Church of Macedonia and Montenegro, the Bulgarian Faction, the Coptic Church, the Armenian Orthodox Church, and the Indian Orthodox Church.[[55]](#footnote-55)

**2. Catholicism**

Catholicism considers the divisions in the Church a disgrace to the Christian Faith. In *The Decree on Ecumenism by the Second Vatican Council*, we read that division “is a scandal to the world and a hindrance to the sacred task of preaching the Gospel to every creature.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

According to Catholic theology, church unity depends on several factors.[[57]](#footnote-57) First, the Church in united in its origin from the Triune God: “The highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.” Second, the Holy Spirit enables this unity: “It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity.” In addition, Mary is thought to be a unifying factor as well.

Along with the above-mentioned, the following “visible bonds of communion” are essential for genuine unity:[[58]](#footnote-58)

- profession of one faith received from the Apostles;

- common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;

- apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family.

It is also supposed that the Lord Jesus entrusted the pastoral care of the Church to Simon Peter, whose place the Pope fills today: “It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ.”[[59]](#footnote-59) Therefore, “It is through Christ's Catholic Church alone... that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.”[[60]](#footnote-60)

However, sincere believers in Jesus Christ who were raised in other Christian denominations are regarded “with respect and affection as brothers.”[[61]](#footnote-61) In addition, “All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord.”[[62]](#footnote-62) Catholics also acknowledge that outside of the Catholic Church “many elements of sanctification and of truth” can be found,[[63]](#footnote-63) which “can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Yet, only in the Roman Catholic Church can worshipers “benefit fully from the means of salvation.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

According to the Catholic view, the Roman Church maintains the true unity of the Faith: “We believe that this unity exists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we cherish the hope that it will go on increasing.”[[66]](#footnote-66) However, as noted earlier, sincere believers who do not submit to Rome can still consider themselves Christians. They are considered “children” of the Catholic Church. The grace of God even reaches non-Catholics by mediation of the Catholic Church.

The following statement reiterates the Catholic view of non-Catholics:

Whenever the Sacrament of Baptism is duly administered as our Lord instituted it, and is received with the right disposition, a person is truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life.[[67]](#footnote-67)

At the same time, Catholics make the qualification that Protestants “have not retained the authentic and full reality of the eucharistic mystery, esp. in the absence of the sacrament of Orders.”[[68]](#footnote-68)

Regarding Catholics and Orthodox, the Roman Church recognizes in the Eastern Church true apostolic succession and genuine sacraments. Catholics are urged to “avail themselves still more of the spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers which lift up the whole man to the contemplation of the divine.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Nevertheless, Catholicism views the Orthodox as “Eastern children of the Catholic Church,” and recognizes that certain barriers prevent a merger.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The Roman Catholic Church feels that the WCC can bring much benefit to the Body of Christ, especially in the area of dialogue, prayer, and mutual humanitarian projects. Rome considers that the Holy Spirit inspired this movement. Catholics also caution that achieving church unity is beyond human effort, but depends on the work of God’s Spirit.[[71]](#footnote-71) Catholics also do not participate in a non-Catholic Eucharist. Yet, they await the day when this barrier is removed:

This is the way that, when the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion have been gradually overcome, all Christians will at last, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, be gathered into a single Church in that unity which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning.[[72]](#footnote-72)

**3. Evangelicals**

Samuel summarizes the typical attitude of Evangelical believers to the WCC and ecumenism in general.[[73]](#footnote-73) Some consider the WCC part of God’s plan to unity Christendom. Some have joined the WCC because is seemed the “fashionable” thing to do. Others join with hesitation, hoping to have a positive influence on the organization. The rest either ignore the WCC or oppose it. There are those who fear associating with “non-Reformation” denominations, namely, Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

Some Evangelicals have concerns about ecumenism even in an Evangelical context. For example, the Missouri Synod Lutherans and Southern Baptists refrain from joining any church union. They feel that centralization hinders the freedom of individual confessions and congregations. Nelson warns that a reckless quest for unity can lead not only to compromise of vital doctrinal positions, but also delays healing of deep wounds caused by abuses in the past, which require long periods of time to heal.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Arguments for participation in the ecumenical movement include promotion of evangelism, a positive influence on secular society, giving Christianity a unified voice, and fulfilling the prayer of Jesus for unity (Jn 17:21).[[75]](#footnote-75) Some think that since the Evangelical Movement is the most mature expression of Christianity, it should take the lead in promoting Christian unity.[[76]](#footnote-76) Bromiley feels that, despite the flaws of ecumenism, “real disunity… is a definite evil in the church. The movement for unity is thus to be applauded in principle.”[[77]](#footnote-77)

Kik warns of the following dangers in this movement in general. First, it is naive to think that forming an organization for church unity will necessarily lead to resolution of doctrinal difference. In addition, it is inappropriate and actually dangerous to require doctrinal conformity for the sake of organizational unity.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Second, a certain saying is common among ecumenists: “We agree to disagree.” Kik responds, “The suggestion to find union by ‘agreeing to disagree’ on vital doctrines is unworthy of the Christian church.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Finally, one should not rely on a human organization to secure church unity. Jesus promised that *He* would build His Church. Therefore, our trust must be in the Lord and His promise that we will all “attain to the unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13).[[80]](#footnote-80)

Although Evangelicals disagree on how far to be involved in interchurch or interdenominational fellowship, a common approach is to emphasize the already existing spiritual unity of true believers in Christ. Many consider this the appropriate starting point for any further discussion of ecumenism. Correspondingly, Kik suggests the following definition of ecumenism from an Evangelical perspective:

Ecumenism is the movement in the universal visible church upon earth by which, under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church comes into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Samuel cites Ephesians 4:3 to demonstrate that Christian unity comes from the Holy Spirit: “{There is} one body and one Spirit…”[[82]](#footnote-82) The Church is not called to create unity, since it already exists.[[83]](#footnote-83) The New Testament says nothing about an organizational unity, but only of a spiritual one. The Church is called to maintain this spiritual oneness.[[84]](#footnote-84) Samuel does not, however, object to the existence of Christian denominations. They do not necessarily “get in the way of fellowship with others who are truly born again.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

Lloyd-Jones also feels that Christian unity is spiritual in nature: “The unity itself is inevitable among all those who have been quickened by the Holy Spirit out of spiritual death and given new life in Christ Jesus.”[[86]](#footnote-86) He notes reference to the Trinity in Ephesian 4:4-6. Christian unity, then, should be based on the Trinitarian concept of God. He also acknowledges that Christian unity can embrace a diversity of gifts (Eph 4:7-12).

Appealing to Ephesians 4:11-16, Kik claims, “The road to unity is through faith and knowledge of Christ and not through organization.”[[87]](#footnote-87) Noting that according to Ephesians 4:11-12, the teaching ministry of the Church should prepare believers “for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ,” Kik claims, “While the church has achieved some maturity, definite growth is still needed through the teaching ministry.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

Again appealing to Ephesians 4, Kik adds the thought that the path to unity is not quick and easy:

Evangelical ecumenism looks forward to the time when the church comes into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ… Though the road may be long and arduous towards the stature of the fullness of Christ, that only will fulfill the will of God and achieve true unity.[[89]](#footnote-89)

In his examination of Ephesians 4, Lloyd-Jones includes consideration of the preceding context.[[90]](#footnote-90) He appeals to Eph 1:10 and 2:14 to conclude that God’s eternal plan consists of unity. He also states that in chapters 1-3, Paul focuses on doctrinal questions – they cannot be neglected in the quest for unity. In particular, the unity of faith is only possible for those who truly embrace the gospel (Eph 1:8-10; 2:8-10).

Kik also cites Jesus’ teaching on unity, especially in John 17:21, where the Lord compares unity between Christians with unity between the Father and the Son. This kind of unity includes unity of doctrine (Jn 7:16; 8:26, 28) and common goals (Jn 6:38, 40; 17:4). The unity of the Trinity is not visible, but spiritual.[[91]](#footnote-91) Samuel concurs with the above, defining genuine unity as follows:

…unity of essence, a oneness of Spirit, a oneness of Life. It is an organic unity, not an organizational unity…. So for the Christian today unity of life through new birth, and unity of mind and purpose through loyalty to the Son are the key to conscious enjoyment of unity with fellow-Christians.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Lloyd-Jones adds the thought that in John 17, Jesus does not pray for everyone, but rather for those whom the Father has given Him (Jn 17:9). So then, unbelievers (including nominal “Christians”) are not included in this prayer.[[93]](#footnote-93) Nelson comments that in Jesus’ words, God’s family consists of those who do the will of God (Mk 3:35).[[94]](#footnote-94)

Kik advances other arguments that true church unity is spiritual in nature.[[95]](#footnote-95) First, true Israel was invisible, that is, not all who were born Israelites were truly God’s people in heart. Second, not all who call Jesus Lord are truly saved (Matt 7:21-23). Third, the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, is hidden from sight. Therefore, His Body will be as well. Finally, people are baptized into the Body by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), which again indicates the spiritual nature of Christ’s Church.

The moral condition of believers in Jesus is also a key to church unity. Lack of holiness can hinder harmonious relationships since it breeds pride, greed, and other vices.[[96]](#footnote-96) Divisions in Corinth, in fact, arose due to excessive partiality for one preacher over another (1 Cor 1:12).[[97]](#footnote-97) Bromiley correctly states, “Perhaps the greatest obstacle to genuine unity in the church is the basic unwillingness of the old man to die.”[[98]](#footnote-98)

Similarly, Samuel emphasizes Christian love as a means to unity. Tolerance is mandatory in non-essential matters.[[99]](#footnote-99) Yet, tolerance has its limits. At times, division is needed to preserve sound doctrine. “Disloyalty to the Christ and the Scriptures” is a bigger issue than division in the Church.[[100]](#footnote-100)

Along with this, Kik stresses proper Christology. He raises the question, “Which Christ is ecumenism promoting”? Is the WCC following the true Savior? [[101]](#footnote-101) Moreover, he notes that the Church labored a long time to reach a biblical understanding of Jesus Christ. It is *that* Christ that should be the basis for Christian unity both doctrinally and in practical Christian living.[[102]](#footnote-102)

Bromiley approaches the question of Christology with more flexibility.[[103]](#footnote-103) He doubts that the Church can reach total agreement about the nature of Jesus: “To confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is obviously essential. To accept an intricate definition of His relationship to God is not so obviously essential to saving faith, and surely ought not to be imposed as a condition of unity.”[[104]](#footnote-104) Our faith should primarily be not in Christological definition, but in a Person. On the other hand, a mere faith in the “Person” of Christ lacks clarity and specificity. We must have some concrete definition of the true Jesus. The Chalcedonian definition has served the Church in this capacity for many generations.

Finally, according to Ephesians 4:5 we must preserve the “one faith.” Kik writes, “Diverse gospels produce diverse faiths.”[[105]](#footnote-105) The New Testament speaks much about preserving true Christian faith (Acts 6:7; Gal 1:23; 1 Tim 4:1; Tit 1:4; Jude 3). Therefore, the quest of unity must not overshadow our concern for sound doctrine. Kik warns, “The very substance of Christianity will be lost if truth be sacrificed to obtain peace and union.”[[106]](#footnote-106) Lloyd-Jones observes that the infant congregation in Jerusalem, which serves an excellent example of church unity, highly valued the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42).[[107]](#footnote-107)

**4. Pentecostals and Charismatics**

Although Pentecostals and Charismatics share with all other evangelical believers a common approach to church unity, we can nonetheless highlight some unique features in their views.

In spite of the hesitation evangelicals show toward participation in the WCC, some Pentecostal groups have joined the Council, especially from Latin America and Africa. A prominent Pentecostal ecumenist has also gained notoriety in this regard – David du Plessis.[[108]](#footnote-108) Nevertheless, most Pentecostal groups shun the WCC.

In his publication *The Ambivalent Ecumenical Impulse in Early Pentecostal Theology in North America,* Jacobsen comments on the general attitude of early Pentecostal leaders to ecumenism.[[109]](#footnote-109) His research revealed that among early leaders of the Pentecostal movement, one finds both supporters and opponents of ecumenism. On the one hand, the former indicted an over-emphasis on doctrinal purity as a major cause of church division. On the other hand, the latter insisted that protecting the doctrine and experience of Holy Spirit baptism was a valid reason to divide the Church. In general, though, Jacobsen concludes that early Pentecostals tended to withdraw from non-Pentecostals.

The founder of modern Pentecostalism, Charles Parham, felt that we must not force congregations to merge. True unity comes voluntarily as a result of our submission to Christ. The revivalist of Azusa Street, William Seymour, welcomed Christians from any background to his meetings. Nevertheless, he was careful to preserve pure doctrine.

We must make mention of an interdenominational organization created for Pentecostal groups – the Pentecostal World Fellowship.[[110]](#footnote-110) Fifty-nine Pentecostal associations from across the globe participate in this association. All members share the conviction of the baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in other tongues. Every three years since 1947, they hold a general conference.

In the mid-twentieth century, a milestone event occurred in the Body of Christ that promoted and enabled, at least for a time, meaningful fellowship between Christian denominations – the worldwide Charismatic Movement. At that time, to the amazement of all, both clergy and laity of the more traditional Christian denominations began to receive the baptism in the Spirit. The Charismatic Movement spread rapidly among nearly every Christian confession throughout the world. The number of those claiming Spirit-baptism reached hundreds of millions. This common experience of the Spirit provided a basis for unity among Spirit-baptized Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, etc.

As a result of this movement, the “Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches” was held in Kansas City in 1977. Fifty thousand participants attended from nearly every Christian denominational and non-denominational group.[[111]](#footnote-111) Nonetheless, the lack of doctrinal unity and uniformity in church practice eventually weakened the movement. Although similar conferences were subsequently held, both attendance and zeal waned over time.

### E. Conclusions

We must agree that, although the Church already possesses spiritual unity, it must nonetheless strive for a visible unity as much as possible. Did not Jesus pray “that they may all be one; even as You, Father, {are} in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (Jn 17:21)? On the other hand, we share the concern that a merger of Christian associations would unavoidably lead to serious compromise of cardinal doctrines.

Nevertheless, while we await the day when “we all attain to the unity of the faith,” the Church must make concrete steps toward a visible unity – whether through interchurch fellowship, formation of denominations, or interdenominational fellowship in the form of the World Evangelical Alliance.

1. We must consider, though, together with Bromiley, that the Early Church and Medieval Church also experienced divisions (Bromiley G. W. The Unity and Disunity of the Church. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958. – P. 16-17). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid., p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Nelson J. R. Overcoming Christian Divisions. – New York: Association Press, 1962. – P. 52-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., p. 70, 99, 102-103. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Kik J. M. Ecumenism and the Evangelical. – Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1958. – P. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bromiley, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., p. 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In fact, celebrating the Lord’s Supper can be an excellent opportunity to reflect on church unity. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Bromiley, p. 50, 56-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid., p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Nelson, p. 31-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid., p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Bromiley, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. We also take into consideration that the separation of the 11 tribes from the tribe of Judah was a punishment for Solomon (1 Kin 11:11-13). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. It is important to remember, together with Nelson, that frequently in Israel’s history, so-called doctrinal divisions were in fact covert attempts to gain authority or riches (see Nelson, p. 43-44). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid., p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid., p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Erickson M. J. Christian Theology. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998. – P. 1141-1143. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. McGrath A. Christian Theology. – 4th ed. – Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. – P. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bromiley, p. 36-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid., p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In recent times, some Catholic and Orthodox leaders are ready to recognize Protestant churches as members of the Body of Christ. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Nelson, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Rusch W. G. A Survey of Ecumenical Reflection about Unity // Braaten C. E., Jenson R. W. The Ecumenical Future. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. – P. 1-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. http://www.worldea.org [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. https://iccc-churches.org [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Bromiley, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., p. 20-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Morrison С. С. The Unfinished Reformation. – New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953. – P. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Samuel L. Evangelicals and the Ecumenical Movement. – London: Evangelical Alliance, 1964. – P. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Pimen (Patriarch of Moscow). An Orthodox View of Contemporary Ecumenism // The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement. – Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978. – P. 326. In Kozlov’s opinion, most Orthodox view ecumenicalism negatively. (see Козлов М. (Протоиерей). Русская Православная Церковь и экуменическое движение. – 31 марта 2006 года. – http://www.pravoslavie.ru/jurnal/478.htm). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Pimen, p. 328. Author’s translation. The Russian Orthodox Church was not able to participate in the WCC previously due to hostilities between the USSR and Western organizations (Pimen, p. 327). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid., p. 336. Author’s translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Nikodim (Metropolitan). The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement // The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement. – Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978. – P. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Limouris G. ed, Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism, p. 30; taken from Guroian V. The Crisis of Orthodox Ecclesiology // Braaten C. E., Jenson R. W. The Ecumenical Future. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. – P. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Nikodim, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid., p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid., p. 267. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Pimen, p. 330. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Nikodim, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., p. 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Pimen, p. 330-331. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Guroian V. The Crisis of Orthodox Ecclesiology // Braaten C. E., Jenson R. W. The Ecumenical Future. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. – P. 162-163. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Pimen, p. 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Wainwright G. The Global Structures of Ecumenism // Braaten C. E., Jenson R. W. The Ecumenical Future. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. – P. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Nikodim, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Guroian, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Райэлз К. Три великие церкви / Пер. с англ. С. А. Резниченко. 2006. – P. 26-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. The Decree on Ecumenism by the Second Vatican Council, № 1, taken from Leeming B. The Vatican Council and Christian Unity. – New York: Harper & Rom, 1966. – P. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 813. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., № 815. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. See Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 816. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid., № 818. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid., № 819. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The Decree on Ecumenism by the Second Vatican Council, № 4, taken from Leeming, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., № 3, taken from Leeming, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., № 4, taken from Leeming, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid., № 22, taken from Leeming, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid., № 15, taken from Leeming, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid., № 17, taken from Leeming, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 821-822; The Decree on Ecumenism by the Second Vatican Council, № 4, 8, 12, taken from Leeming, p. 5-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The Decree on Ecumenism by the Second Vatican Council, № 4, taken from Leeming, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Samuel, p. 5-7, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Nelson, p. 98-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Kik, p. 6-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ibid., p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Bromiley, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Kik, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ibid., p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid., p. 17, 76, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibid., p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ibid., p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Lloyd-Jones sees indications of the unity already existing among true believers and the need for preserving that unity in the words of Jesus: “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, {the name} which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We {are}” (Jn 17:11) (Lloyd-Jones D. M. The Basis of Christian Unity: An Exposition of John 17 and Ephesians 4. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962. – P. 11-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Samuel, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Samuel, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Lloyd-Jones, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Kik, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Ibid., p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Ibid., p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Lloyd-Jones, p. 17-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Kik, p. 41-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Samuel, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Lloyd-Jones, p. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Nelson, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Kik, p. 91-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Ibid., p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Lloyd-Jones, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Bromiley, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Samuel, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Ibid., p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Kik, p. 11-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Ibid., p. 55-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Bromiley, p. 77-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ibid., p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Kik, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Ibid., p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Lloyd-Jones, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Hunter H. D. Global Pentecostalism and Ecumenism: Two Movements of the Holy Spirit // Vondey W. Pentecostalism and Christian Unity. – Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2010. – P. 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Jacobsen D. The Ambivalent Ecumenical Impulse in Early Pentecostal Theology in North America // Vondey W. Pentecostalism and Christian Unity. – Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2010. – P. 3-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. https://www.gowpf.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. http://fanaticforjesus.blogspot.ru/2011/01/ecumenism-and-three-threads-of.html [↑](#footnote-ref-111)