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Talk delivered at the Book Launch:  
***Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism,  
Resources for Theological Education – “That They All May Be One” (John 17, 21)***  
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Dear Moderator and Vice-moderators of the Central Committee of the WCC, Dear General Secretary, Estimated Members of the Executive Committee, Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is with great joy that we accepted the invitation to present to the members of the WCC Executive Committee the very recently published *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources for Theological Education*. It is a great honor for me to be here, in this place full of history and symbolism and on the occasion of this book launch. to speak to all of you.

The *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism* was initiated as a joint project of the Programme on Ecumenical Theological Education of the World Council of Churches (ETE/WCC), the former Churches in Dialogue Commission of the Council of European Churches (CiD/CEC), and the Volos Academy for Theological Studies. It is building upon the fruits of the long engagement and achievements of the Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement. Certainly, we already have publications concerning several aspects of the Orthodox participation in the ecumenical dialogue, such as the works published by His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, His Holiness Aram I Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), Fr. Ion Bria, Fr. Tomas FitzGerald, Prof. Constantin Patelos, and the Deputy General Secretary of the WCC, Yorgo Lemopoulos, and more.

However, this collective volume is an attempt to include both the fruit of the bilateral dialogues, as well as the achievements of the multilateral dialogue, and map out the current Orthodox theological reflection around the world on different questions discussed in the ecumenical movement. It is meant as a tool to be used for teaching ecumenism and reference to previous significant contributions to the ecumenical dialogue (in the form of providing texts or presenting pioneer ecumenical work of Orthodox hierarchs and theologians). Apart from the positive achievements, the Handbook attempts to also present the challenges posed to the Orthodox tradition, and the need for ecumenical theological education at present.

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The initial process towards a Handbook had already started in February 2010 as a follow-up of previous initiatives between Volos Academy and the ETE/WCC. It was both during the Sibiu consultation of November 2010, and on several other occasions where different voices indicated the need to have a proper reference book for teaching ecumenism in Orthodox theological faculties, seminaries, and academies, as there is still a serious lack of resources for proper and sound teaching of the history and life of the ecumenical movement.

A preparatory meeting of 25 consultants (clergy and lay theologians, teaching or researching on ecumenism, engaging in ecumenical work locally, nationally or internationally) took place in Volos, Greece, in October 2011, and prepared the outline and core thematic areas of the Handbook, and also suggested possible authors to contribute to the volume. The authors are church leaders and representatives, or theologians actively engaging in dialogue, teaching and researching on ecumenism and ecumenical theology. An effort was made to bring insights and perspectives of theologians who haven't had up to now the chance to be involved in WCC or CEC work, but who contribute significantly to ecumenical work in terms of scholarship and local engagement in ecumenical initiatives. In accordance with WCC and CEC standards, a serious effort was made to include contributions of female theologians, and also perspectives of theologians, researchers, and practitioners in mission and ecumenism of the younger generation.

The process of being in touch with different theologians from all parts of the world has not been easy, because of difficulties in communication, busy agendas, and limitations of time. We do recognize that there are still voices missing in this Handbook (for example, there could be more contributions from the Oriental Orthodox family), but we do hope that this is only the beginning of working together in the area of Ecumenical Theological Education, and that we will find more effective ways of future cooperation.

In conclusion, the present volume does not claim to be the final piece of work regarding Ecumenical Theological Education in Orthodox contexts. Nevertheless it is offered to our churches and theological institutions as a tool to be used in class, and to address a wide audience within churches, and as an opportunity to stimulate further engagement in Ecumenical Theological Education.

Regarding its contents, the Handbook is divided in 8 sections, plus an appendix, while it is accompanied by a Digital Reader of Official Reference Texts.

In the introductory section the essays provide a survey on the historical role of Orthodoxy worldwide, its understanding of ecumenism and its contribution to the main ecumenical organizations (World Council of Churches, Council of European Churches, Middle East Council of Churches) as well as some difficulties for developing a proper understanding of ecumenism and a concise glossary of fundamental ecumenical terms.

In the second section the essays attempt to present the biblical, patristic, ecclesiological and historical foundations of the ecumenical perspective of Orthodoxy, along with various negative factors that often prevent the full engagement of the Orthodox people or Churches with the ecumenical movement.

In the third section an overview of the ecumenical contribution of eminent Eastern and Oriental Orthodox thinkers and figures towards the common Christian understanding is provided, including names like Fr. Georges Florovsky, Nikos Nissiotis, Fr. John Meyendorff, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, Fr. Ioan Bria, Abuna Paulos, Matthew the Poor, etc.

The next fourth section provides survey articles from different Orthodox Churches (Patriarchates, Autocephalous etc.) on the ecumenical situation and dialogue, as well as the current status of the theological education in the respective Churches.

The goal of the next fifth chapter is to present survey articles on the current status from the various official bilateral theological dialogues between the Orthodox Churches with the other Churches (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, etc) on various theological issues.

The sixth section is dedicated to the different ecumenical perspectives of the various Oriental Orthodox Churches (like Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian, Armenian, Eritrean Churches and so on).

The goal of the next seventh section, which is the biggest one, is to articulate the ecumenical dimension of Orthodox theology for a number of classic or modern theological and practical issues which one way or another have important implications on the ecumenical dialogue and the life of the Orthodox Churches. Issues like common prayer, ethics, ecology, disability, the position of women, laity and youth in the Church, interreligious dialogue, just peace, reception, etc are only some of the topics that this chapter deal with.

The goal of the eighth section is to present a short survey on Orthodox theological institutes providing courses on Ecumenism or Ecumenical theology, as well as some basic ecumenical statements and communiqués from international consultations (Basel, Penteli, Sambata de Sus, Sibiu) on the ecumenical theological education

The following last section is a sort of appendix. This section provides a historical introduction and a list of selected Texts from Orthodox Synods and Bishops Conferences on Ecumenism/ Ecumenical relations, pan-orthodox meetings and conferences which in the past have informed the commitment and engagement of Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement both on international and on regional levels. These texts are available in the Digital Reader that accompanies the Handbook.

For the completion of the present volume, and on behalf of the editorial group of the Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism, i. e. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Fr. Thomas FitzGerald, Fr. Cyril Hovorun, Aikaterini Pekridrou, Nikolaos Asproulis, Rev. Guy Liagre, and Rev. Dietrich Werner, we would like to convey our special thanks to the Ecumenical Theological Education Programme of WCC, and in particular to Rev. Dr. Dietrich Werner for his constant support and ceaseless work. Also, we are grateful to the WCC Deputy General Secretary, Mr. Yorgo Lemopoulos, Rev. Prof. Dr. Daniel Buda, Programme Executive for church and ecumenical relations, and Mr. Michael West, Manager of WCC Publications, for their cooperation, advisory and consultative assistance to the project. Our deepest gratitude goes to the Conference of

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