

STATEMENT OF STANDING CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS
ON
RELATIONS WITH NON-ORTHODOX GROUPS

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Editors' Note: Although the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Episcopalian denominations have suffered a serious deterioration in doctrine and in their identity as Christians—especially over the past three to four decades—ecumenistic Orthodox churchmen continue to persist in their joint prayers and services—and even inter-communion—with these non-Orthodox bodies. This is why it is needful for all to read the document that follows, simply to see how far the SCOBA (Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America) bishops, and all in communion with them, have strayed from the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith.*

“The Encyclical of the Oecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Athenagoras, and the Holy Synod of Constantinople, of January 31, 1952, contains this paragraph:

‘It is meet that Orthodox Clerics who are delegates (i.e., to conferences with non-Orthodox) should be careful as possible about services of worship in which they join with the heterodox, as these are contrary to the Sacred Canons and make less acute the confessional sensitiveness of the Orthodox. They should aim at celebrating, if possible, purely Orthodox liturgical services and rites, that they may thereby manifest, before the eyes of the heterodox, the splendor and majesty of Orthodox adoration.’”

Since the position of the Church in the United States affords the maximum opportunity for contact with separated Christians, and *since the presence of Orthodox clerics as participants in non-Orthodox services either scandalizes or confuses the faithful, while confirming uninformed heterodox in their opinion that the Church is simply another denomination* (emphasis added), The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas authorizes the following directive:

1. The spirit of the Patriarchal Encyclical, as quoted above, is especially applicable to the circumstances of the Church in the United States.
2. All who have a teaching function in the Church will instruct those committed to their charge that the Grace of the Sacred Mysteries cannot be obtained, and should not be sought, outside the Church. There is no point in the United States so remote from a parish or other church that any of the faithful cannot receive the Holy Mysteries. at least once annually.
3. Clerics will not attempt to give or receive the Sacred Mysteries to or from any but Orthodox Christians.

* See *The Thyateira Confession*, by Metropolitan Athenagoras Kokkinakis, The Faith Press, 1975. This *Confession* was published “With the Blessing and Authorization of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.” as the front cover states and the Ecumenical Patriarch’s official letter and signature inside re-affirms. Not only does this *Confession* teach that Orthodox and non-Orthodox may pray and have services with one another, but it also affirms, on pp. 69 and 70, that Orthodox may give holy communion to Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, and that Roman Catholics and Episcopalians may give “communion” to Orthodox. This official document has never been retracted.

4. Clerics will not participate in worship with non-Orthodox, nor wear any of the sacred vestments in non-Orthodox places of worship, nor at non-Orthodox services of worship. Clerics will not be photographed wearing the sacred vestments while in the company of non-Orthodox clerics.
5. The following special regulations will be observed in cases of an exceptional nature:
 - (a) Clerics who are chaplains in organizations which have a large non-Orthodox membership will neither participate in nor conduct worship services of a general or inter-confessional nature.
 - (b) Clerics who are delegates to interdenominational meetings will celebrate purely Orthodox services and rites without admitting non-Orthodox to an active part in the service.
 - (c) Clerics invited to preach at non-Orthodox places of worship, and who have the consent of their Hierarch to do so, shall wear none of the sacred vestments nor participate in the services.
6. Clerics and laity will not enter local or other Councils of Churches or interdenominational associations as members thereof, but may participate as observers, according to instructions from the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, and shall not participate in their inter-confessional services. Orthodox relations with all such bodies are the responsibilities of the Hierarchs.
7. Clerics, and the faithful generally, should remember their opportunities to witness for the Church in all of these matters.