

Chapter 4

The Church Abroad & the Non-Orthodox Churches

Before World War I, there was as little interest in Orthodoxy in the West as there was interest in the Western Churches in the East. The Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches existed in proximity to one another because the regions in which their faithful lived abutted each other, though no inter-Church contacts took place. Both Churches—the Catholic and the Orthodox—viewed the other Church as schismatic and saw the conversion of the faithful of the other Church as a missionary task. In the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands and the Seven Mountains, millions of Uniates lived, who had formerly been Orthodox and who, while retaining their liturgy and liturgical language, had recognized the Pope as their head (the Union of Brest) in 1596 [Trans., and in 1698 (Siebenburgen)]. The reason for these unions with Rome was political; there were no theological causes for these unions. They were based solely on the connection between the State and the Catholic unions. Since then, the return of these "erring faithful" from Rome to the "bosom of Orthodoxy" was a goal of Orthodox ecclesiastical politics in this area, whereas Rome simultaneously sought to bring more Orthodox faithful to the Unia. After the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian State and the obliteration of independent Poland, these faithful lost their political protection. Tsarist Russia, in which the Orthodox Church was the State Church, promoted the re-missionizing and return of the Uniate faithful into the "bosom of the Mother Church."

A typical example of this mission was the foundation of the aforementioned Convent of the Lesna Icon of the Mother of God. It had been founded in 1885, in the Diocese of Kholm, where mainly Catholic and Uniate faithful lived, with the special assignment of serving as a

missionary outpost for the conversion of the Uniates.¹ Indeed, the Lesna nuns, who were happy to have such massive State support, enjoyed great missionary success, though the final "winning back" and "reunification of the Uniates" was reserved for the Russian Patriarchal Church.

In 1950, "a great event in the life of the Orthodox Church took place: a Synod for the Greek Catholic clergy and laity in the Preshov region in Czechoslovakia decided to break with Rome and to return to the bosom of the ancestral Orthodox Church."² Behind this benign statement was hidden the annihilation of the Uniate Church, which was accomplished under massive government pressure.

The struggle for influence and mission among the faithful in the borderlands, in which political power was for centuries often the only deciding factor, has overshadowed the relationship between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church, especially with regard to the Russian Church. In the case of the Russian Church a further factor of mistrust was added: the Polish-Russian relationship on a political level also effected the ecclesiastical realm, because Polish nationalism and Catholicism were inseparable, just as in Russia tsarism and Orthodoxy were. Thus, political-governmental goals were entangled in many ways with ecclesiastical politics.

Less problematic was the relationship to the Reformed Churches. In the Baltic Republics and in Finland there were points of contact, though here there were no numerically significant conversions or forcible takeovers of entire regions. Both groups perhaps had a mutual rejection of the Roman Catholic Church.

Before the Revolution there were contacts with the Anglican Church, the Old Catholic Church and a few Protestant Churches. After the World Mission Conference at Edinburgh (1910), the next contacts with the Ecumenical Movement came during World War I. An "exchange of letters" between the First Secretary of the Movement for Faith and Church Order,

the American solicitor R. H. Gardiner, and two prominent representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church..., Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev & Galicia and canon law specialist Archimandrite Hilarion (Troitsky), revealed their opposition, which the Church Abroad later continued. Archbishop Anthony represented the view that, according to Orthodox teaching, all outside the Church are "heathens, heretics and usurpers of the Christian name." American attorney R. H. Gardiner referred in his reply to the contrasting utterances of Russian theologians, whose opinion he summarizes as follows: "The schisms and heresies have not made the Christian people from the West into heathens."³

If this exchange of letters only concerns the positions of individuals in relationship to the Anglican and Old Catholic Church, one can speak of more regular relations and of a theological dialogue between these Churches and the Russian Church. Since the 18th century there had been a close relationship to the Anglican Church.⁴ Since the 19th century there has existed in North America and England a "Committee for Rapprochement with the Orthodox Church" [in England, the Eastern Church Association]. In 1865, there was a conference between the Orthodox and the Anglicans in London, at which the possibilities of a union of both Churches were discussed. "The Lambeth Conference of 1897 expressed the Anglican Church's desire to grow closer to the Orthodox Church." In 1906, the Society for the "Union of the Anglican & Orthodox Eastern Church" was formed in England. In 1912, with the blessing of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the "Society for the Rapprochement of the Anglican & Orthodox Churches" was inaugurated. The first chairman of this society was Eulogius, Bishop of Kholm.⁵ After the outbreak of the War, contacts with the Anglican Church broke off. They were only able to be reinstated in 1943, when a delegation of Anglicans again visited Russia.

Contacts with the Old Catholic movement began in the 1870s. Between 1897 and 1910, representatives of the Russian Church attended Old Catholic Conferences; from 1892, a commission existed at the Holy Synod, which was to study the possibilities of a union between the Old Catholics and the Orthodox. Similar commissions existed to address rapprochement with the Catholics. For about 25 years, there was an intensive dialogue between the two Churches, but relations with the Old Catholics were also interrupted during World War I: "Since World War I, the intercourse between the Old Catholics and the Orthodox has been in abeyance. In 1946, an exchange of letters... was again undertaken."⁶

There were points of contact with the Protestant Churches since the 16th century. "In the 19th century, many renowned theologians of the Russian Church occupied themselves with a thorough study of Protestantism The Russian theologians made good use of the knowledge of Protestant academics in the realm of Church history, biblical scholarship and Christian ethics."⁷

All these contacts with the Russian Mother Church broke off after 1920. The rulers [Trans., Soviets] no longer permitted the Patriarchal Church to continue theological dialogue. Only after World War II was the Patriarchal Church able to again enter into discussions. Today, the Patriarchal Church conducts multi- and bilateral contacts with the non-Orthodox Churches on all levels. Through entrance into the World Council of Churches in 1961, the Patriarchal Church has participated in ecumenical discussions on an interconfessional basis.⁸ Also, the Patriarchal Church conducts bilateral talks with the Reformed and heterodox Churches. Theological talks with the Evangelical Church in Germany have, for example, become an integral part of this bilateral dialogue. Since the Second Vatican Council, at which, for the first time, official representatives of the Patriarchal Church were present, dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church

has also been initiated. It must also be pointed out that both the Ecumenical Movement, as well as the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, were most closely connected with the name of Metropolitan Nicodemus (Rotov), who, until his death [Trans., in Rome], was not only the initiator but also the moderator of this dialogue. Thus, R. Slentska writes in his condemnation of the ecumenical activities of the Patriarchal Church: "It is only a relatively small group which carries out the ecumenical activities of the Russian Orthodox Church. At ecumenical institutions, one meets the same people again and again, who are much concerned with the corresponding reports and journeys. It is no wonder that not only an ecclesio-political, but also a theological opposition is directed against such a grouping. This has occasioned reproaches of renovation and of challenging the basic tenets of the Faith."⁹ Whether the proponents or opponents of a dialogue, especially with the Catholic Church, will prevail, cannot now be predicted. As for a continuation, the abiding fact is that the contacts have become such a part of ecclesio-political routine that a cessation would necessarily have serious consequences for the whole ecumenical movement. With Rome, an interruption of the dialogue would be more feasible, because it is only a matter of bilateral talks, limited to the small group around Metropolitan Nicodemus. With the exception of the Ecumenical Patriarch, the dialogue with Rome is viewed with mistrust.

From the end of World War I, the dialogue with the Western Churches was exclusively maintained by the emigration. The upkeep of contacts from the time before 1920, as well as generally getting information on the Russian Church and, therefore, also on Orthodoxy within the non-Orthodox world, can for the most part be credited to the emigration.

While the Orthodox Church had been limited to eastern and southern Europe, Turkey and the East until the beginning of this century, the situation changed after the 1880s. Particularly in North America, many Orthodox communities made up of immigrants from the Near East and

Eastern Europe [e.g., Carpatho-Russia] came into existence. Thus, it is not particularly surprising that the General Convocation of the Anglican Church in North America, rather than the Anglican Church of England, began the dialogue with the Russian Church.¹⁰

After the end of World War II, Russian refugees streamed into Western Europe. The establishment of Russian Orthodox communities in traditionally Catholic and evangelical Protestant countries led to many contacts between representatives of these Churches and the faithful. Russian spirituality, piety, Church customs and traditional Church art and usages not only became known but also aroused curiosity and, ultimately, academic and theological interest. Thus, the émigrés, by their mere existence, contributed much to the "discovery" of the Russian Church.

It was not the émigré communities alone that awakened the interest of Western Christians in the Russian Church. It was the situation of the Church and the faithful in Russia itself. The terrible persecutions of the Church, which began at the time of the Communists' seizure of power, aroused indignation in Western Church circles, as well as admiration for the martyrdom of clergy and faithful. That the full extent of the persecution of religion was known is one of the main contributions of the Church Abroad, which has, since its foundation, taken advantage of every opportunity to point to the difficult fate of their brethren in the faith in their homeland. The persecution of the Church led to the Western Churches feeling solidarity with the Russian Church, because the atheistic and materialistic ideology was the common enemy of all religions, especially the Christian. This evaluation remained commonly in force at least until the 1940s. Then, on account of the "new church policy" in the Soviet Union, a fresh evaluation of Communism came about, because more and more church representatives in the West received the impression that coexistence with Marxism-Leninism and Christianity would be entirely possible,

as the ecclesio-political situation in the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern bloc would now prove. It has thus been overlooked even to this day that Communist ideology has not desisted from proclaiming the incompatibility of Marxism-Leninism and Christianity; that religion, now as before, is redundant and a thing of the past, something that has no future. One is thus also helping the State to confirm this prognosis, in that the institution of the Church has limited its activities to a minimum.

Both developments—the establishment of Orthodox communities in the diaspora, especially in Western Europe, and the persecution of the Church in Russia—awakened in the West an interest in the Russian Church and Orthodoxy. Such academic interest found its clearest expression in the foundation of numerous institutions concerned with the study of Orthodoxy. Until 1920, there was hardly any literature on Orthodoxy and the Russian Church in the West; but from the early 1920s, the publishing activities increased greatly. Many academic and church journals started their own chronicles, in which the Orthodox Churches, mostly represented through the Russian Church, were considered. Much study was done on the Orthodox Churches, especially on the Roman Catholic side, by the establishment of Eastern Church periodicals.

The Church Abroad often viewed this—sometimes mistakenly—merely as an especially 'refined attempt' by Rome to bring Orthodox faithful into the Unia or to convert them completely to Catholicism. Thus, at the Second Pan-Diaspora Council in 1938, Hegumen Philip (von Gardner) warned against the journal *Irenikon*, which on its pages pursued a single goal, viz. to prove that there are no differences between the Orthodox Faith and the Roman Catholic faith, except in ritual. Rome would be prepared to accept Orthodox psychology if Orthodoxy would accept the supremacy of the Pope. With this interpretation, it is understandable that in its

resolution the Council stressed a proposal, that there must be particular emphasis in religious instruction on the "great differences" between Orthodoxy and Catholicism.¹¹

It is impossible for this scholarly undertaking to analyze the theological thought of the Church Abroad, which arose against a dialogue with Rome, the Ecumenical Movement, and the individual Reformed Churches. Here, there can only be a brief overview of the basic position of the Church Abroad. It may appear that the Church Abroad today stands as a forlorn outpost in rejecting the Ecumenical Movement and condemning the dialogue between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Rome as a unilateral move. One should also not draw any hasty conclusions when individual representatives of Orthodox Churches take a liberal or conservative stand on certain questions. The dialogue with Rome and the Ecumenical Movement was condemned in various ways. In each of the Orthodox local Churches there are opponents and proponents. This also applies to the Russian Patriarchal Church.

If Slentska speaks of a "small group" of representatives, there is also the question of the other group and its size. Did they leave Metropolitan Nicodemus alone because they were unable to prevent his ecumenical contacts, or because they were too small? Another example is the question of the acceptance of Anglican ordination. Although the two Russian Churches did not recognize Anglican ordinations, the Paris Jurisdiction has recognized them since the 1930s.¹² One could also speak of conservative and liberal Russians. In other Orthodox Churches, there are similarly diverse positions, but, correspondingly, they are not always able to be articulated.

The Church Abroad has to the present time represented the Orthodox standpoint that the Orthodox Church alone is the one Church of Christ.¹³ All other Christian Churches, which have split from it, have gone on a schismatic and heretical path. A reunification of Churches, therefore, could only be accomplished by the non-Orthodox Churches rejoining the Orthodox Church. The

Church Abroad based this claim on the fact that until the Great Schism in 1054, only one Church existed that recognized the dogmas established at the Seven Ecumenical Councils. The Roman Church has separated itself from this common path. Through the defilement of the purity of Orthodox teaching by the introduction of new dogmas, the Church of Rome has not only become schismatic, but also heretical. The new dogmas of Rome, starting with the *Filioque*, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and the Virgin Mary's bodily Assumption into Heaven, to the "completely anti-Christian teaching that the Pope is the Head of the Church and is infallible," are impediments to any reunification. With the Protestant Churches, most particularly with the Anglican Church, a reunification would be essentially easier to accomplish, because these had not adopted the "new dogmas" of Rome. There would, therefore, also be fewer hindrances on a possible path to unity. But here there should be no misunderstanding: the total reunification of the Churches is also in this case only to be understood as their joining the Orthodox Church.

It may appear as if this view of the current developments in the Ecumenical Movement and of the strides taken in the dialogue with Rome have prevailed. However, reunification is perhaps even more tenuous today than 30 or 50 years ago, when romanticized hopes of a joint, reunified Christian Church gave the movement fresh impetus. Today one begins to properly evaluate the actual, divisive factors after extensive theological discussion. One begins gradually to understand that no Church will renounce one of its own dogmas. The readiness to allow a dogma not to be binding for the whole Church has not been forthcoming. The separation of Churches will continue.

The Church Abroad accuses the Ecumenical Movement, and the Roman Catholic Church above all, of attempting to achieve unity through a minimization of dogmas. The accusation that Rome would attempt to reduce the differences to liturgical forms was made not only at the

Council of 1938. Archpriest George Grabbe (today Bishop Gregory) also analyzed the 1952 papal encyclical "Sacro Vergente Anno."¹⁴ Grabbe sees the real goal of the encyclical to be a "new form of mission among the Russian." In order to bring the latter to their [Roman Catholic] side, the Pope connected this with a campaign against Communism. In the encyclical, he gives a historical survey of the history of the Russian people and the Russian Church. In the schism between the Eastern and Western Church, according to the Pope, the Russian Church did not take part. The separation took place before the Russian Church took its own path, only in 1448 (autocephaly). The Pope has always felt particular love for the Russian people. Together, both Churches would avert and condemn Communism.

This response to the encyclical clearly shows that there have been no changes in the consciousness of the Church Abroad toward the Roman Catholic Church during the time of the emigration. The Church Abroad even rejects a joint struggle with Rome against Communism. Already in 1922, Metropolitan Antony had appealed for help on the occasion of Patriarch Tikhon's arrest to the heads of the non-Orthodox Churches, but specifically excluded the support of the pope. The Appeal was entitled: "An appeal of the SEA Abroad to the leaders of the non-Orthodox Churches (excluding the Pope of Rome)."¹⁵ Although this stance may have been prompted by a deep mistrust of Rome, the real reasons of separation are to be found in the claim of the Orthodox Church to be the One Church. The various Orthodox Local Churches approached the possibilities of a dialogue in different ways. At the Pan-Orthodox Conferences on Rhodes in 1961, 1963 and 1964, [the Churches] were unable even once to agree on whether or not they should accept the invitation to send observers to Vatican II. While a conservative group, headed by the Church of Greece, brought up the great distance between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, the other group, headed by the Œcumenical Patriarchate, advocated sending

observers.¹⁶ The Russian Church was represented at Vatican II only by the Church Abroad's observers and the Paris Jurisdiction. Archbishop Anthony of Geneva headed the Church Abroad's group. In conjunction with the opening of the Council, he had served the divine liturgy at the Church Abroad's St. Nicholas Church in Rome, and in his sermon once again stressed the following position of the Church Abroad: "All attempts, no matter whence they proceed, which aim to introduce something into our Orthodox Faith or change it in any way, will meet with no success. This is the reason why such attempts are unrealistic and impossible."¹⁷

The Church Abroad did not take part in any sessions of the Vatican II Council. After a delegation of the Patriarchal Church suddenly arrived—the negotiations over participation had taken place without any publicity—the Church Abroad's delegation withdrew.¹⁸

The dialogue between the Russian Patriarchal Church and the Roman Catholic Church, which has grown more intense over the years, has moreover led to a difference between both parts of the Russian Church in the matter of allowing Catholics Communion. Whereas the Patriarchal Church permits Roman Catholic Christians to partake of Communion, the Church Abroad denies them Communion.¹⁹

The Church Abroad considered the lifting of the ecclesiastical ban of 1054 by the Œcumenical Patriarch and the Pope to be invalid, because only a joint Council could take such a step. The Russian Patriarchal Church was of the same opinion that this step was “an act of the Local Church of Constantinople and could have no theological significance for the Holy Orthodox Church.”²⁰ The Catholic-Orthodox Commission, created by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Demetrios to clarify the theological questions under dispute, was rejected by the Church Abroad because not all Orthodox Churches participated in the discussion.

The rapprochement between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Pope is viewed by the Church Abroad with great mistrust. Strong reactions have met all attempts of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to give the appearance of being the spokesman for the whole of Orthodoxy. The Church Abroad and the Russian Patriarchal Church have both protested against this. In many instances, Athonite monasticism, which occupies a special place within Orthodoxy, shares the Church Abroad's view. In an epistle of 9/22 April 1980, the representatives of all 20 Athonite monasteries expressed their concern over the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarch seems to have taken a "dangerous" path, and they stressed that the "Orthodox Church is the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ," to whose bosom "the Churches" and "confessions" of the West must return. They warned the Ecumenical Patriarch to avoid everything that could give the appearance that Orthodoxy would be able to lay aside this claim. A hasty dialogue would imply the "spiritual suicide of Orthodoxy."²¹

The stance towards the Ecumenical Movement and the Anglican Church has become similarly clear. The Church Abroad regularly observed sessions of the Ecumenical Movement, conferences of the Anglican Church, and sessions of the WCC. It was represented at these meetings by observers, who took part in all *in camera* sessions, but generally not in the discussions, because they had no right to vote. The representatives of the Church Abroad wanted this status, because they wanted to work together with the group, but not in any way to pursue the goal of forming a "new united Church." The Church Abroad wanted to collaborate under the aspect of brotherly help" of the non-Orthodox Christian Churches, on behalf of the Russian Church in the homeland and the émigré Church. As help for the oppressed Church in the homeland, the Church Abroad had in mind moral support to protect them from persecution. The Church Abroad repeatedly addressed other Christian Churches with appeals and implored them

for support for the oppressed Mother Church. The release of Patriarch Tikhon was in part a result of these massive protests. In the time between the Wars, joint prayers for the persecuted Christians in the Soviet Union were no exception. The participation of Metropolitan Eulogius in such prayers led to the break between the Paris Jurisdiction and the Patriarchal Church.

Dialogue with the Anglican Church was carried out by both émigré Churches after the 1926 schism. The Paris Jurisdiction was especially active in this dialogue. Only with this group could intercommunion be established, whereas the other Russian Churches did not take this step.

The Church Abroad took the view towards the Ecumenical Movement, that collaboration would be useful if this collaboration succeeded in bearing witness to Orthodoxy and bringing to the consciousness of the Protestant-Reformed Churches the Orthodox Church as the One Church of Christ. Never would it have been able to join in any movement that had as its objective the foundation a "Christian World Church," which would be formed out of a compromise of existing Churches. This basic stance has determined the participation of the Church Abroad in the Ecumenical Movement from the beginning. Until today, the Church Abroad, therefore, criticizes those Orthodox Churches that are represented in the WCC and add their opinion to the "ecumenical blather." If these so-called "ecumenical services," in which women participate as clergy and which involve even non-Christian religions, were instituted with the goal of underscoring the "common basis of all religions," the Church Abroad feels compelled every time to present the Orthodox standpoint. They have warned their Orthodox Sister Churches again and again not to deviate from the foundation of Orthodoxy.

Although the Church Abroad had formerly sent observers to the meetings of the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC,²² since the 1960s they were hardly ever represented with official delegations. The Church Abroad justified its position that as the free part of the Russian

Church, it had to instruct its Christian brothers about the situation of the Church and the faithful in the homeland. Until 1954 (Evanston Conference U.S.A.), this was possible. The next conference met in 1955, in Hungary. Thereafter, the situation changed fundamentally. At the Evanston Conference, there were representatives of the Eastern bloc Protestant Churches including the Czech professor of theology, Gromadko, and the Hungarian Bishop Peter, who were predisposed towards pro-Soviet policies; however, they were in the minority. At the Hungarian Conference in 1955, the political resolutions of the Communist representatives were ultimately passed. An Anglican bishop from China maintained that the Communist victory in China brought only good to the country and to its Christian Churches.²³

The change became apparent since Evanston—a moral disarmament before the representatives of Communism—continued steadily in subsequent years and culminated in the reception of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Churches of Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland in 1961 at New Delhi. Since then, the Church Abroad has viewed the WCC as an instrument for influencing Western public opinion in favor of the Soviets. Patriarch Alexis's message of greeting, which was addressed to the full assembly in New Delhi, should still give one pause. After the Patriarch had emphasized the rôle of the Churches in preserving world peace, he asked the assembly "categorically to summon and bring the statesmen to the negotiating table, to bring about a final agreement over a general and total disarmament under effective international control, as well as to procure a solution to the remaining questions that so disturb the people."²⁴

The Church Abroad, which was represented at the session in New Delhi by Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore), has behaved with much more reservation towards the Ecumenical Movement since then. Until then, they had never taken any step to join the WCC. They were, however, always invited to the sessions. They had always declined membership. The Paris Jurisdiction and

the North American Metropolia belonged to the WCC. At the WCC, the representatives of the Patriarchal Church and the Metropolia made the first contacts, which later led to the autocephaly of the OCA.

Prayers for the persecuted faithful in the Soviet Union have become increasingly rare since the entry of the Moscow Patriarchate, because none of the membership wants to be criticized by Moscow. If today the membership of the WCC prays for its persecuted brothers and sisters, it prays for the "oppressed people and the persecuted churches, under whose political rule the members also find themselves, but particularly for the Churches in Central America!"²⁵ This suggests that the situation of the Churches in the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern bloc actually corresponds to that situation [in Central America], as the representatives of these Churches gladly present it in interviews, if one were to take the reference to Central America seriously.

The real relations between the Church Abroad and the Reformed Churches, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church today are limited to local contacts. At this level, the Church Abroad is not only supported materially by the Christian Churches of the West, but also morally. It is still possible to speak of the persecution and oppression of the Church in the Soviet Union and to organize aid. These measures, however, rest primarily with the personal contacts between individual representatives of the Church Abroad and the Christian Churches of the West. These Churches must ask themselves how they can answer for their silence over their Russian brothers and sisters before God. This question is today more real than 20 or 30 years ago, because today we are better informed about the events in Russia. In contrast to earlier days, we are no longer dependent upon the reports of the émigrés alone, but rather today learn from the

dissidents, the human rights movement, *samizdat*, and visitors, almost everything about the life of the Church and its faithful.²⁶

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