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The Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox Dialogue in the Bonn Union Conferences and its prospects for inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian relations today

Abstract

The following article deals with the early stage of contacts between the Old Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox in the union conferences held at Bonn in the 19th century. A historical summary of bilateral Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox relations will provide the reader with a clearer picture of the ecumenical dialogue. The discussion of theological teachings, such as the Filioque, the authority of the Church, Holy Scripture and Tradition, and the validity and correctness of the



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ecclesiastical sacraments, permeates the course of century-long efforts made to reach doctrinal agreement and union. Thus, the historical and theological examination of the proceedings of the two conferences which took place in Bonn between 1874 to 1875, as well as their later reception by both sides, may offer illuminating insights concerning the prospects of inter-Christian and inter-Orthodox relations in the 21st century. This article will rely methodologically on the historical accounts recorded by Friedrich Reusch, Nikolaos Damalas and Zikos Rossis, as well as the secondary literature of notable academics, such as George Florovsky and Ioannis Karmiris.

Keywords

Old Catholic, Orthodox, Bonn Conferences, inter-Christian, bilateral dialogue

1 Introduction to the bilateral Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox dialogue

Of all the inter-Christian dialogues, that which took place between the Old Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox Churches could perhaps be considered the most successful. Contacts between them are said to have begun officially in the middle of the 20th century, within the context of the first and third Pan-Orthodox Conferences. The Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox dialogue can be generally divided into four phases. The first phase refers to the Bonn Union Conferences of 1874-1875, the second to the correspondence between the respective theological committees of St. Petersburg and Rotterdam from 1893-1913, the third to the Bonn Conference in 1930 and the fourth to the

three Pan-Orthodox Conferences (1966 in Belgrade, 1970 in Geneva and 1971 in Bonn). The official theological dialogue of the 20th century then took place between 1975 and 1987. Professor Ioannis Karmiris published articles on the development of the dialogues between the two churches in the bulletin of the Church of Greece, entitled *Orthodoxy and Old Catholicism*, in separate issues in 1966, 1967, 1970, 1972 and 1973. Equally important are the informative presentations given during the second conference of the Inter-Orthodox Theological Committee in 1971 by Professor Ioannis Kalogirou. Orthodox theologians have visited the conferences of Cologne in 1890, Lucerne in 1892, Rotterdam in 1894, Vienna in 1897 and Bonn in 1931. Contacts between the two churches were revitalized in the early 20th century following the First World War in the context of the ecumenical movement in Geneva in 1920, in Lausanne in 1927, again in Geneva in 1930 and so on.¹

On February 15, 1910, the Russian Committee of St. Petersburg expressed the position that the two committees agreed on the difference between universal doctrine and personal theological

¹ Ιωάννης Καρμίρης, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παλαιοκαθολικισμός*, (τεύχος I, Η Δ' Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις τοῦ Βελιγραδίου, Ἀθήναι, 1966), p. 3-11. Idem, *Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἐν Διαλόγῳ μετὰ τῶν Ἐτεροδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν* (Ἀθήναι, 1975), p. 32. Γρηγόριος Μ. Λιάντας, *Διμερῆς Θεολογικὸς Διάλογος Ὁρθοδόξων καὶ Παλαιοκαθολικῶν* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ζήτη, 2004), p. 12-20. Meyer Harding, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung: Sämtliche Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene*, (Frankfurt am Main: Bonifatius-Druckerei Paderborn und Otto Lembeck, 1er Bd. 1931-1982), p. 23. For a general overview of the historical development of the bilateral dialogue, see Christian Oyen, „Chronologisch-bibliographische Übersicht der Unions-verhandlungen zwischen der orthodoxen Kirche des Ostens und der altkatholischen Kirche der Utrechter Union“, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 57 (1967), pp. 31-40 (29-51).

opinion, and consequently on the obligatory acceptance of doctrines and the relative freedom of opinion; they were also in agreement concerning the belief in the indivisibility of the Church and the dogmas of the Seven Eumenical Councils, in the obligatory acceptance of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, namely, that He is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, proceeds from the Father and is sent in time by the Son, and that the addition of the Filioque to the ancient Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed was noncanonical. On August 18, 1920, the two churches met in the context of the "Faith and Order" committee. Orthodox representatives of Constantinople, Alexandria, Greece, Romania, Serbia, the Russian Diaspora and Bulgaria, with the Metropolitan of Thyateira Germanos Strinopoulos, Exarch of Western Europe (Ecumenical Patriarchate), as the presiding bishop, convened with Old Catholic delegates of Switzerland and the Netherlands. The Swiss Old Catholic bishop Eduard Herzog referred to the issues of the Filioque and the Holy Eucharist, to name but a few, expressing a desire for union with the Orthodox delegates. In 1925 the Congress of the Old Catholics took place in Bern, and the Orthodox participated there, as well. The next conference in Lausanne in 1927, within the context of the "Faith and Order" committee, was also attended by representatives from the local Orthodox Churches of Constantinople (Germanos Strinopoulos, as well as Archimandrites Konstantinidis and Paraskevaidis), Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Romania, Poland etc. The presence of professors Amilka Alivizatos, Diouvouniotis and Balanos should also be noted. It was decided there that they would organize a joint committee.²

² Stefan Zankow, „Beziehung zwischen Altkatholiken und orthodoxen Kirchen“, *Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift: neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie* 52 (1962), pp. 28-34 (25-37).

Meetings between the two groups were held in Lambeth in 1930 and in Bonn the following year. At the latter conference – perhaps the most significant event for bilateral relations in the beginning of the 20th century – remarkable progress was noted by representatives of the Western Confession. There was general consensus regarding the number of the ecumenical and local councils (seven), the acceptance of the ancient creed without the addition of the Filioque, and the role of the Bible and Tradition. The Old Catholics also accepted the absolute authority of the Ecumenical Councils. They differed, of course, in certain liturgical practices, such as the separation of chrismation from baptism and the timing of the consecration (epiclesis) in the liturgy, but they accepted the teaching of the honorary veneration of the saints and the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, despite their agreement on most dogmatic issues, their decision to establish ecclesiastical communion with the Anglicans on July 2, 1931 caused the Orthodox to have reservations about the possibility of union. According to Metropolitan Maximos of Sardis, a “perfect resolution of their differences” was required “for full agreement”. In 1931, the Old Catholics announced that the Filioque had been removed from the liturgical books of the Netherlands and Switzerland and that it would be removed from those of Germany. Again, while at the Congress of Bonn in 1874 the Old Catholics had agreed with the Anglicans that the listing of seven sacraments was established during the 12th century and did not belong to the tradition of the ancient church, in 1931 they agreed with the Orthodox. Moreover, at the first congresses in Bonn it was also argued that the canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council were not obligatory for all Christians, while in 1931 they officially accepted them. Furthermore, the Old Catholics would not condemn the Filioque as a theological doctrine per se, but simply maintained that it would not be an official doctrine of the church, nor would it be imposed on other

Christians. They were criticized for this position by the Greek Professor Ioannis Karmiris. Once again, at the meeting in Bonn in 1931, which took place under the aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, they came to an almost complete agreement. Yet one crucial issue that was not brought up was that of the intercommunion established between the Old Catholics and the Anglicans. The preliminary committee of the Orthodox Churches on Mount Athos characterized relations with them as relations of fraternal love. In fact, the Old Catholics sent representatives to attend the celebrations in honor of the Apostle Paul in 1951, to the millennium celebration of Mount Athos in 1963 and to the First Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes in 1961. Moreover, in 1962 a delegation visited the Ecumenical Throne.³

At the second meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Theological Committee, the text published in the official publication of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Visit informs the reader about the satisfactory results of the bilateral dialogue. Three Old Catholic texts concerning the confession of faith, the Filioque and primacy in the Church provided an optimistic atmosphere. Professors Kalogirou and Karmiris, representing the Church of Greece, made significant contributions to the discussions beginning in 1961. In two informative presentations, Karmiris remarked on the work of the committee and the progress reached up to that

³ Ibid., pp. 28-36. Meyer Harding, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, p. 24. Cf. Ιωάννης Καρμίρης, *Ορθοδοξία και Παλαιοκαθολικισμός*, p. 18-23, 45-70. Γρηγόρης Μ. Λιάντας, *Διορθόδοξος διακονία του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου και της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος και η συμβολή των δύο εκκλησιών στους διμερείς θεολογικούς διαλόγους με τη Ρωμαιοκαθολική Εκκλησία και την Εκκλησία των Παλαιοκαθολικών*, (Doctoral Thesis, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2004), p. 47. Meyer Harding, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, p. 24.

point in time, while also expressing his views on Bonn (1931) and Belgrade (1966). Next, during the third and fourth phases of the bilateral negotiations the first and third Pan-Orthodox Conferences dealt with the subject of the dialogue with the Old Catholics. In 1966 a Pan-Orthodox committee was set up in Belgrade, and the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Conference in 1968 agreed to follow the decisions of the Belgrade commission. In 1970-1, significant progress may be noted in the dialogue. The Joint Committee met in Athens in 1973, announcing the end of the preparatory phase, the commencement of the sessions of formal dialogues, and plans for the first conference to take place in August 1975. Thus, the dialogue lasted twelve years in seven Joint Committees, during which time twenty-six joint texts were agreed upon and signed. Of course, one should not overlook the contribution the Orthodox committee made to the dialogue with the Old Catholics in Chambésy, Geneva in 1970 (October 16-24), where participants expressed rapprochement about the teachings concerning the Holy Spirit and the Holy Eucharist and the branch theory of ecclesiology, which was then being promulgated by many Old Catholic theologians, was condemned.⁴

⁴ Γρηγόρης Μ. Λιάντας, *Διορθόδοξος διακονία τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου*, p. 52-53. Idem, *Διμερῆς Θεολογικός Διάλογος Ὁρθοδόξων καὶ Παλαιοκαθολικῶν*, p. 21. Ἰωάννης Ν. Καρμίρης, *Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἐν Διαλόγῳ*, pp. 34-35. Meyer Harding, Damaskinos Papandreou, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung: Sämtliche Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene* (Frankfurt am Main: Bonifatius-Druckerei Paderborn und Otto Lembeck, 2er Bd. 1982-1990), p. 19-50. s.n. „Dokumente zum orthodox-alkatholischen Dialog“, *Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift: neue Folge der Revue internationale de theologie*, 61 (1971), pp. 72 (65-78).

By the end of the International Assembly of Old Catholic Bishops a confession of allegiance was sent to the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras⁵ in June 1970, the Joint Committee was held in Penteli for the first time in July 1973, which was preceded by a program involving theological discussions. The following issues were resolved:

1. Theology. Revelation, Bible and Tradition.
2. Canon of the Bible. Christological doctrine regarding the incarnation of the Word of God and the hypostatic union. The proper teaching about the Virgin Mary and the refutation of contrary teachings.
3. Ecclesiology. The essence and characteristics of the Church, the unity of the Church and the local churches, the Church's boundaries, authority, infallibility, the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the local synods recognized by them; the necessity of apostolic succession and the canonicity of the Old Catholic Church, the head of the church and the problem of intercommunion.⁶

With the designated location of Penteli, the program of the joint committee began from August 20-29, 1975 in Chambésy, Geneva, at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The first and nearly all of the second part of the dialogue took place there. In 1977 they discussed the orthodox teaching on the Virgin Mary and ecclesiological questions concerning the essence and characteristics of the Church. In 1979, in Bonn both sides discussed the unity and boundaries of the church. In 1981, in Zagorsk, Moscow, the authority of the Church and in the Church, its infallibility, the synods and the apostolic succession

⁵ s.n. „Dokumente zum orthodox-alkatholischen Dialog“, pp. 65-68.

⁶ Theodor Nikolaou, „Der offizielle Orthodox-Alt-katholische Dialog“, pp. 175.

were further analysed.⁷ In 1983 in Chambésy the principal theme was the “Head of the Church” (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18) and soteriology (the redemptive work of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church). In 1985 in Amersfoort, Netherlands, the sacraments of baptism, chrismation and the Holy Eucharist were the focus of discussion, while in 1987 in Kavala, Greece, attention was directed to the sacraments of repentance, unction, ordination and marriage. Participants also discussed eschatology (the Church and the *eschaton*, life after death, the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of the world) and the theological presuppositions and implications of ecclesiastical communion.⁸ Both sides expressed the common conviction that they are heirs of the ancient church, based on the Bible and the unanimity of the Church, the Fathers and the decrees of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.⁹ The committee’s first text, regarding the Holy Trinity, criticized the prior agreement concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Old Catholics accepted the teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone as well as the distinction between His *eternal* procession and His being sent *in time*, something they had formerly rejected at the second Bonn union conference. Also, in the joint statement made in Munich, the Old Catholics were in rapport with Orthodox Triadology. The procession (ἐκπόρευσις) concerned the Holy Spirit’s unique mode of existence, just as unbegottenness

⁷ Meyer Harding, Damaskinos Papandreou, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, p. 24. Cf. Theodor Nikolaou, „Der offizielle Orthodox-Alt-katholische Dialog“, p. 176-177.

⁸ Meyer Harding, Damaskinos Papandreou, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, p. 20.

⁹ Theodor Nikolaou, „Der offizielle Orthodox-Alt-katholische Dialog“, pp. 178.

and begottenness were proper to the other two Divine Persons. Christology was formulated in the terms of the Council of Chalcedon. They thus spoke of Jesus Christ as one Person known “in two natures” and not merely “from two natures”.¹⁰

Most of the theological obstacles that arose were matters of ecclesiology. They agreed to condemn the Protestant claim that certain ecclesiastical sacraments were invalid because they did not originate with Christ, and to accept specific Western medieval practices of separating First Communion and the Rite of Chrismation from Baptism as valid. However, in Penteli the serious ecclesiological problem of the establishment of communion between the Old Catholics and Anglicans starting in 1985 (following a joint statement with Evangelicals in Germany) was ignored. It should be noted that this agreement on intercommunion was reached at a time when the dialogue with the Orthodox was still in progress. Apart from the above, certain ecclesiological views which originated with the rationalism of the 19th century, such as the rejection of the infallibility of the church, as well as the rejection of the veneration of the saints and excommunications remained quite common among Old Catholics.¹¹ However, the joint statement at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Zagorsk in 1981 must be taken into consideration. The text on the infallibility of the Church jointly confessed that “Unfehlbar ist nur die Kirche als ganze, nicht aber einzelne Glieder für sich allein”, and furthermore the absolute authority of the Church as a whole is recognized when it is expressed

¹⁰ Meyer Harding, Damaskinos Papandreou, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, p. 26-28. Cf. Theodor Nikolaou, „Der offizielle Orthodox-Alt-katholische Dialog“, pp. 180-181.

¹¹ Theodor Nikolaou, „Der offizielle Orthodox-Alt-katholische Dialog“, pp. 182-183.

through an Ecumenical Council: “Das höchste Organ der Kirche, ihren Glauben unfehlbar auszusprechen, ist deshalb allein das ökumenische Konzil.” Thus, it would seem that the Western delegates accepted this Orthodox ecclesiological position.¹²

2 The Bonn Conferences

In order to understand the discussions held in the late 20th century, it is necessary to delve into the proceedings of the Union Conferences at the University of Bonn, Germany in the 19th century. Indeed, the primary theological presuppositions of the Old Catholics as well as several other key theological issues, such as the Filioque, were first addressed there.

2.1 First Conference 1874

The first union conference in Bonn took place on August 14, 1874, and was chaired by Professor Reinkens. The basic principles of the conference were the creeds and teachings of the Christian faith of the first centuries, as well as the goal of “unity in the necessary doctrines” (*unitas in necessariis*). It should be pointed out that this was the first time in history that Anglicans, Orthodox and Old Catholics all gathered together for discussion. The Old Catholics formed the connecting link between the two other groups, since two committees were set up: the Old Catholic-Anglican, where discussions took place in English in the morning and were followed by the bilateral dialogue, where the participants communicated in German in the afternoon. Reusch, as rector of the University of Bonn, provided the meeting place,

¹² Meyer Harding, Damaskinos Papandreou, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, p. 47-48.

and Döllinger presided. Zikos Rossis, a lecturer at the Theological Seminary of the University of Athens and professor at the Rizarion Ecclesiastical School, traveled to Bonn to attend the conference on September 2/14. He refers to the participation of four Orthodox theologians from Russia and non-Orthodox from Denmark, France, Switzerland and Germany, in addition to the above. From the very first meeting, the Anglicans expressed their theological preferences. They emphasized the tradition of the first six centuries of Christianity, and thus excluded the Seventh Ecumenical Council which vindicated the honorary veneration of icons. It also turned out that the basic principle of the conference about which Döllinger and Meyrick spoke, namely, the tradition of the indivisible Church, was characterized by some measure of ambiguity.¹³

During the second meeting was discussed the millennial dogmatic stumbling block between the Western and Eastern churches, the Filioque. The Bishop of Winchester initially agreed that it was non canonically introduced into the creed. However, in his opinion, the Filioque did not contradict the *monarchia* of the Father. At the same time, he expressed his desire for communion with the Old Catholics. After the conclusion of the bilateral discussions between these two western confessions, the proceedings of the Old Catholic-Orthodox dialogue began. Döllinger started by referring to the problems that the Ultramontanism of the Roman Catholic Church caused for the Orthodox. Janyschew followed, representing the Eastern delegates. Nevertheless, the German professor maintained that

¹³ F. H. Reusch (ed.), *Bericht über die am 14., 15. und 16. September zu Bonn gehaltenen Unions-Conferenzen* (Bonn: P. Neusser, 1874), p. 1-7. Cf. Ζήκος Ρώσης, *Πρός τὴν Ἱερὰν Σύνοδο τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Ἀθήναι, 1874), p. 15.

there were no significant differences between the two churches, besides the Filioque, papal primacy and the doctrine of purgatory. Janyschew and Rossis formulated an Orthodox understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit proceeds in a unique manner from the Father, and is sent or emitted in time by the Son. Rossis remarked on the meaning of the verbs ἐκπορεύεσθαι and πέμπειν and Janyschew then clarified the difference between *eternal* procession and procession *in time*. The Greek professor continued by interpreting the Augustinian teaching in an Orthodox manner. According to Reinkens, the Orthodox never officially condemned the Filioque at an Ecumenical Council. Thus, he entreated the delegates to accept the commandment of love as possessing greater value than these doctrines. In response, Janyschew argued that love could not be separated from justice. He also referred to the Third Ecumenical Council, where any alteration of the ancient creed was condemned. Afterwards, the professor of philosophy Knoodt argued that the teaching that the Spirit proceeds from the Father “alone” was also a new doctrine. However, Rossis insisted on the rejection of this Western teaching. When Döllinger asked the Greek professor if he would accept any formulation of this Western expression he answered in the negative, claiming that no one could consider the Filioque orthodox. Döllinger concluded the second meeting and announced that he would discuss the matter further with the Anglican delegates.¹⁴

¹⁴ F. H. Reusch (ed.), *Bericht über die am 14., 15. und 16. September*, p. 10-28. Janyschew would predicate the orthodox understanding of the procession. See *Ibid.*, p. 26: „Unsere Kirche anerkennt ein zeitliches Ausgehen, d. h. eine Sendung des h. Geistes auch vom Sohne; aber ein ewiges Ausgehen des h. Geistes von den beiden anderen göttlichen Personen wird nicht als Wahrheit anerkannt.“

At the third meeting, which took place on August 15, it was decided that the issue of the Filioque would be treated in such a way that it could be accepted by the Orthodox. Both Rossis and Janyschew participated. The Western delegates explored the formulation of the Bishop of Winchester, according to which the procession of the Holy Spirit “from the Son also” (*filioque*) expresses some truth, and is therefore not to be rejected. The Russian theologian insisted that nothing could be changed to make this Western addition acceptable to the Orthodox, and in the end it was decided that this addition to the creed was non-canonical and that in the future the restoration of the creed to its original form must be considered by the church, without sacrificing any truth that the Western formulation may carry. Afterwards, the Bible and its relationship to Tradition was the primary question addressed by the delegates. The teaching given by Christ to the Apostles and to the later generations of Christians was not defined as an ecclesiastical tradition. Tradition was determined by the doctrinal concord and historical continuity of the ecclesiastical bodies (*Kirchenkörper*). For the Anglicans, the Bible was the rule of tradition, as it was for the Old Catholics, too, albeit to a lesser degree. Janyschew argued that the relationship between the Bible and Tradition is not presented in detail in the Orthodox (Russian) catechisms. At the same time, he asked the Western delegates to clarify the meaning of “ecclesiastical bodies”. The *Kirchenkörper* essentially indicated the historical churches of the Anglicans, the Old Catholics, the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, and referred to the branch theory. The Orthodox immediately reacted strongly to this formulation. Janyschew stated that the historical continuity of the Roman Catholic Church (and indirectly of the Anglicans and the Old Catholics) was in question. Consequently, the question of whether or not Anglican ordinations were valid was posed. The Old Catholics immediately recognized them as valid,

but the Russian theologian Sukhotin referred to the fact that Archbishop Filaret had expressed doubts about them. Although the Anglicans were held in high esteem in the Greek Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory had called them “brothers in Christ”, the Church had still not officially recognized their sacraments, according to Rossis. At any rate, the issue was not ultimately clarified by the Orthodox, among whom various views were expressed.¹⁵

2.2 Second Conference 1875

The invitation to the conference was drafted on July 20, 1875, and it took place in August 10-16 of the same year. The participating denominations proposed as a common principle their recognition of the indivisible Christianity of the first centuries. The conference aimed at ecclesiastical unity in the form of Eucharistic intercommunion and a united association of church groups. Damalas’s report to the Synod of the Church of Greece informs the reader about the departure of the Greek delegation (Damalas, Rossis and the Archbishop of Syros and Tinos, Alexandros Lykourgos) for the Synod of Bonn (July 20/August 1). The meeting was scheduled to take place on 14/26 August, but began on July 31/August 12 due to Professor Schulte’s illness at the meeting in Breslau. The delegation arrived the same day that the meeting commenced, starting in the afternoon. In the morning they visited Döllinger and the Old Catholic Bishop Reinkens and participated in the conference at noon on August 1/August 13.

Representing the Old Catholics were Bishop Reinkens; the Counselor of the German State and professor in Munich,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28-37.

Döllinger; professors of theology in Bonn Langen, Menzel and Reusch; the professor of philosophy in Bonn, Knoodt; professor of philosophy in Giebeck, Herzog and other laymen and clergy. Among the Anglicans were the Bishop of Gibraltar, Sandford; the Elder of Chester, Howson; the pastor of St. Paul's Church, Liddon; Pastor Meyerick et al. Among the Americans participating were the pastor and doctor of theology, Langdon; the pastor and secretary of the synod of bishops, Potter; Pastor Perry; the pastor of the American Church in Rome, Nevin; and the professor of theology in New York, Schaff. The Western delegates were impressed by the strong presence of Orthodox theologians, among whom were the Archbishop of Syros and Tinos, Alexandros Lykourgos; the Bishop of Argissos Gennadios and the Bishop of the Lower Danube, Melchizedek of Romania; Archimandrites of the Ecumenical Throne Bryennios and Anastasiadis; priest Savvas from Serbia; professor of theology at the University of Athens, Damalas; Zikos Rossis; the German theologian, expert in Oriental Studies and convert to Orthodoxy, Joseph Julian Overbeck; Alexander Kirejew; the doctor of philosophy, Dimitrios Maroulis; the graduate of the Theological School, Athanasios Papaloukas; as well as others from Germany and Paris. On July 29/August 10, the representatives of the two confessions met at Reinkens' home to reach an agreement.¹⁶ The Russian delegates played a key role, and the active participation of the German Orthodox professor Joseph Julian Overbeck from England was also noteworthy. Indeed, he did not only influence the outcome of the conference and the future of

¹⁶ F. H. Reusch (ed.), *Bericht über die vom 10. bis 16. August 1875 zu Bonn gehaltenen Unions-Conferenzen*, (Bonn: P. Neusser, 1875), p. 3. Cf. Νικόλαος Δαμαλάς, *Ἐκθεσις πρὸς τὴν Ἱερὰν Σύνοδον, περὶ τῶν ἐν Βόννῃ πεπραγμένων καὶ κρίσεις περὶ αὐτῶν*, (Αθήνα, 1876), p. 3-4.

Orthodox-Old Catholic relations, but had in fact encouraged them from the beginning of the Old Catholicism movement. On the afternoon of August 15 the work of the committee resumed. The president took the position of a work attributed to Eugenios Voulgaris, according to which the Western teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit was acceptable. However, according to the Russian delegates, the authorship of this report was disputable since it was published after his death. The next morning, despite the unresolved differences between the Orthodox, the Old Catholics and the Anglicans, Döllinger was optimistic.

The “Easterners” agreed with the following six points submitted to the committee:

1. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, who is the Principle (ἀρχή), Cause (αἰτία) and Source (πηγή) of divinity.
2. The Holy Spirit does not emanate from the Son, because there is only one Principle and Cause in the divinity, by which all that exists in the divinity comes forth.
3. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.
4. The Holy Spirit is the image of the Son (who is the image of the Father), emanating from the Father and resting in the Son as His manifesting power (ἐκφαντορική δύναμις).
5. The Holy Spirit is an Emanation of the Father but not of the Son, for He is the Spirit (Πνεῦμα) of the mouth of the Deity, whereby the Word speaks (λόγου ἐξαγγελτικόν).
6. The Holy Spirit is the medium (μέσον) between the Father and the Son and is united to the Father through the Son.¹⁷

The theology of John of Damascus formed the basis of the dialogue, since these positions were essentially expressions taken

¹⁷ F. H. Reusch (ed.), *Bericht über die vom 10. bis 16. August*, pp. 89-90.

from his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. Aside from the Filioque other dogmatic issues were raised towards the end of the conference, but without monopolizing the dialogue. The question of the validity of the Anglican ordinations fell on the table. The Orthodox continued to hesitate about the recognition of their validity, but promised to address the issue in local church assemblies. Moreover, the Roman Catholic teachings on purgatory and the remission of sins were rejected without any disagreement. Then baptism and chrism predominated the discussion. The Orthodox immediately stated their opposition to baptism by sprinkling. It is interesting to note that Döllinger accepted the Orthodox practice of baptism as more correct. He also indicated that this ancient tradition had also once been the custom in the Western church. Regarding chrismation, on the one hand, the Western delegates endorsed the Orthodox practice of chrismation by priests (rather than just by bishops), on the other, the Orthodox condemned the Western separation of chrismation (confirmation) from baptism. Tatschalow described this separation as a papal innovation. Knoodt disagreed with the Orthodox, also citing the custom of baptizing adults in the ancient church. Döllinger considered the Western practice of this sacrament to be acceptable.¹⁸ Another issue that had historically occupied the bilateral debates between East and West and reemerged in the conference was that of the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the liturgy. According to Janyschew, it was not a point of contention, but Tatschalow said the Russian Synod must address this issue. In the second sentence of the fourth position in the letter, there was a difference between the western and the eastern practices of the eucharis-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-59.

tic invocation (epiclesis). According to Döllinger, a kind of invocation of the Holy Spirit is to be found in the Western liturgy too. Janyschew agreed with his German counterpart, while maintaining that the western liturgical text should return to a pre-schismatic form, from before 1054. The imposition of celibacy on the clergy, according to Döllinger, should not separate the two churches, because, despite its condemnation by the Quinisext Council (692), the unity of West and East was never affected by it. The Orthodox, as might be expected, reacted strongly and condemned it as a papal innovation. The concern raised by the German professor was that the West was not represented in the synod at that time. Finally, the Orthodox practice of administering Holy Unction to the ill was accepted, while the western practice of limiting it to the dying (as Extreme Unction) was rejected.¹⁹

At the end of the conference the Orthodox delegation, represented by Archbishop Lykourgos, thanked the president Döllinger and the other participants. Bishop Reinkens then closed with prayers, reading in Latin the *Te Deum* and *Pater Noster*. To the Sunday prayer he added an extemporary prayer, in which he prayed for God to protect the Christians of both East and West and to lead them to the truth. Thus, on August 16, 1875, the assembly was concluded.²⁰

In summary, the Old Catholics agreed with the Anglicans on the following points:

1. Definition of the Old Testament canon.
2. Superiority of the original text of the Bible over translations.
3. The reading of Holy Scripture in local common languages.
4. The use of each country's local language in the liturgy.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-102.

5. Justification by faith through love.
6. Rejection of the Roman Catholic teaching on merits.
7. Rejection of the doctrine of the merits of the Saints.
8. The number of the sacraments.²¹

Moreover, they agreed with the Orthodox on the following six points:

1. Recognition of the Bible as the first rule of faith.
2. Rejection of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.
3. The preservation of the sacrament of repentance and confession.
4. Rejection of the Roman Catholic teaching on the remission of sins.
5. Recognition of the practice of praying for the dead.
6. The doctrine of the Holy Eucharist.²²

3 Problems and Prospects for Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian Cooperation

Neither of the congresses of 1874, nor the one in the following year, affected the daily life of the participant churches on a practical level. Nevertheless, these fresh united efforts of Christians, and in particular the willingness of the Old Catholics to remove the Filioque, should not be underestimated. At the same time, the presence of the English representatives in Bonn did, in fact, distance the Old Catholics theologically from the Orthodox. On the one hand, certain figures, such as Bishop Chapman Graf

²¹ Ibid., pp. 103-116.

²² Urs Kury, *Die Altkatholische Kirche: Ihre Geschichte, ihre Lehre, ihr Anliegen*, Die Kirchen der Welt, Band III, (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 103-104.

ton (1830-1912), a follower of the Anglican “High Church” and close associate of Pusey, showed an eagerness for dialogue and cooperation. On the other hand, theologians like Pusey stressed the need for the Filioque, insisting that it be preserved. Although the Council of Canterbury ratified the Bonn Declaration, the English theologian does not appear to have changed his views concerning the Eastern Church and the Bonn Conference. In his letter to Liddon he questioned both the authority of John of Damascus and the removal of the addition, which would be understood as a compromise of Trinitarian doctrine and a concession to the Easterners. Such actions practically overturned the joint decisions of the delegates. It is true, in consideration of his political motives, that he did not wish to deepen the gap with Rome, but even more so he wished to avoid conflicts with ecclesiastical groups (BroadChurch, Evangelicals, HighChurch) within the Anglican Communion itself. Apart from the Filioque, the ecclesiastical differences were not examined, with the result that the Old Catholics failed to clarify their position not only towards Anglicanism, but also towards Protestantism in general, and this ambiguity gave rise to several problems. The Anglicans and the Orthodox preserved contacts throughout 1870-1890 and in 1888 at the third Conference in Lambeth the Anglicans expressed their desire for union with the Orthodox, but at the same time, they criticized the invocation of the saints, the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the use of icons, and deemed them unacceptable.

Studying the Bonn Conferences and the Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox meetings raises several perennial issues that concern later and contemporary inter-Christian relations, especially the question of the validity of the sacraments, such as baptism, chrismation, ordinations, and thus the ecclesiology of the non-Orthodox, as well as the question of engaging in common prayer with them. At the Bonn conferences and later in the corre-

spondence of the two Amsterdam-St. Petersburg committees, the validity of the baptism of the Old Catholics, even those of the Archdiocese of Utrecht, was not questioned - at least not directly, as it was in the case of Anglican ordinations. What was discussed was the way the bishops of the historic archbishopric of the Netherlands had been ordained. This was because at one point the Roman Catholic bishop Dominique Maria Varlet had ordained the bishop Cornelius van Steenoven in the 18th century without the participation of a second bishop, as required by canon law. Although this incident is historically true, the Old Catholics maintain to this day that, according to Roman Catholic canon law, one bishop alone cannot ordain another bishop. Thus, many questions arise about how if they would be accepted as valid today, especially considering the fact that they have ordained women and established ecclesiastical communion with Anglicans and other Protestant churches. Theoretically, if the last two obstacles did not exist, union between the Orthodox and the Old Catholics could be possible. But would it be correct for the Orthodox Church to accept the Roman Catholic canons? How could a whole ecclesiastical group be integrated into the Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church? Through a single act of repentance, if not reordination? Should they keep their western liturgical customs or should they adapt to the Byzantine Rite?²³

While reading the reports of the two conferences of Bonn in 1874 and 1875, it should also be noted how the meetings were concluded with a common prayer. In 1874, the *Te Deum* and the Sunday prayer were recited together in Latin, while the first Old Catholic Bishop of Germany, Reinkens, completed the prayer in

²³ Γεώργιος Φλορόφσκυ, *Θέματα Εκκλησιαστικής Ιστορίας*, (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναράς, 1979), pp. 298-309.

Latin “Benedicat nos omnipotens et misericors Deus Pater Filius et Spiritus. Amen.” In 1875 Reinkens read the Latin hymn *Te Deum* and followed with the Sunday prayer in Latin.²⁴ However, the following should be noted. The first conference seemed to be attended by all the participants (the Orthodox delegates from Russia, Janyschew, Kirejew, Sukhotin, Tatschaloff as well as Zikos Rossis from Greece), while in the second, the prayer had been read only by Bishop Reinkens, in the presence of the Orthodox delegates, including the Archbishop of Syros and Tinos, Alexandros Lykourgos. The participation of the Anglicans should not be omitted. Thus, the bilateral contacts of the two groups in the 19th century raise the question of the canonicity of practicing common prayer with the non-Orthodox (for subsequent and contemporary meetings), according to Orthodox theology and practice. For instance, St. Theodore Studite writes that common prayer is not permitted with heretics, schismatics, or any other ecclesiastical group that has been cut off from communion with the Orthodox Church. Of course, if an Orthodox priest is forced to enter a church where the name of a heretical bishop is commemorated in the service, the concelebration of the liturgy together with heretics is forbidden, but the chanting is forgiven. The transgressor would be excommunicated only in the event of participation in the first case (concelebration), not in the second (common chanting, especially if he were forced to do so). However, in the event that someone happens to pray with an excommunicated clergyman unknowingly, he is not punished with the prescribed punishments (dismissal and excommunication) by the church.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 310-315.

²⁵ Θεόδωρος Στουδίτης, *Πρὸς Ναυκράτιον ἐπιστολή*: PG 99: 1055A-1057B.

Another theological problem that is to be found nowadays and that must be dealt with in Pan-Orthodox discussions concerns the various local Orthodox churches' differing approaches to the non-Orthodox. For instance, the difference between the Russian Church and the Church of Constantinople in terms of how the Roman Catholics have been accepted between the 17th and 19th centuries has been a recurring issue in inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian relations. Konstantinos Oikonomos, in commenting on the Russian practice, respects their custom as an application of *economia*, following the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril V in 1755. However, he still maintained that the Russian Church had never dismissed the strict application (*akribeia*) of the canons, according to the decision made in 1667.²⁶ Nevertheless, during the 19th century this seems to have been ignored by Russia. Count Dimitrios Andreyevich Tolstoy (1823-1889), as chief procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church, had discussed this issue in his correspondence with St. Filaret, Metropolitan of Moscow. The latter seemed to recognize the baptism of the Roman Catholics, and even when, in the case of the German convert Joseph Julian Overbeck, he refused to restore his priestly orders, this was because Overbeck had been married after his ordination. Concerning the issue of whether or not an Anglican should be baptized, the issue has to be readdressed. The previous commander, Alexis Petrovich Akhmatov (1818-1870), expressed the need to resolve the differences in practice between the Greeks and the

²⁶ Cf. Γεώργιος Μεταλληνός, *Ἑρμηνεία καὶ Ἐφαρμογή τοῦ Ζ' Κανόνος τῆς Β' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου ἀπο τοὺς Κολλυβάδες καὶ τὸν Κων/νο Οἰκονόμο: συμβολὴ στὴν ἱστορικοκανονικὴ θεώρηση τοῦ προβλήματος περὶ τοῦ κύρους τοῦ δυτικοῦ βαπτίσματος*, (Ἀθήνα: Τήνος, 1996²), pp. 110-112.

Russians.²⁷ The validity of Anglican ordinations was the apple of discord, and it exposed the difficulty of making effective and comprehensive decisions regarding questions of apostolic succession. The treatment of these non-Orthodox Christians differed, for Russia had its own practice independent of Greece in this regard.²⁸ Today all the Orthodox autocephalous churches ought to address this problem along with the problem of inconsistent approaches towards the non-Orthodox, so as to have greater consistency and a more strategic mission and goal.

Conclusion

The bilateral dialogue of the two Christian denominations at the end of the 19th century leads the reader to the following conclusions. Firstly, the ultimate goal was union under the condition of dogmatic agreement. It sought to rely on the tradition of the church fathers before the Great Schism and it took place in an atmosphere of consensus and mutual respect, despite occasional verbal contentions. Although it failed to bear fruit directly, owing to different interpretations of common positions and differences in ecclesiology, it nevertheless paved the way for further bilateral relations. Lastly, despite such differences in their approach to the non-Orthodox as well as the lack of joint cooperation in recent years, the well-organized cooperation of

²⁷ Филарет, митрополит Московский [Дроздов] *Письма митрополита Московского Филарета к А.Н.М. [Муравьеву А.Н.], 1832-1867. – 1869. – 692 с, р. 641-644.* Филарет, митрополит Московский [Дроздов] *Письма духовных и светских лиц к митрополиту Московскому Филарету (с 1812 по 1867 гг.). – 1900. – 724 с, pp. 581-582.*

²⁸ F. H. Reusch (ed.), *Bericht über die vom 10. bis 16. August*, p. 116.

the Orthodox churches (Greek, Romanian, Russian and Serbian) planned within a short time span for the purpose of dialogue with the Old Catholics provides powerful testimony to the possibility of genuine inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian agreement.