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Typewritten Russian Orthodox Theology, read by a Lutheran

Almost all the Russian Orthodox textbooks and theses are typewritten and not printed. For three weeks each in 1962, 65, 67, 69, 73, 76, 79, 83 and 87 I read this literature at the library of Leningrad theological Academy. I reported 7 textbooks in an English booklet (1963) and 10 theses for the degree of master of theology (m-theses) and more than 40 theses for the degree of licentiate (l-theses) in one Swiss and three American periodicals. I shall in this article report 1 textbook and 6 m-theses on dogmatic, confessional and ecumenical questions and 2 l-theses.

Lecturer Miroljubov wrote in his textbook Orthodox Dogmatic Theology[1]: "It is impossible to prove the non-existence of God". The image of God is perverted but not annihilated in human beings and needs to be recreated by God. God needs both to forgive sin and cleanse the person from sin. But it was up to human nature to conquer sin and therefore Jesus Christ had to take upon himself human nature. Human freedom and God's grace act together in organic unity and interdependence. Justification is sanctification and is accomplished only through faith, but good works are necessary in an equal degree, without any right for reward. Both on earth and in heaven church members are living in a process of gaining holiness. Human beings must belong to the church in order to be saved. When venerating saints people venerate God who helped the saints become saintly. Christ, however, is the only mediator. The veneration of icons is based on the incarnation. By its essence, but not in its form, the sacrifice of the eucharist is identical to the sacrifice on the cross. "We believe in the Church, although it is visible, because God's grace which dwells in it is invisible." "At the present Eastern and Western Churches should be brought together in order to ... resist unbelief with a common front." "The main task of ecclesiology is ... to strengthen what unites all Christian Churches: Christian love and brotherhood in the name of Christ."

Professor Gnedič wrote in his m-thesis "The Dogma of Redemption in Russian Theology from 1892 to 1944"[2]: It is fidelity to the tradition

[1] Leningrad 1954–61, 1848 pp. Reported in *Alf Johansen,* Theological Study in the Russian and bulgarian Orthodox Churches under Communist Rule (London, Faith Press, 1963), pp. 6–18.

[2] Zagorsk 1962, 398 pp. Rep. by me in Diakonia, New York, 12,2 (1977), pp. 192–201.

of the Holy Fathers which separates Orthodoxy from other confessions. Redemption means to Orthodoxy the restoration and cleansing of the nature of fallen humans, while to Catholicism it is satisfaction of God's justice. God is love according to God's nature and all of God's virtues reveal love. Therefore, one must not oppose God's justice to God's love. Redemption does not mean the change of God's relations and reconciliation with us. Redemption was directed not toward God who is unchangeable and cannot be influenced from without, but toward human beings who can be reborn. The right teaching on God veers away from the legal theory of redemption which often understands the anthropomorphic expressions about God's anger, enmity and reward in a literal way. We know, however, only God's virtues from God's actions. God is in the same way good, both in showing mercy and in punishing. The legal theory tries to penetrate into the inner nature of God which is impossible and makes God changeable. The right teaching on human beings states that evil comes from human freedom and not from God. It interprets redemption from the teaching on God's love and human freedom. God will not limit (human) freedom which is a characteristic of God's image and this constitutes the essential difference between Orthodox theology and other confessions.

Archbishop Mihail (Mudjugin) wrote his m-thesis on "The Foundations of Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation according to Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers"[3].

Metropolitan Nikodim wrote in his m-thesis "John XXIII, the Roman Pope"[4]: John XXIII looked upon his age with optimism and "humane realism." The Roman curia fought to cut off what he began, but he was autocratic and stubborn and appointed many of his personal candidates as new cardinals. The Vatican Council preserved Latin as the language at services, but also permitted local languages, thus making a decisive step toward ecumenical understanding. The Russian Orthodox estimated the first session of the Council "only positively". It worked for peace and opened the possibility of a constructive dialogue between the churches, mainly due to the influence of Pope John XXIII. He was the first pope who did not speak in op-

[3] Leningrad-Astrakan 1969–71, 523 pp. Rep. by me in Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift, Bern, 1981, 1, pp. 33–37.

[4] Moscow 1969, 610 pp. Rep by me in Diakonia, New York, 14,1 (1979), pp. 62–68.

position to Communism as a social-economic program. He realized that atheism could be resisted only by a living faith and a genuine Christian life. Believers and atheists might cooperate on social questions. The Moscow Patriarchate and the Roman Church could thus begin a dialogue. Never before had a Roman pope made such a step to re-establish Christian unity. He consiously put his whole pontificate under the banner of Christian unity. Pope Pius XII replaced the word "schismatics" with the word "separated brethren" (Orthodox and Protestants), but put the accent on the word "separated". John XXIII put the accent on the word "brethren". He recommended that members of the Council turn their eyes not toward past separations, but toward the future – not seeking who was guilty and who was innocent. However, he was sufficiently wise not to show haste or impatience. The schema "On the Divine Revelation" was inspired by an anti-ecumenical spirit. John XXIII personally removed the schema from the agenda of the session as the majority against it was not large enough to remove it. Unlike his predecessors, he acknowledged the World Council of Churches as God's gift. The Vatican Council's debates on the schema "On the Church" were penetrated by an ecumenical spirit, in a high degree due to him.

Professor D. P. Ogičkij wrote in his m-thesis "The Roman Catholic Church"[5]: The Second Vatican Council did, strictly speaking, not decide anything. The deciding factor was the pope. It is within the power of the pope to permit the Fathers of the Council to take part in carrying out the decisions or to do without the Fathers. The Council consisted of persons completely harmless to the pope. The Council was not allowed to appoint the presidents of the commissions or to elect its own presidium and its other leading bodies. The pope did, however, permit free debate at the Council. Most remarkable at the second session was the endeavor of the majority to raise the prestige of the episcopate and to emphasize the principle of collegiality, expressed at the debates of the schemas "On the Church" and "On the Bishops" and at the vote on whether the full and supreme power over the church belongs to the board of the bishops in connection with the pope, completely preserving the pope's rights. The problem of collegiality was the main problem. At the third session, the Council met a new interference of the supreme authority through the obligatory en-

[5] Zagorsk 1969–70, 786 pp. Rep. by me in the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Philadelphia, USA, Vol. 12,1 (1975), p. 42.

try of twelve corrections into the text of the decree "On Ecumenism", which was in fact already approved, specifying that the power of the episcopacy does not at all restrict the power of the pope. The Council consequently did not have full freedom of action. The principle of obedience triumphed. At the fourth session, the Pope established the Episcopal Synod – a personal act of the Pope, not an act of the Council. Generally speaking, the Council helped Catholicism think in a new way about some new problems. Yet the pope alone continues to rule over the behaviour and thought of Catholics and in this respect the Second Vatican Council still impedes Christian unity. But the other decisions of the Council in connection with some actions of Pope Paul VI and the work of the Secretariat for Christian Unity helped create a new climate in inter-Christian relations.

A. Sergeenko wrote in his m-thesis "Old Catholicism: Its History and Fundamental Positions"[6]: He hopes that the Old Catholics, in spite of their liturgical communion with the Anglicans (1931), will be true to their wish to keep their orthodoxy. The inter-Orthodox commission on a dialogue with the Old Catholics (in Belgrade 1966) decided that the Old Catholics had to propose an official declaration, obligatory to all Old Catholics, on the filioque, infallibility and organization of the church, the validity of the Utrecht hierarchy, baptism without immersion, transformation and sacrifice in the eucharist, private confession, and marriage of bishops and ordained priests. The existence of the inter-Orthodox commission proves that the Orthodox Church, in spite of all existing difficulties, continues to wish a reunion with the Old Catholics and to do all that is possible to promote it.

Professor N. Zabolotskij wrote in his m-thesis "Catholicity as a Problem of Ecumenism"[7]: He suggests that the external manifestations of catholicity are communion, consent, and sobornicity, and the internal elements are faith, hope, and love. Communion means communion with Christ, with the heavenly world, and hope, and love. Consent is realized by the free will of the believers. Sobornicity is only one aspect of catholicity and has a wider sense than synodality. Dogmatically, catholicity is God's gift. Practically, it is expressed through the church, which unifies and assembles all who freely accept the membership of the Body of Christ. The Roman Catholic Church must renounce papal primacy and infallibility, the pope being only primus

[6] Zagorsk 1968, 837 pp. Rep. in Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 12,1 (1975), p. 47.

[7] Leningrad 1968, 888 pp. Rep. in J.E.S. 12,1 (1975), p. 51.

inter pares among the patriarchs. The Second Vatican Council and the Episcopal Synod showed promise in this respect. The partakers in ecumenical dialogue shall distinguish between Holy Tradition and church traditions. The dialogue on faith may succeed when united with the dialogue of love. We hope that all Christians will recognize the fundamental doctrines of faith and admit differences in questions of secondary importance. At the councils, discussions must aim not at compromises, but at the most exact expression of the truth of the church. Only a unanimous council can be accepted by the church. The WCC shall contribute to the manifestation of catholicity within the churches which are members. A neutral, special, ecumenical theology does not exist, but an ecumenical theology shall develop within each confession. The Orthodox churches contain the fundamental norms of catholicity in their unchanged tradition. Many Orthodox churches have transcended their confessional boundaries and seek community and sobornical relations with other churches. The restoration of catholic relations depends on recognition of the episcopal authority, the universal restoration of apostolic succession, and acknowledgement of the full canonical freedom of each autocephalous church.

Professor L. Voronov wrote in his m-thesis "Orthodoxy, Peace, Ecumena"[8]: Documents connected with the General Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi show a "purely Protestant" view on unity: 1) unity, as God's gift, always belongs to united Christianity, but not always in a visible form, 2) all Christian churches are in the same degree both participating in the full essential unity in Christ and guilty of the sin of separation. Voronov objects: The sin of separation does not consist in an insufficient consciousness of the objectively existing unity, but in the destruction of the unity in its essence. This unity will not be extended by a simple proclamation of a unity everywhere present, but only by returning to obedience to the full revelation, revealed in Scripture and Tradition. If our forbears often sinned by zealously deepening the difference of opinions, we sin no less by removing the difference of opinions with much less zeal. We are either too passive and hope that the reunion of Christians will come without our special efforts, or we are too active and demand what is impossible – namely immediate intercommunion in spite of dogmatic differences. At the General Assembly of the WCC in Upsala, the understanding of catholicity was very fluid and something like neighbourly, humane sol-

[8] Leningrad 1966, 443 pp. Rep. by me in J.E.S. 12,1 (1975), p. 52.

idarity or the sending of the church to the whole world. Metropolitan Nikodim said in his lecture at the General Assembly that Orthodox cooperation within the WCC resembles a form of kenosis in a mainly Protestant world. The Orthodox contribution shall be not only the entering of some Orthodox views in "syncretic" documents, but also the understanding of catholicity in its internal aspect, understood in the light of the apostolic teaching on the church as the mystical body of Christ. The separation between the churches cannot be removed by a superficial medical treatment, but only by a deep, radical cure. The Orthodox work for complete Christian unity will take a long time and demand strained efforts so that the Orthodox kenosis within the WCC may serve the wish of our Lord that they all may be one.

Two l-theses are written by 1) Sergij Lomakin, "The History of the Protestant Denominations in Russia after 1900" (Leningrad 1986, 174 pp.): Some Baptist leaders desired rapprochement with the Orthodox Church, but "only when this Church reformed its heart and reason". After 1945 the Baptists increased their membership. In 1944 the Baptists and the evangelical Christians formed a union, the strongest one in the Soviet Union as to dogmatism, cults, missionary activity, and central organization. – 2) *Viktor Savik,* "The Roman Catholic Church 1939–1958" (Leningrad 1986, 47 pp.): The expressions of the pope limit theologians' liberty to solve controversial theological problems. To the Orthodox the assumption of the Mother of God remains an open question and is not a subject of dogmatization.[9]

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[9] Rep. in J.E.S. 24,4 (1987), pp. 668–69.