

THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES ON ANGLICAN ORDERS

On the occasion of the celebration of the fifth centenary of the autocephaly of the Russian Church, July 8-18, 1948, there was issued by the Moscow Conference a "Resolution of the Committee regarding the validity of the Anglican Hierarchy, approved by the Moscow Conference of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches." The text is given here; it was translated by a priest of the Patriarchal Church in America; only minor changes of orthography or punctuation have been made.¹

After hearing the reports "On the Anglican Hierarchy," we, the Conference of the Heads and Representatives of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, with a feeling of good-will and brotherly love towards Anglican Christians in their attempts to secure recognition of the validity of the Anglican Hierarchy, have decided that:

1) The doctrine contained in the "Thirty-nine Articles" of the Anglican Church differs sharply from the dogma, doctrine, and tradition professed by the Orthodox Church. Therefore, in order to arrive at a decision on the recognition of the validity of the Anglican Hierarchy, there must first be, as a basis, an agreement with the Orthodox teaching on the Mysteries (Sacraments). Individual opinions that the Anglican Hierarchy can agree to change the teachings of the "Articles" regarding the Sacraments in order to approach Orthodoxy cannot serve as a basis for a decision in the positive sense. Therefore, if the Orthodox Church cannot agree to recognize the correctness of Anglican teachings regarding the Sacraments in general, and in particular, the Sacrament of Holy Orders, it cannot recognize as valid the derivations of Anglican ordinations. If the Churches of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Roumania, and other autocephalous Churches have given their positive reply regarding the recognition of valid Anglican Orders, we are informed that these recognitions were conditional.

2) The question of recognition of the validity of the Anglican Hierarchy can be considered only in conjunction with the question of the Unity and Confession of Faith with the Orthodox Church, and having in existence an authoritative Act regarding this from the Anglican Church, which should be derived from a *Sobor*, or a Conference of clergy of the Anglican confession, and presented with the approval of the Head of the Anglican Church. Such an Act we do not have at the present time. In this connection, we express our desire that the Anglican Church will change its doctrine from the dogmatic, canonical, and ecclesiological point of view, and in particular, its original understanding of the Holy Sacraments, and more specifically, the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

3) With all due sympathy and consideration to the contemporary movement among representatives of Anglicanism towards us, directed to resume ties and

¹ A resolution concerning the Vatican and smacking of the old polemical style is cited in *Etudes*, Nov. 1948, pp. 256-67.

communion of the faithful of the Anglican Church with the Ecumenical (Catholic) Church, we decree: That the contemporary Anglican Hierarchy may receive recognition of the grace of its Orders from the Orthodox Church if, between the Orthodox and Anglican Churches, first of all, will be established a formal expression (as is mentioned above) of Unity of Faith and Confession. After instituting this desire for Unity, the recognition of validity of Anglican Orders can be realized under the principle of *Economia*: the only authority for us stemming from a Conciliar decision of the entire Holy Orthodox Church.

We pray that, by the Ineffable Mercy of God this can be accomplished, and that Our Lord will grant the Spirit of Love and Benevolence to inflame these fruitful tasks for the Glory of His Holy Church.

I may add this brief comment. From the viewpoint of the history of Anglican-Orthodox relations the above resolution may be considered a severe setback to the hopes of those Anglicans who have sought or still seek recognition of their Orders by the Orthodox. The Bucharest Report, which attempted to harmonize some of the differences between the two Churches, was publicly criticized in England in 1936. Then the Convocation of Canterbury approved the Report in 1937 as being not *the*, but *a* legitimate interpretation of Anglican faith; this meant that it was the interpretation of *some* Anglicans. It seems quite unlikely, then, that any Anglican Conference would issue a statement as authoritative, whereby "Unity of Faith and Confession" with the Orthodox, particularly regarding the sacraments, would be declared in the sense this resolution from Moscow seems to demand. One wonders, besides, what the generality of Anglicans would think of a recognition of sacraments according to the notion of "economy," which is considered a sort of condescension on the part of the Orthodox Church. The final stage of approval of such recognition by the entire Orthodox Church would present no small difficulty, at least under present conditions.

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