

Project Canterbury

Relations Between the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCES BETWEEN THE OLD CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX CHURCHES, HELD AT BONN, ON OCTOBER 27TH AND 28TH, 1931.

FIRST AND SECOND CONFERENCES HELD ON THE 27TH OF OCTOBER, AT 10 A.M. AND 5 P.M., AT THE HOTEL KONIGSHOF, AT BONN, BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ORTHODOX AND OLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

THE Archbishop of Utrecht, Dr. Kenninck, opened the Conference with prayer in Greek. Bishop Moog, as Bishop of the place where the Conference was being held, welcomed the members and dwelt on the importance of the Conferences on Re-union which had met there in the years 1874 and 1875 under the leadership of Dollinger, the continuation of these negotiations through the Rotterdam Committee, on the one hand, and the Petersburg Committee--Kireeff-Janyshv--on the other, and finally through the Oecumenical Conference and its representative, the Vice-President, Metropolitan Germanos.

He concluded with Döllinger's words. (*Conference on Re-Union* 1874, p. 23.) The Metropolitan Germanos returned thanks for the welcome and proposed Archbishop Kenninck as President, inasmuch as the Old Catholic Church was entertaining them. Archbishop Kenninck in return proposed the Metropolitan Germanos, because the initiative for the present Conference came from the Orthodox Church.

This initiative is due to the great interest which the Orthodox Church has shown from the beginning in the Old Catholic movement.

The names of the representatives were then verified.

(1) *Old Catholic Church*--(1) F. Kenninck, Archbishop of Utrecht, (2) Prof. A. Kury, Bishop of the Christian Catholic Church in Berne, (3) Dr. G. Moog, Bishop of the Old Catholic Church in Germany, at Bonn, (4) Dr. Muhlhaupt, parish priest at Bonn, (5) C. Wijker, President and Professor at the Seminary at Amersfort.

(2) *Orthodox Church*--(1) Dr. Germanos, Metropolitan and Exarch of Western and Northern Europe, as representing the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem, (2) Theodosius, Metropolitan of Tyre and Sidon, representing the Patriarchate of Antioch, (3) Dr. Nectaries, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Bukowina, representing the Patriarchate of Roumania, (4) Leontius, Metropolitan of Paphos, representing the Church of Cyprus, (5) Polycarp, Metropolitan of Triikka and Stagon, representing the Church of Greece, (6) Dr. Nicholas Arseniev, representing the Orthodox Church in Poland, (7) Dr. Theologos Paraskevaides, Archimandrite of the Greek Church in Leipzig, Secretary of the Orthodox Committee, and (8) Irenay, Bishop of Novi-Sad, representing the Church of Yugoslavia (arrived on Wednesday).

The Metropolitan Germanos, who had been elected President, laying emphasis on the difficulties on account of which the Russian Church could not send any representatives (as was the case also at Athos in 1930 and Lambeth, 1930-1931), added that this was the more grievous because the Russian Church, both clergy and laity, had from the first shown their sympathy for the Old Catholic Church and nearness to her and he hoped that these difficulties would be removed in the future.

While Archbishop Kenninck declared that the present Western Delegation had full authority to accept the decisions of the present Conference in the name of its churches, the Metropolitan Germanos said that he must decline such plenipotentiary powers on behalf of the Orthodox Church, since the present discussions would serve only as preparations or proposals for the local Churches and from these would be passed on through the Oecumenical Patriarchate to the Eastern Pro-Synod, which would meet in June, and to which the confirmation of to-day's decisions would be reserved. Professor Dr. Muhlhaupt was called by Archbishop Kenninck to fill the place of the absent Bishop Paschek of Czecho-Slovakia, as member and secretary. The three secretaries would compare their notes at each session and prepare a joint statement.

The first session lasted from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the second session from 5 to 7 p.m.

Basing himself upon the preparatory correspondence which had passed between the Metropolitan Germanos and Archbishop Kenninck, the President put this question to the Old Catholic Committee:

What are the fundamental documents for Old Catholic teaching? In reply the Conference was referred to the Declaration of Utrecht, put out by the Old Catholic Bishops on September 24th, 1889, to the Old Catholic Catechisms and to their liturgical books, which were laid before the members present to form the basis of the discussions. This discussion started from the first article of the Declaration of Utrecht. The conclusion was that all the seven Councils are to be accepted. Because, however, sometimes only the first four Oecumenical Councils are regarded as important--while the others are regarded as secondary on account of the lesser importance of the subjects treated at them--the Old Catholics accordingly added in the first article the No. 7 to the phrase "Oecumenical Councils." Similarly the decisions of Local Councils are recognized as of equal force by the Old Catholics if their decisions subsequently obtained the confirmation of Oecumenical Councils. In the discussion on Creeds it was acknowledged unanimously that the official Creed is that of Nikaia-Constantinople (without the addition), but that besides this there is--as a baptismal Creed--the so-called Apostles' Creed, which is in use in the West.

The Metropolitan Germanos brought forward the question of the Filioque. Archbishop Kenninck stated that in the Old Catholic Church of Holland it had been deleted, and Bishop Moog said the same for the Christian Catholic Church of Switzerland. In Germany and Austria the liturgical books still retain the Filioque in brackets, but, according to the statement of Bishop Moog, it will be deleted in the new edition of these books also. This agreement was greeted with joy by the Orthodox Committee and Archbishop Kenninck is contemplating the publication of an Encyclical on this subject to all the Old Catholic Churches. The Metropolitan of Thyatira brought forward the question of "Holy Tradition." The following reply was given on behalf of the Old Catholics. Tradition is the explanation and completion of Holy Scripture, through the unanimous and written tradition of the Ancient Church. (See *Old Catholic Catechism*, p. 39; also *Inter. Kirch. Zeitschrift*, No. 3, July-September, 1931, p. 156).

Question about the Canon of Holy Scripture.

Both the proto-canonical and the deutero-canonical books--the latter in particular as edifying books, profitable for reading--are recognized as forming part of Holy Scripture; the latter consequently are not regarded as apocryphal.

Question about the Canons. Does the Old Catholic Church recognize the Canons of the Seven Oecumenical Councils?

The Archbishop Kenninck replied, "Certainly, so long as they are not interpreted according to the letter, but in the spirit of the Ancient Church." The Metropolitan Germanos emphasized the fact that each autocephalous Church can add new regulations which have the force of law to these canons, so long as they are not in opposition to the canons. A new codification would be made in accordance with the Pro-Synod on Mt. Athos, but the old canons would remain in force so far as they bear on the present-day life of the Church. The Archbishop of Triikka pointed out further, "These canons have become inapplicable, not because they are opposed to Holy Scripture and tradition, but on account of human weakness (for instance, the question of attendance at church)." To the question of the Archbishop of the Bukowina, whether the canons of the Roman Church are held binding, a negative answer was given. So it was shown that there was agreement, too, as to the recognition of the ancient canons.

Question about the Marriage of the Clergy.

After a long discussion the views of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches were defined as follows: "The Orthodox Church permits marriage only before ordination. Bishops must be unmarried and are therefore chosen from the unmarried or widowed clergy or from the monks. The Old Catholic Church permits marriage both after ordination and not only to priests but also to bishops. The whole question is regarded as a matter of indifference. Archbishop Kenninck called attention further to the Roman Catholic decree of the Council of Trent, which makes marriage for the clergy entirely impossible. Archbishop Germanos stated that the widowed clergy in Serbia who had married a second time were excluded from the clerical office.

Question: What do the Old Catholic and Orthodox Churches think about the so-called "customs and usages"?

Answer: The local church can use customs of its own, if these are not opposed to catholic ecclesiastical decrees or injurious to them (for instance, in Confirmation, laying on of hands is the practice in the Old Catholic Church and anointing with chrism in the Orthodox Church).

Question: On the meaning of the word "Church"?

Reply: The Church as guardian of faith and morals has authority over the faithful. "The Church, therefore, is to be interpreted as being above Scripture and not Scripture above the Church."

Archbishop Kenninck emphasized especially, "As God is our Father, so the Church is our Mother," and recalled the words of St. Augustine, "I should not have believed if the Church had not taught me the Gospel." But the Church must teach on the basis of Scripture and tradition, "what has been believed always, everywhere and by all." The Oecumenical Councils decide authoritatively concerning the teaching of the Church, but the Church is not justified in declaring new doctrines, not based on Scripture and tradition.

So on this point also full agreement was shown between the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches. On the question as to whether a local council was justified in altering customs settled by an Oecumenical Council, or whether only an Oecumenical Council could attempt this change or sanction it subsequently, no decision was reached. The Orthodox Church declared in the negative.

There was agreement as to the second and third Articles of the Declaration of Utrecht and in general as to Articles 4 and 5, the historical importance of which was explained by Archbishop Kenninck.

No other Council is recognized as Oecumenical beyond the seven Oecumenical Councils. The really catholic dogmas of the Synod of Trent are of force in the Old Catholic Church also, so far as they are in agreement with the ancient teaching of the Church.

The afternoon session was closed with prayer.

THIRD SESSION, OCTOBER 28TH, 1931, 9.30 A.M.

The session opened again with prayer. The Bishop Irenay of Novi-Sad--representing the Church of Yugo-Slavia--also arrived.

The Acts of the two previous sessions were read and confirmed, after three alterations in the drafting. They will be published when Archbishops Germanos and Kenninck consent and will be signed by them and the Secretaries. The discussions were continued.

First Question. How does the Old Catholic Church understand the term "Sacrament"?

Agreement was reached between the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches on the basis of the Catechisms. The No. 7 was recognized as the number of the Sacraments without any disagreement, special stress being laid on Baptism as effecting entrance into the Church and the Holy Eucharist as the centre and the means of grace which unites all Christians. Holy Order is not only appointment to an office, but the imparting of a divine charisma, such as is imparted also by the other sacraments (mysteries).

(I) Baptism.--There is a difference here as to form.

In the Orthodox Church there is triple immersion, in the Old Catholic Church, affusion, which is also used in the Orthodox Church in case of necessity. As to the rest there is agreement.

(2) Confirmation.--In the Orthodox Church this follows immediately after Baptism, being conferred by the priest with chrism which has been consecrated by bishops. The Orthodox Church holds it necessary for chrism to follow Baptism, as being indispensable for the inner growth of the Christian life. The Old Catholic Church administers it after previous teaching and she regards chrism (Confirmation) as desirable. In any case as necessary before ordination, but not for the reception of Holy Communion. (The German text adds here: "because it is often received after Communion.")

(3) The Eucharist.--The President, Archbishop Germanos, read the 6th Article of the Declaration of Utrecht (the German text gives the Article in full) and emphasized with satisfaction that everything in it was set forth very clearly. Both Churches were agreed as to the change of the bread and wine, only in the Old Catholic Churches the epiclesis precedes the words of institution of the Sacrament and in the Orthodox Church it follows them, since in the view of the Orthodox Church the whole liturgy is a representation of the life of Christ. The Eucharist is offered as a sacrifice on behalf of the living and the dead. Bishop Kury also said that in Switzerland, Old Catholic clergy give the Holy Eucharist in cases of necessity to members of the Orthodox Church if they express a desire for it. He therefore proposed that at the coming Synod at Mt. Athos permission for this should be officially given. Archbishop Germanos said that he would convey this desire.

Administration in the West is under one kind, but under both kinds if desired. In the Old Catholic Church it is with unleavened bread; in the Orthodox Church, with leavened bread.

Question about Confession.--In the Old Catholic Church compulsory private confession is abolished, but every opportunity is given for voluntary confession. In the Orthodox Church confession is necessary before the reception of the Holy Eucharist. The so-called penances in the Orthodox Church are means for the improvement of sinners, which the priest imposes on those who come to confession.

Prayer Oil (Unction).--There was complete agreement here.

Eschatology.--The teaching about purgatorial fire is also rejected by the Old Catholic Church. We pray, invoking the mercy of God on behalf of the dead; everything else is a mystery.

Veneration.--The teaching about the "intercession of the Saints is accepted and their veneration is recognized, especially the honour to the Mother of God, which is particularly emphasized in the liturgy. The abuses in honouring the saints which are found in the Roman Church are rejected. In regard to the "holy ikons and relics," both the Churches recognize the honour due to them, so far as this, however, refers not to the material, but to the person represented thereon, as Basil the Great and the 7th Oecumenical Council insist. The form of paying honour varies. In the Old Catholic Church there are statues of saints, but not in the Orthodox. Likewise the offering of lighted candles in their honour is permitted, and at the consecration of churches holy relics are deposited. The morning session was concluded at 1 p.m. with prayer; the next session began at 3 p.m.

FINAL SESSION, OCTOBER 28TH, 1931, 3 P.M.

Archbishop Germanos asked if anybody had anything further to say.

The Metropolitan Theodosius asked what the Old Catholic Church thought about fasting?
Archbishop Kenninck: Fridays and the Great Lent are fasting days in the Old Catholic Church.

How is the fast kept? There is a difference made in food according to the season and circumstances. Sermons are preached in the Church on the Passion of Christ. There is no fixed rule, but naturally the great week is observed with special solemnity.

The Bishop of Novi-Sad, Irenay: How does the Old Catholic Church regard the Apostolic Succession?
Archbishop Kenninck: All Old Catholic Church doctrine maintains the Apostolic Succession.

The Archbishop of Trika: How is the bishop ordained? Always with three bishops?

Archbishop Kenninck: The Chapter (that is, the clergy of the Cathedral who constitute the electoral assembly) asked for three bishops from the Pope, but without success. Finally Bishop Varlet alone was found willing to consecrate. It was a case of necessity.

Archbishop Kenninck, in conclusion, put the question: What is the attitude of the Easterns towards the Old Catholic Church, so that further conferences may have a clear idea about this? The present representatives of the Orthodox Church said that they had not plenipotentiary powers. But the Old Catholic Church would like to know what the Orthodox Church thinks about the Old Catholic Church? Is it possible for an (Ecumenical Council to meet and not merely one of local autokephalous Churches?

The Metropolitan Germanos replied: Each of the present representatives of the Orthodox Church must communicate the Acts of these conferences to his own Church and they will be submitted in common to the Pro-Synod for decision. Such a common decision has been impossible up till now, because till the preceding year no such Synod has been able to meet. However the question is asked: What are our relations towards the Western Church? The speaker himself will introduce this question at the Pro-Synod. It is especially desirable that the Union of the Old Catholic and Orthodox Churches should be realized in sacramental communion as the Fathers desired

Archbishop Kenninck expressed his thanks for these statements.

Professor Arseniev stated officially as representative of the Church of Poland his desire, not only to submit the Acts, but to express his own opinion (to lay his own opinion before his Church--German text). This opinion was full personal agreement (for intercommunion--German text). He would submit the Acts as material for the Pro-Synod and would exercise his influence and zeal that he might see sacramental communion realized as quickly as possible.

The Metropolitan Nectaries desired Sacramental Communion because there are no dogmatic hindrances. He would propose this to his Synod and recommend its acceptance.

Bishop Dr. Moog then concluded as follows: He expressed his joy that the conferences had gone so smoothly and had reached such a gratifying conclusion. He referred to the saying of

Our Lord, "that they all may be one," which is often not understood rightly. He explained it as meaning unity in the truth, in freedom and in love, as God the Father and Christ are one. Unity, however, does not mean uniformity in the letter, but unity in freedom, with due regard to peoples, places, customs, but at the same time (it means) unchangeable Catholic truth. "Such a unity Döllinger desired; therefore let us dedicate our last thoughts to him." (All present rose from their seats.)

The Conference closed with prayer.

(Signed) GERMANOS, Metropolitan of Thyatira.

FRANCISCUS KENNINCK, Archbishop of Utrecht.

Project Canterbury
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