

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The ecumenical relations of the local Orthodox church can be classified into foreign and local contacts. The focal point of the first category was the relationship between the Orthodox Church of Estonia and the Church of England while the second includes contacts with the Lutheran church and the local diocese of the Roman Catholic Church. The relations with all three denominations have been well recorded in the press and archive sources of the period. The following overview does not deal with the ecumenical relations within Orthodoxy, e.g., ties of the OCE with the Orthodox churches of Finland, Latvia or other countries. To summarise briefly, these contacts can be characterised as friendly and there were even ideas of convergence (such as plans to create a Finnish-Estonian 'Nordic' church between 1919 and 1922)¹⁵⁷. The overview does not discuss relations with the free churches and other Protestant movements that were relatively small at the time. The references in Orthodox periodicals indicate that most of the con-

tacts with smaller Protestant churches had a negative tone, even though their diligence in disseminating religious literature, doing youth work and pastoral care was occasionally appreciated as an example.¹⁵⁸

It should be noted in this introduction that much of the ecumenical experience of the Orthodox Church of Estonia was partially based on the respective work of the Russian Orthodox Church. For instance, the synod of the Russian Orthodox Church started a lively ecumenical dialogue with the Old Catholic Church and the Church of England already in the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁵⁹ The latter fact also helps to explain the very friendly relations between the Orthodox Church of Estonia and the Church of England during the first years of independence of the Republic of Estonia. The general attitude towards ecumenical cooperation was well reflected at the meeting of the Primate of the Estonian, Latvian and Finnish Orthodox churches on 23-24 September 1938 in Pechory. The meeting

¹⁵⁷ Voito Setälä, „Põhjala kirik – Kalevipoja sild 1919–1922” – *Usk ja Elu* 3/4 (1972), 6–12.

¹⁵⁸ „Mitmesugust” – *Uus Elu* 1 (1931), 6; cf. Konstantin Kokla, „Huwitavat kirjanduse kaudu.” – *Usk ja Elu* 10, 20 October 1934, 167–168.

¹⁵⁹ Православие и экуменизм. Документы и материалы 1902–1998 (Москва, Отдел внешних церковных сношений Московского патриархата, 1999), 18–23.



Prayer service on the market-square in Pechory on the 50th anniversary of the Firefighters' Society. Pictured, from left: Diocesan Bishop Nikolai, next to him are Agafon, the Hegumen of the Monastery of Pechory, and Archpriest Tints. On the right, the pastor of the Lutheran congregation of Pechory, Aleksander Hinno is conducting the prayer

decided to support the ecumenical movement because it was in accordance with the Scripture (Mt 12:30, „whoever is not with me is against me”) and enabled it to join forces in the fight against godless Communism.¹⁶⁰

Contacts between the Orthodox Church of Estonia and the Church of England

It should be noted first that the Church of England clearly played the leading role in the ecumenical relations with the Orthodox church in the beginning of the 20th century. In 1888, Canterbury had decided to establish closer relations with the Orthodox churches.¹⁶¹ Rapproche-

ment between the Orthodox and Anglican churches was supported by the Oxford movement where the leading theologians had started to take an interest in the Eastern churches. Several committees were set up in England and Russia to promote relations between the Orthodox and Anglican churches. The Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union, founded in 1906, and *Общество ревнителей сближения англиканской церкви с православной* (Society of Initiators of Rapprochement between Anglican and Orthodox Churches), established in 1912, are two noteworthy examples. In addition, both churches organised several conferences (e.g., St. Petersburg 1912, New York, London and Oxford 1918) where they learned more about each other's doctrine and history.¹⁶² After the revolution in Russia, the leading role in the dialogue with the Church of England was taken over by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In 1919, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the person of Metropolitan Dorotheos made an unexpected proposal to many Protestant churches to establish a League of Churches.¹⁶³ The envisaged union was supposed to work towards harmonisation of doctrinal views and the Christian calendar, promote communication both at the academic and personal Christian level and to increase mutual support as necessary (e.g., enabling the use of prayer

¹⁶⁰ „Kirikuelu teateid” – *Usk ja Elu* 9, August 1938, 146.

¹⁶¹ Kurg, „Oikumeenilise liikumise kajastamine ... 1910-1940”, 61.

¹⁶² Wassili Martinson, „Homniku-õigeusu ja Inglise (anglikani) kiriku wahekorraast.” (Valga, J. ja O. Lepiku trükk., 1925), 5.

¹⁶³ Kurg, „Oikumeenilise liikumise kajastamine ... 1910-1940”, 56–57; cf. Православие и экуменизм. Документы и материалы 1902–1998 (Москва, Отдел внешних церковных сношений Московского патриархата, 1999), 31

houses and cemeteries by members of other denominations).¹⁶⁴ In 1922, the Ecumenical Patriarch accepted the apostolic succession of the Anglican bishops, which contributed to closer relations between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Patriarch of Constantinople.¹⁶⁵ The improving relations between the Orthodox and Anglican churches were also noticed by the Estonian press.¹⁶⁶

How did the earlier ecumenical communication between the two churches affect the Estonian Orthodox Diocese, which was about to become independent? The leading role in this respect was undoubtedly played by the first Estonian Bishop Platon (Kulbusch). Even though Nigul Hindo, a graduate from the University of Tartu who has thoroughly studied the life and martyrdom of Platon, does not mention his contacts with the Church of England before the First World War, the Estonian emigrant priest Jüri Poska claims that Platon was a prominent member of the Society of Rapprochement between the Orthodox and Anglican churches in St. Petersburg and he even visited England once as a representative of the St. Petersburg Metropolia.¹⁶⁷ Platon's contacts become easier to research in 1918

when he starts to support the independence of Estonia – unlike the German-oriented Lutheran church – sending several letters of protest to the Archbishop of Canterbury through Professor Ants Piip who was living in London. In these letters, Platon complains about the oppression by the German occupation authorities in Estonia and pleaded for the patronage and support of England for the independence of the Baltic nations.¹⁶⁸

After Bishop Platon was murdered by the Bolsheviks (14 January 1919), the Estonian Diocesan Council (EDC) continued to develop relations with the Archbishop of Canterbury, hoping for his support for the independence of the church and participation in the consecration of the next Bishop. Shortly before the extraordinary general assembly of the Orthodox Church of Estonia, the Diocesan Council, comprising seven members, sent a letter of greeting to Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, notifying him of the murder of Bishop Platon and thanking Great Britain for sending the British fleet. The letter emphasised the desire of the martyr bishop „to pave the way between the Eastern and English churches”, because the latter was closest to the Orthodox church in terms of the

¹⁶⁴ „Окружное послание Вселенского патриарха 1920 года” – Православие и экуменизм, 69–70.

¹⁶⁵ „Ar.-õig. Kiriku elust väljamaal. Inglise piiskop ap.-õigeusu kirikust” – *Uus Elu* 7, (1922), 4–5.

¹⁶⁶ Alexander Boross, „Inglise=Slaawi lähenemine. Inglise kirik tahab Kreeka-katoliku kirikuga ühineda” – *Päevaleht* 282, 16 November 1922, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Jüri Poska, „The Martyrdom of bishop Platon” (Stockholm, Publication of the Culture Fund of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, 1968) 17; cf. Nikolai Hindov, *Esimene Eesti ap.-õigeusu piiskopiusukannataja Platon: tema elu ja tegevus* (TÜ käsikirjaline auhinnatöö, 1929). It can be found in the Tartu University Library.

¹⁶⁸ „Eesti piiskopi protest Saksa okkupatsiooni võimude tegevuse vastu 18.09.1918” – *Uus Elu* 1 (1918), 7–8; cf. letter from Bishop Platon to Ants Piip, 1.10.1918. A digital copy of the letter can be found in the personal archive of Aivar Sarapik.

church order and canons.¹⁶⁹ According to Professor Ants Piip, the representative of the Republic of Estonia in London, the Primate of the Church of England responded positively to the letter from the EDC, demonstrating willingness to engage in closer relations.¹⁷⁰ On this basis, the extraordinary general assembly of the OCE adopted on 21 March the following resolutions:

(1) After gaining independence, the Church shall strive for closer relations with the Church of England;

(2) The Primate of the Church of England shall be asked to assist in the consecration of the new Estonian Orthodox bishop;

(3) A respective delegation authorised by the general assembly shall be sent to England for that purpose.¹⁷¹

The task of implementing the resolutions fell on the five members of the new Diocesan Council elected at the same general assembly, the ministers Nikolai Päts, Nikolai Skromnov and Ioann Paavel and the laymen Nikolai Kann and Paul Sepp.¹⁷² In April 1919,

the new Council submitted an application to the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain passports required for the journey to England.¹⁷³ I am inclined to believe, however, that the delegation did not actually go to England. This is confirmed by the letter of 29 August 1919 by Professor Ants Piip to the head of the Church of England in which he asks, on behalf of the Estonian Diocesan Council, whether the Archbishop would agree to consecrate the next Estonian Orthodox bishop.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, between March and June 1919, the focal point of the external relations of the EDC shifted to the plan of the united Nordic church, which was supported at the time by the Estonian and Finnish governments.¹⁷⁵ Both churches still continued to communicate with England through the diplomatic representation in London in the person of Ants Piip. For example, in his letter of 13 October 1919 to Ants Piip, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, apologises for delayed response (he was abroad) and asks for more information about the wishes of the Estonian Diocesan

¹⁶⁹ „Eesti apostliku kiriku aadress Inglismaa kirikule” – *Uus Elu* 3 (1919), 33–34; cf. „The Estonian Clerical Council to the most eminent Archbishop of Canterbury.” A digital copy of the letter can be found in the personal archive of Aivar Sarapik.

¹⁷⁰ ERA (Estonian State Archives), 957-11-166. Ants Piip to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 6.5.1919.

¹⁷¹ „Eestimaa Apostliku Õigeusu koguduse Täiskogu koosolekul 21-sel märtsil 1919. vastu võetud resolutsioonid Kiriku walitsemise küsimuse kohta” – *Uus Elu* 3 (1919), 45; cf. The Autonomous Orthodox Church of Estonia. *L'Église autonome orthodoxe d'Estonie (Aproche historique et nomocanonique)*. Bibliothèque Nomocanonique No 11. (Thessaloniki, Epektasis, 2002), 111.

¹⁷² *Eesti Apostlik-Õigeusu Kirik. Eesti piiskopkonna nõukogu ja sinod (kirikuvalitsus) ajavahemikus 1919–1982.a.* Koostanud Vladimir Neeme August Kaljukoski ainetel ja juhendamisel (Tallinn, 1998), 1. A copy of the manuscript can be found in the personal archive of A. Sõtšov.

¹⁷³ ERA, 957-11-190. Correspondence on the matter of acquiring permission to the representatives of the Diocesan Council of the Orthodox Church for travelling to England and the letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury from 13 October 1919.

¹⁷⁴ Ants Piip to Randall Davidson, 29.08.1919. Digital copy of the letter can be found in the personal archive of Aivar Sarapik.

¹⁷⁵ Voito Setälä, „Põhjala kirik – Kalevipoja sild 1919–1922” – *Usk ja Elu* 3/4 (1972), 8–9.

Council with regard to the consecration of the bishop. The Archbishop of Canterbury was interested in the question, what would be the ecclesiastical subordination of the new Estonian bishop.¹⁷⁶ The EDC declared in their response to the Primate of the Anglican church on 27 November 1919 that their approach „was not an endeavour to violate the canonical order but a sincere attempt to save the church in Estonia”. They also stated that they are unwilling to return to subordination to Patriarch Tikhon and asked whether the Church of England would agree to become the mother church for the soon-to-be independent Orthodox Church of Estonia.¹⁷⁷

However, this plan did not materialise and the possibility of consecration of the Estonian bishop by the Archbishop of Canterbury was withdrawn from the agenda. The Orthodox Church of Estonia resumed its relations with the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church in the autumn of the same year. The latter, led by Patriarch Tikhon, expressed willingness to grant autonomy to the Estonian diocese and to consecrate Archpriest Alexander (Paulus) the Bishop for Estonia.¹⁷⁸ The EDC started to arrange the technicalities of the consecration of the bishop in cooperation with the leadership of the ROC from October 1919. For instance, on 17

October 1919, EDC sent a radio-telegram to Patriarch Tikhon, asking for the Finnish Archbishop Serafim to be sent to the planned consecration of the bishop in Estonia.¹⁷⁹ The leadership of the Orthodox Church of Estonia had two firm demands to the head of the Russian church: the local church must be granted full independence (autocephaly) and the new head of the Orthodox church of Estonia in an independent nation could no longer be subordinate to the head of the church of another nation. This position of the Estonian Diocesan Council is confirmed in the newspaper *Uus Elu* by Anton Laar, a member of the Council: „/---/ without waiting for the outcome of Estonia’s political future, we have to attain independence for our church immediately... An ecclesiastic connection with Russia would be most unfortunate for us /---/. /---/. Thus, our position is clear: full independence (autocephaly) for the Orthodox Church of Estonia, no matter what /---/. We say this publicly and directly. – The time is ripe.”¹⁸⁰ As a concluding remark in the history of the independence of the Estonian church, we could note that the Serbian and Polish Orthodox churches were also approached through diplomatic channels of Jaan Poska to explore the possibility for achieving autocephaly and consecration of the new bishop.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ ERA, 957-11-190, 10. Randall Davidson to Ants Piip, 13.10.1919.

¹⁷⁷ EAA, 1655-3-248, 123–126. Estonian Diocesan Council to Randall Davidson, 27.11.1919.

¹⁷⁸ EAA, 1655-3-248, 108. Government of ROC to Estonian Diocesan Council, 10.10.1919; cf. *ibid.*, page 113, letter from the Government of ROC to Estonian Diocesan Council, 26.11.1919.

¹⁷⁹ EAA, 1655-3-248, 121. Radio-telegram from EDC to Patriarch Tikhon, 17. 10. 1919.

¹⁸⁰ „Lähem Eestimaa piiskopkonna räiskogu” – *Uus Elu* 2 (1919), 30.

¹⁸¹ EAA, 1655-3-248, 59–60. Correspondence of EDC with the delegation of the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia; cf. ERA, 957-2-387, 122–125, correspondence of EDC with the Orthodox Church of Poland.

Affection for the Church of England persisted in the Orthodox Church of Estonia after it was granted extended autonomy by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1923. With this in mind, it is important to take a closer look at the contribution of Vassili Martinson, Professor at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tartu and Archpriest, to the rapprochement between the Church of England and Orthodox Church of Estonia in the 1920s and 1930s. His main achievement was the presentation of the doctrines of the Anglican church in the Estonian Orthodox press from 1925. He concludes in his articles that the doctrines of the two churches are very similar.¹⁸² Martinson's writings on the relations between the Anglican and Orthodox churches were later collected and published as a small booklet.¹⁸³ In addition to the Anglican doctrine, Martinson also presented the proceedings of the Lambeth Conferences 1920 and 1930. For instance, discussing the 1920 Lambeth Conference, he remarks, approvingly, that it was attended by many representatives of Orthodox clergy, including Meletios, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Germanos, Metropolitan of Thyateira,

deputy to the Patriarch of Constantinople.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, Martinson can undoubtedly be regarded as a promoter of the ecumenical dialogue between the OCE and the Anglican churches.

The relations between the two churches enhanced at the beginning of the 1930s. The preconditions were created by the 1930 Lambeth Conference, which decided (Resolution 33) to set up a joint commission with the help of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other autocephalous churches. The task of the commission was to develop a joint theological statement.¹⁸⁵ When Basil Stannton Batty, an Anglican bishop, stayed in Tallinn on his way back home in 1931, he informed the local Orthodox church that the matter of convergence between the Anglican and Orthodox churches would be brought back to the agenda of the Church of England in the autumn.¹⁸⁶ Oskar Kallas, Estonian representative in London, was another prominent figure who, in his correspondence with Metropolitan Alexander, attested to the willingness of the English church to cooperate with the Orthodox church. The ambassador offered assistance to the Primate of the Estonian church in 1931 should the OCE desire

¹⁸² Martinson, „Hommiku-õigeusu ja Inglise (anglikani) kiriku wahekorra” – *Uus Elu* 1 (1925), 6–8. Cf. *Uus Elu* 2 (1925), 1–2. Prof Martinson writes at the end of the article series, „We do not know when the union might take place. Everything is in the hands of God. We only know that it will happen eventually because of the prayer of our Saviour Jesus Christ that all who truly believe in him may be one (Jh 17: 11, 21)”.

¹⁸³ Martinson, *Hommikuma-õigeusu Inglise (anglikani) kiriku wahekorra*.

¹⁸⁴ *Idamaa õigeusu ja anglikaani kiriku ühinemisest* Toimetanud prof. ülempreester W. Martinson. (Tartu, M. Hermann'i trükkikoda. 1931), 12.

¹⁸⁵ Lambeth Conferences on the Internet: <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1930/1930-33.cfm>.

¹⁸⁶ „Venelaste usuelu juhtivad jõud on...” – *Uus Elu* 7 (1930) 4; cf. ERA, 957-8-1153. Correspondence with the Estonian mission in London concerning the passage of Anglican Bishop Basil Stannton Batty to the Soviet Union and back through Estonia.

closer contacts with the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁸⁷ Initially, the leader of the Orthodox Church of Estonia was fully prepared to develop the cooperation. The general assembly of the OCE elected in the summer 1932 a commission of five, headed by the Metropolitan, to establish friendly relations with the Church of England.¹⁸⁸ Even though this fact is confirmed by the documents of the 1932 general assembly of the OCE, no archive records of the work of this commission in the 1930s have been preserved.¹⁸⁹ The lack of sources that would cast light on the relationship between the Anglican and Estonian Orthodox churches in the second half of the 1930s is significant. There is only one report, stating that the OCE adopted in 1937 the ecumenical tradition of the Octave of Prayer, i.e., eight days of prayer for Christian unity. The first prayer service of this kind was presided over by Alexander, Metropolitan of Tallinn and all Estonia, in January of the same year in the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Tallinn.¹⁹⁰

It should be noted in this connection that the fascination with Anglicanism by the Orthodox Church of Estonia left an interesting mark on the tradition of local rhymed hymns. The Orthodox Church of Estonia adapted many Anglican tunes

during introduction of this type of hymns in the 1920s. Seven of the fifty hymns published in the 1925 Hymnal of the Orthodox Church of Estonia belong within this category.¹⁹¹ A concluding comparison between the OCE and EELC in their contacts with the Anglican church presents us the following picture: While the most active communication between the Orthodox and Anglican churches took place in 1919 and in 1930-32, the relations between the Anglicans and the EELC were most active from 1936 to 1938.¹⁹² There is relatively limited information on the contacts between the local Lutheran church and the Church of England in the first years of the Republic of Estonia.¹⁹³

Contacts between the Orthodox Church of Estonia and the Lutheran Church

Without attempting to give a very detailed account of this subject, I would like to focus on the points of contact and dispute between the denominations on the basis of the Lutheran and Orthodox periodicals of the period. As an introduction, it could be said that the diocese of Riga and Mitau of the Tsarist period had very few contacts with the local Lutheran rural church. This is confirmed by the documents of the

¹⁸⁷ EAA, 1655-3-348, 1. O. Kallas to Metropolitan Alexander, 27.3.1931; cf. *ibid.*, letter from O. Kallas to J. Tõnisson, 30.4.1931.

¹⁸⁸ „Apostli-õigeusu kirik loob sõprussidemeid anglikani kirikuga” – *Postimees* 138, 16 June 1932, 1.

¹⁸⁹ EAA, 1655-3-1137. General Assembly of the Orthodox Church of Estonia (14–17 June 1932), unnumbered pages.

¹⁹⁰ Jeremia Ciocan, „Ühe vennasteseltsi üleskutse kirikute ühinemise eest palvetamise kaheksapäevaku puhul” – *Ühine Kirik* 3-4 (1939), 51–52.

¹⁹¹ „Eesti Apostliku õigeusu kiriku Wiiside raamat I” (Tallinn, EAÕK Sinod. 1925).

¹⁹² Vihuri, *Rahamägi*, 173–187.

¹⁹³ Rohtmets, *EELK välissubted 1919–1940*, 64.

diocese clergy meetings where the only reference to Lutheranism relates to the need to introduce a procedure for voluntary conversion of the Orthodox into that denomination (such as in case of marriage).¹⁹⁴ The fact that an ecumenical dialogue between the two denominations was virtually non-existent is evident from the anti-Lutheran booklets published at the time.¹⁹⁵

Tension appeared in the relations between the denominations in the 1920s when the Orthodox Church of Estonia became a minority church. The disputes and rivalry between the two churches can be partially explained by the desire to abandon respectively the German or Russian colonialist past and to take steps towards developing an identity for the Estonian people's church. However, there was some search for common ground. For instance, the OCE circles recognised and approved of the high church liturgical movement that appeared in the German Lutheran church at the end of the First World War under the leadership of the High Church Ecumenical League (*Hochkirchlich-Oekumenischer Bund*).¹⁹⁶ Professor Martinson expressed hope that this movement could save the local Lutheran church from the 'crisis of faith', which was also recognised in the press in 1928 by Peeter Pöld, for

instance.¹⁹⁷ The Orthodox press occasionally also supported the reform-minded pastors (e.g., Theodor Tallmeister) who recommended a liturgical reform in the Estonian Lutheran church.¹⁹⁸

Trying to avoid idealising or downgrading Orthodox-Lutheran relations, we should first focus on the links between the denominations and then consider some problematic issues. While the first category can be classified easily into ecumenical relations at the grassroots and official levels, the problematic questions are best highlighted by the mutual accusations in the Christian publications. The ecumenical relations at grassroots level include joint commemorations of the clergymen who were killed during liberation of Tartu on 14 January 1919 or were murdered in the cellar of the Credit Bank in Tartu, support of the EELC to preserve the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Tallinn, joint services at various national and church holidays, and the contribution to the temperance movement. The official relations include cooperation at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tartu, development of an inter-denominational religious education programme for schools and attempts to join the World Council of Churches.

The following is an overview of the

¹⁹⁴ XXVII Епархиальный Съезд духовенства Рижской епархии. Протоколы съезда 28 октября – 13 ноября 1908 г. (Рига, Тип. Г. Гемпель. 1908), 43–46.

¹⁹⁵ „Ühe luterlase mõtted Lutheri usust” (Riia, Otto Ramischi trükikoda. 1915); cf. Serafim Läde, *Lutheri õpetus Kristuse tõde-ivalguses. Sõnake minu suguvendadele*. Eestikeelde toimetanud M. Suigusaar. (Pärnu, Laane trükikoda. 1911).

¹⁹⁶ Vassili Martinson, „Kõrgkiriklikust liikumisest luteri usu kirikus Saksamaal” – *Ajalooline album Pärnu Issandamuutmise kiriku 25. aasta juubeli päevaks 1904 – 1929 25. aug.* (Pärnu, A. Janseni trükk, 1929), 69–80.

¹⁹⁷ Peeter Pöld, „Waadete rewideerimisel” – *Postimees* 77, 18 March 1928, 3.

¹⁹⁸ „Kas uus reform” – *Elutõde* 6, 19 March 1937, 69.

links between the two denominations. The first point to consider is the development of ecumenical relations in connection with the commemoration of the 1919 Tartu massacre, which developed into a joint ecumenical event by the two denominations in the 1920s. The OCE started to celebrate the liberation of Tartu with a greater degree of emphasis from 1922. On 14 January 1922, all clergymen of the Orthodox parishes in Tartu assembled at the site of the massacre. In 1923, Archbishop Alexander of Tallinn and all Estonia attended the ceremony, as did the first Lutheran pastors.¹⁹⁹ By the end of the 1920s, all churches in Tartu commemorated this day with prayers for the dead and remembrance ceremonies.²⁰⁰ Both churches joined forces to establish a committee for perpetuating the memory of the victims who died in the Tartu Credit Bank. The idea was to reconstruct the cellar of the Credit Bank as commemoration chapel. The chapel design committee included Professor Hugo Bernhard Rahamägi from the EELC and Dean Konstantin Kokla from the OCE.²⁰¹ The plan was implemented and the cellar chapel of the Credit Bank was consecrated

on 14 January 1931 by the higher clergy of the OCE and EELC.²⁰² The contribution of Rahamägi to the cellar design and perpetuation was duly recognised by the Synod of the OCE, which awarded him the third class Order of Bishop Platon.²⁰³ The chapel was taken under heritage protection by the government in the beginning of the 1930s.²⁰⁴ The joint services presided over by the heads of the EELC and OCE on 14 January in the chapel of the Credit Bank became an established ecumenical tradition in the second half of the 1930s.²⁰⁵

The second form of friendly relations was manifested in the joint participation of clergymen at the celebrations of various institutions – army units, Defence League, societies, schools, community centres – or on public holidays, as evidenced in the memoirs of Orthodox priests and publications in the Lutheran press.²⁰⁶ Combined Lutheran-Orthodox hymn sheets were usually printed for institutional anniversaries or consecrations of insignia.²⁰⁷ In connection with such events, clergymen from one denomination could occasionally preach in the church building of the other denomination.²⁰⁸ This type of co-

¹⁹⁹ Nikolai Kokla, „14. jaanuar Tartus – usupäevana” – *Usk ja Elu* 1 (1934), 8.

²⁰⁰ „Tartu vabastamise usulik mälestamine IX aastapäeval 14. jaanuaril 1928 aastal” (Tartu, 1927).

²⁰¹ „Märtrite mälestuseks” – *Eesti Kirik* 41, 11 October 1928, 331.

²⁰² *Laululeht Tartu vabastamise ja Krediidikassa keldri ohvrite XII. Mälestuspäeval* – (Tartu, 1931).

²⁰³ „Uusi piiskoppe ev. luteriusu kirikus” – *Usk ja Elu* 7 (1934), 124.

²⁰⁴ Kokla, „14. jaanuar Tartus”, 9.

²⁰⁵ E.g., *Mälestusleheke Tartu Krediidikassa keldri ohvrite 20. a. surmapäeval 14. jaanuaril 1939. Jumalateenistustel teenivad mitropoliit Aleksander ja piiskop Rahamägi*” (Tartu, N. Kokla trükk. 1939).

²⁰⁶ E.g., Joann Ümarik, *Elutee I*, 253–254 (Tallinn, 1983). Copy of the manuscript can be found in the Church of Transfiguration of Our Lord in Pärnu. Father Joann also described consecrations of the Audru Liberation War memorial and the statue of Konstantin Päts; cf. „Karksi kaitsemaleva lipu õnnistamine” – *Eesti Kirik* 33, 16 August 1928, 268.

²⁰⁷ *Kaitseliidu Tartumaa maleva ja Räpina malevkonna 19. aastapäev. Räpinas, 22. augustil 1937* (Tartu, 1937); cf. *Laulud Mehikoorma Vabat. Tuletõrje Seltsi 25 a. juubeli ja lipu pühitsuse ajaks* (Tartu, 1936).

²⁰⁸ „Kõne kaitseleitlaste wannutamisel. Pidanud Sangaste Luteruse kirikus 24. juunil 1925 Ilmjärve preester A. Eller” – *Usk ja Elu* 10 (1925), 10.



Blessing of young soldiers of 6 Infantry Battalion. From left: Dean August Grünberg and priest Jüri Välbe

operation also includes instances when a congregation permitted the other denomination to hold a service in their church building. For example, one such instance took place in the region east of the Narva River. When some Izhorian Orthodox appealed in 1926 to Sergei Samon, priest of the Narva Nikolai parish of the Orthodox Church of Estonia, with the request to hold Estonian services in the villages of Vanaküla and Kallivere, the Lutheran congregation of Kallivere agreed to let them use their chapel for this purpose.²⁰⁹ The first Estonian liturgy was celebrated in the Lutheran chapel of Kallivere on 24 October 1926.²¹⁰

Another form of cooperation between the two denominations was the promotion of the temperance movement. The ecumenical Christian Temperance Union

was founded in 1925 as a section of the Estonian Temperance Union. The main objective was to reach all churches and congregations to step up the fight against alcoholism. The first meeting that adopted the House Rules of the Union took place on 14 April 1925 in Tallinn. The Christian Temperance Union organised so-called 'temperance services' on various temperance days, congresses and respective gatherings. A National Christian Temperance Day was introduced in 1926. The location of the Union was in Tallinn until spring 1927, but was later moved to Tartu where it was registered as an independent organisation with separate Articles of Association. The Executive Board of the new Union at the beginning of 1930 included Professor Rahamägi as chairman and Professor Martison as treasurer and both men became

²⁰⁹ „Kalliwerest – Ingerimaalt” – *Uus Elu* 3/4 (1927), 16.

²¹⁰ „Pidulik Jumalateenistus õigeusu kombe järele Kallivere küla Ew.-Luteruse palvemajas” – *Uus Elu*. 11/12, (1926), 13.

the leading figures of the Christian temperance movement. The Board also included representatives of other denominations: Aleksander Kuum from the Methodist Church and Karl Kaups from the Baptist Church. The equal support given by different churches to the temperance movement is illustrated by the 1929 statement of accounts of the Christian Temperance Union: in that year, the Union was supported with donations from 55 Lutheran, 8 Orthodox and 3 Methodist congregations.²¹¹ Hymn sheets of the Christian Temperance Union from the 1920s and 1930s indicate that the fight against alcoholism was, at the time, one of the initiatives of the ecumenical movement that brought together clergymen from different denominations to organise respective events, collect donations, or even to write and arrange topical hymns.²¹²

The following paragraphs are dedicated to the ecumenical relations at the higher level (heads of churches, Synod and Consistory), which can be classified into three main groups: cooperation between churches in the Estonian National Council, development of interdenominational study programme, and friendly relations in the Faculty of Theology. As the first area has been thoroughly discussed by Priit Rohtmets in his Master's thesis, there is no need to go into details here. Suffice to say that the cooperation that begun in the framework of the World

Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches lasted until the first Soviet occupation, and it was partially due to this cooperation that the EELC and OCE could join the World Council of Churches in 1939.²¹³ The foundations of the World Council of Churches were established in 1938 at an inter-church conference in Utrecht, Holland. Estonia was represented by the Archbishop of the EELC, Rahamägi, who had the authorisation to act on behalf of the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran churches as well as the Orthodox Church of Estonia.²¹⁴

The interdenominational programme of religious education, an idea that emerged at the end of the 1920s, included, for instance, development of a religious education curriculum for primary schools and publication of textbooks. The initiative came from the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs, as the Synod of the OCE was more interested in denominational religious education. However, finding support for the idea of denominational education proved to be difficult, because the schools were reluctant to group pupils by their denomination and many teachers of religion from other denominations opposed the idea.²¹⁵ The Ministry of Education and Social Affairs established a joint commission of the EELC and OCE in 1930 to correct the current textbooks of religious education and to develop an interdenominational curriculum.

²¹¹ *Laululeht üleriiklise karskuspüha jumalateenistusel 4. mail 1930* (Tartu: A. Süüdeni trükk, 1930), 4.

²¹² E.g., *Ap.-õigeusu laulud ja palved 7. Karskuspüha jumalateenistusel 3. mail 1925* (Tartu: J. Mällo trükk., 1925).

²¹³ Rohtmets, *EELK välissuhted 1919–1940*, 147.

²¹⁴ Kurg, „Oikumeenilise liikumise kajastamine ... 1910–1940”, 61.

²¹⁵ „Hariduse ja sotsiaalministeerium ma- ning linnakooliwalitsustele ja Kultuurwalitsustele 31. 10. 1930 nr 33238” – *Uus Elu* 1 (1931), 8.

A meeting of the commission took place on 12 May. Attending were August Westrén-Doll, Minister of Education and Social Affairs, Reverend Ferdinand Jürgenson, Archpriest Nikolai Päts and school councillors Mart Raud and Christian Brüller. The meeting reviewed the current textbooks of religious education. At the same meeting, Archpriest Nikolai Päts communicated the requests of the Metropolitan and Synod, which included easier access to denominational religious education for Orthodox children in primary schools and a review of respective study programmes by Orthodox personnel with academic degrees.²¹⁶ Several facts confirm that the commission respected the requests of the Orthodox Church of Estonia and achieved good results. First, the interdenominational primary school textbooks of religious education were indeed published.²¹⁷ Second, the task of reviewing the content of Orthodox religious education was given to Orthodox theologians. For instance, Professor Vassili Martinson reviewed the Orthodox study programmes at the Pechory, Tartu and Narva upper secondary schools in 1930 and 1931.²¹⁸

Another point of contact between the clergymen and academic staff from both

churches was the Faculty of Theology at the University of Tartu. It is an interesting fact that the Orthodox Chair of Dogmatic Theology was founded by the University Council before the Faculty of Theology itself (the former on 10 September 1919 and the latter on 26 September 1919).²¹⁹ The reason was probably a long tradition of having an Orthodox Chair outside the Theological Faculty. The first Head of the Chair was Archpriest Karp Tiisik, MTh. For a while, the Chair remained an independent structural unit at the University, but this made it difficult to attract students to the lectures.

The Synod of the OCE decided in 1922, after the death of Archbishop Karp Tiisik, that the Chair should be incorporated in the Faculty of Theology. The task of implementing the merger and developing a new study programme in compliance with the programmes of the Theological Faculty was assigned to Archpriest Vassili Martinson who had an academic background and was a Doctor of Theology. Martinson was elected Acting Professor of the Chair of Orthodox Theology in the same year.²²⁰ After eighteen months of preparations, negotiations and reorganisations, the Chair of Orthodox Theology was finally opened

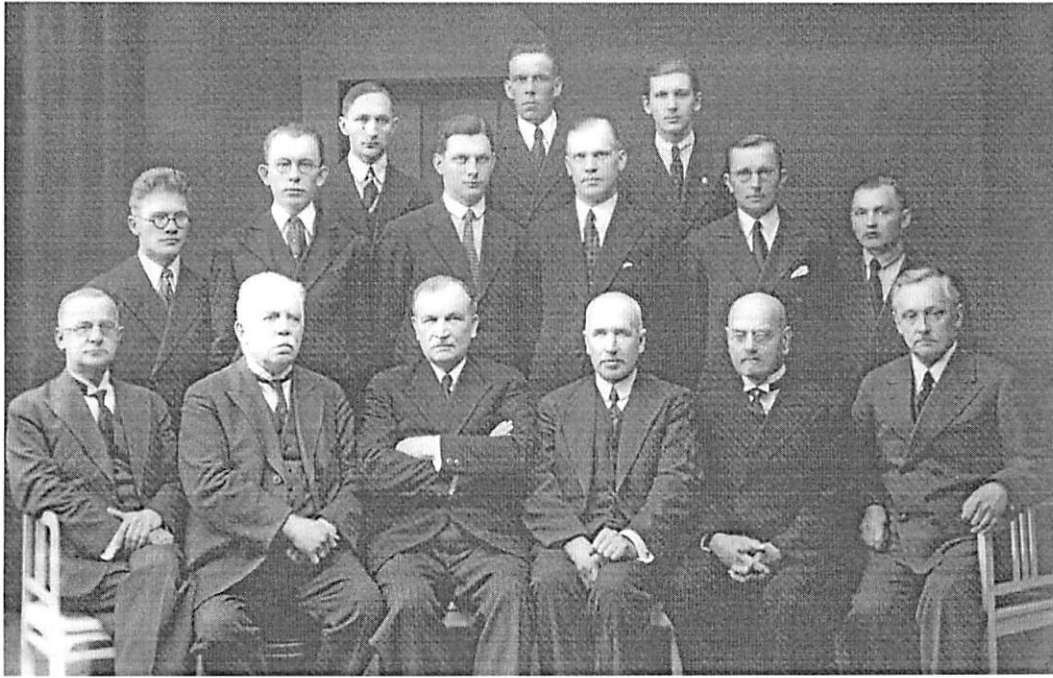
²¹⁶ EAA, 1655-3-67, 1-2, minutes of the meeting of the commission for the program of religious education on 12.5.1930.

²¹⁷ E.g., Leopold Raudkepp ja Nikolai Päts, *Püha tõde ja tegu. Algkooli V klassi õpperaamat 38 pildi ja 2 kaardiga* (Tallinn, Eesti Kirjastus-ühisus, 1933), 106-114. This textbook contains an equal number of teachings and songs from both denominations and describes, in addition to the Protestant Reformation, also the conversion of Estonians to Orthodoxy in the 1840s.

²¹⁸ EAA, 2100-2-615, 149, service record of Vassili Martinson.

²¹⁹ Lembit Raid, *Tartu Ülikooli usuteaduskond 1632-1940* (Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 1995), 104; cf. EAA, 2100, n 2, s 1222, page 4.

²²⁰ Raid, *Tartu Ülikooli usuteaduskond 1632-1940*, 35; cf. EAA, 2100-2-615, 10. Notification of the Minister of Education, 21. 10. 1922.



The academic staff and graduates of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tartu in 1935. Sitting, from left: Eduard Tennmann, Otto Emil Seesemann, Johan Kõpp, Olaf Sild, Alexander von Bulmerincq and Vassili Martinson. Elmar Salumaa (Teppan) is the first from left in the back row

as part of the Faculty of Theology in the autumn semester 1924.²²¹ With the adoption of the new Statutes of the University of Tartu on 18 June 1925, the Chair was also recognised by the Ministry of Education.²²² In order to support the Orthodox theologians studying at the faculty, the government of the Orthodox church approved the idea proposed by Professor Vassili Martinson to create a scholarship fund, which was launched in 1929 under the name „Study Capital Society

of the Orthodox Church of Estonia”.²²³ It can be assumed that the ecumenical cooperation amongst the academic staff of the faculty was based on mutual understanding and respect, irrespective of the denominational background. For instance, on 21 March 1931, professors Hugo Bernhard Rahamägi, Olaf Sild and Eduard Tenmann unanimously supported promotion of the Head of the Orthodox Chair, Vassili Martinson, to the status of ordinary professor, emphasising his ex-

²²¹ Vassili Martinson, *Seletuskiri Eesti Ap.=õig. kiriku Sinodile* (Tartu, 1926), 1–3.

²²² Arthur Vööbus, „The Department of Theology at the University of Tartu” – *Estonia christiana eximio domino Ioanni Kõpp nonaginta annos feliciter explenti discipuli congratulantes dedicaverunt* (Holm: Eesti usuteaduse seltsi paguluses, 1965), 279.

²²³ Seltsi „Eesti Ap.-õigeusu Kiriku õppekapitali” aruanne 13.I.1930–I.VII.1930 (Tartu: M. Hermann'i trükk, 1930), 1.

emplary and active work in the academic field, the church and matters of state.²²⁴

Some mixed feelings arose among the Lutheran pastors with regard to the plans to demolish the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Tallinn. The church historian Riho Saard and Patriarch Alexiy noted that part of the Lutheran pastors approved of the idea.²²⁵ However, there is also evidence that Lutheran clergy included firm opponents of the plan. The latter group gained strength after parliament had started to consider the idea of relocating St. John's Church from the Vabaduse Square in Tallinn in connection with the planned reconstruction of the square.²²⁶ Both Rahamägi and Sommer justified their opposition to the above plans with the following arguments:

(1) Destruction of church buildings is morally wrong, especially considering that they have been preserved in similar situations in Finland, Denmark, the United States and elsewhere. If a church has been erected in a specific location, it should not be torn down.²²⁷

(2) Toompea Castle with the Tall Hermann tower and the building of The Riigikogu are not examples of Estonian style either, having served as residences of foreign governors.

(3) Demolition of the Cathedral

would be very expensive and would not be a symbol of patriotism but rather chauvinism.²²⁸

The editors of the Orthodox newspaper *Uus Elu* thanked both pastors for their assistance, adding that Orthodox Estonian clergymen (e.g., Karp Tiisik) had been financially supporting the construction of the Cathedral as well. The editors believed that implementation of the plan would constitute a blatant intervention by the state in religious affairs and discrimination against the Orthodox minority.²²⁹

This does not mean, however, that there was total peace and harmony between the two denominations. A review of the Orthodox and Lutheran publications of the period indicates that there was also much debate, mutual accusations and ironic remarks. As early as 1919, the Orthodox press comments with sadness that establishing peaceful relations with the Lutheran church that represents the majority is proving to be complicated.²³⁰ A significant trait in the hostile relations between the denominational publications is that the Orthodox authors were especially hurt by some articles on Orthodoxy that appeared in the Lutheran publications *Eesti Kirik* (Estonian Church) and *Protestantiline Ilm* (Protestant World).²³¹ Trying to classify the questions under dispute, there seems to be

²²⁴ EAA, 2100-2-615, 43–46. Opinion of the review panel on the promotion of Prof. V. Martinson, 21.3.1931.

²²⁵ Saard, „Eestlane luterluse ja õigeusu vahel”, 120–124; cf. Патриарх Алексий. „Православие в Эстонии.” (Москва, Православная Энциклопедия, 1999), 395.

²²⁶ „Kulukad unistused. Wabadusplatsi planeerimine ja kultuurhoone ehitamine” – *Päevaleht* 276, 10 October (1928), 2.

²²⁷ H. B. Rahamägi, „Toompea apostl. õigeusu kirikust” – *Eesti Kirik* 43, 25 October (1928), 343.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 343; cf. Sommer, „Toompea katedrali küsimus” – *Eesti Kirik* 43, 25 October (1928), 344–345.

²²⁹ „Tallinna Toompea ap.-õigeusu kirik” – *Uus Elu* 10 (1928), 1–4.

²³⁰ „Meie wahekordadest” – *Uus Elu* 7 (1921), 49–50.

²³¹ „Waimulikkudest wahekordadest” – *Uus Elu* 8/9 (1928), 2–7; cf. Konstantin Kokla, „Kirikliku elu vaatlemisel” – *Uus Elu* 9/10 (1930), 7.

a separate debate on historical topics and then there were other kinds of accusations (e.g., improper attitude of the clergy). The following paragraphs present in a nutshell a summary of the differences.

Historical disputes can be found in Orthodox publications from 1921. The editors of newspaper *Uus Elu* (New Life) note that the other church was mistaken when they called Jakob Kukk, Archbishop of the EELC, the first Estonian Primate, because the Estonians Platon (1917) and Alexander (1920) had been consecrated before him.²³² The most notorious accusations of the Lutheran clergy concerned the unequal treatment of denominations during the Tsarist period (when the Orthodox church was preferred as the national religion).²³³ In response, the Orthodox priests emphasised participation of their colleagues in the national awakening of the Estonians and the rescue operation organised by the Orthodox in 1905 to save peasants from punitive troops.²³⁴

However, the neighbouring denomination had further accusations with which to focus on the past. For instance, Pastor Meedar lists in *Eesti Kirik* 1928 a long 'register of sins' of the Orthodox church, including 'agitation and material lures' by Russian priests during the conversion campaign in 1845-48, the 19th century policy of Russification of village and par-

ish schools (the author calls the parish schools 'nests of ethnicity change'), and easier access of the Orthodox intellectuals to public offices in the Estonian and Livonian provinces.²³⁵ The editors of *Uus Elu* responded with the following counterarguments: Conversion could not have happened as a result of the propaganda by a few Russian Orthodox priests who did not know the local language but it was primarily a spontaneous movement of peasants who started to spread incorrect rumours about the gifts of land in return for the conversion. The dense network of church schools created as a result of the conversion rather accelerated the improvement of the level of education of Estonians and the development of real Estonian intellectuals. Thirdly, it was the Lutheran Estonians who had easier access to public offices, not the Orthodox. The latter had to be content with careers in the public administration and universities elsewhere in Russia. For instance, Aleksander Kaelas went to teach at the university in Siberia.²³⁶

The second large group of debate topics focused on the present day matters. One should fully concur with the statement of Dr. Riho Saard that the majority of the pre-war Lutheran church considered the Orthodox church as a 'foreign object', a 'reactionary element', or even a

²³² „Üks põhiõpetus Ew.-Luteri kirikus” – *Uus Elu* 5/6, May-June 1921, 44–45.

²³³ Konstantin Kokla, „Usutegelaste wahekorrad” – *Usk ja Elu* 7 (1933), 1–3.

²³⁴ „Ajalooline tõde. Mitte õigeusk ei killustanud Eesti rahva tervikut, vaid seda taotles luterlik kirik ja subjektiivne ajaloo käsitus” – *Elutõde* 6, 19 March (1937), 71. An anonymous church figure writes in the same article, „In order to solve this issue, the main point of interest should be the general Tsarist policy towards Orthodoxy ... while the comparison with germanisation should be left to future historical studies ...”

²³⁵ M. Meedar, „Eesti apostlik õigeusu kirik tsaariaegset eestlasi wenelasteks ümberrahwustavat Wene kirikut ja tema esitajate tegevust kaitsmas” – *Eesti Kirik* 31, 2 August (1928), 250–251.

²³⁶ „Waimulikest wahekordadest” – *Uus Elu* 8/9, Sugust-September (1928), 4–7.

'semi-pagan entity' in Estonian society.²³⁷ This is confirmed by respective references in the Estonian protestant press of the period.²³⁸ Similar claims were also made by Pastor Eduard Steinvand from the Internal and External Mission Department of the Consistory of EELC at the conference of the Protestant World Alliance in Holland in 1934. He said in his presentation that the local Orthodox church has been 'soaked in paganism' and should be 'renewed by the evangelical movement'.²³⁹ As expected, the Orthodox press reacted very sharply to these claims.²⁴⁰ There were other sources of misunderstanding. Occasionally, the clergymen of one denomination behaved improperly by presiding over funerals or weddings of members of the other denomination. It should be noted that Lutherans, who converted to Orthodoxy, were not re-baptised and the Canon Law permitted combining the traditions of both churches in interfaith wedding ceremonies.²⁴¹ The Lutheran church did not respond well to the conversion to Orthodoxy of the supporters of prophet Maria Normann in 1934 in Virumaa.²⁴²

In conclusion, the words of an Orthodox priest, Konstantin Kokla, poignantly summarise the relations between the Or-

thodox and Lutheran churches: „... we should accept the truth and admit that the relations between us and the clergy of the Lutheran church are far from good, because polite and good relations cannot be ascribed to spiritual life”²⁴³. In brief, while the official relations between the two denominations, particularly at the higher level, were governed by a polite and correct tone, the ecumenical relations at the 'grassroots' level were expressed in specific associations (e.g., Christian Temperance Union or the committee for perpetuating the memory of the victims who were murdered in the Tartu Credit Bank) or restricted to conducting joint services at national or local gatherings.

Relations between the Orthodox Church of Estonia and the Roman Catholic Church

While the relations with the Church of England can be described briefly as friendly, the relations with the Lutheran church were sometimes friendly and sometimes controversial. The contacts between the OCE and the Roman Catholic church, however, were much more reserved than could have been expected. Development of closer relations was prevented prima-

²³⁷ Saard, „Eestlane luterluse ja õigeusu vahel”, 120–124.

²³⁸ „Maa ilma merelt. Eestist” – *Eesti Kirik* 28, 17 July (1930), 224. The same article calls Orthodox church holidays of Pechory 'actions of semi-pagan nature'.

²³⁹ *Protestantische Rundschau* 4, Oktober (1934), 3.

²⁴⁰ *Eesti Kirik* salgab! – *Elutõde* 33, 24 September (1936), 4–5; cf. „Järjekordne pettumus” – *Elutõde* 30, 3 September (1936), 5.

²⁴¹ *Jublnõõrid Eesti Ap.-õigeusu Kiriku (liidu) põhikirja §§ 45, 46 ja 47 täienduseks* (Wastu võetud Eesti Ap.-õigeusu Kiriku Täiskogul 19.–21. juunil 1929 a. ja kinnitatud mitropoliit Aleksandri poolt § 45 põhjal) (Tallinn: Eesti Ap.-õigeusu Kiriku Sinod, 1929), 23.

²⁴² „Huvitavat usuelust ajakirjanduse kaudu – Usuliikumine Virumaal” – *Usk ja Elu* 5 (1933), 92–93; cf. „Huvitavat usuelust ajakirjanduse kaudu – Veel usuliikumisest Virumaal” – *Usk ja Elu* 7 (1933), 92–93.

²⁴³ Konstantin Kokla, „Kirikute wahhepiirilt Eestis” – *Usk ja Elu* 7 (1933), 1.

rily by differing interpretations of the ecumenical movement, which the Roman Catholics understood as subordination to the Pope while the Orthodox as meaning closer cooperation between denominations. According to available sources, the contacts between the OCE and the Roman Catholic church became more active in the 1930s when the Catholic church received legal backing and started to promote Uniatism.²⁴⁴

As an introduction, we should briefly describe the Estonian Catholic Mission for Eastern Rites. The Mission for Uniatism or Eastern Rites was led in Estonia by the order of Jesuits. An Apostolic Administration was set up in 1931 by the Jesuit mission *Commissio pro Russia*, and Eduard Profittlich, priest of the St. Peter and Paul parish in Tallinn, was appointed Apostolic Administrator. He was consecrated local bishop on 27 December 1936 (as titular Archbishop of Hadrianopolis).²⁴⁵ North East Estonia was the main mission area for Eastern Rites, with several Catholic chapels and mission stations being established in the 1930s (in Rakvere, Narva and Esna near Paide). The missionary efforts in the area were supported by the Poles working in the coalmines in the North East, who did not have the opportunity to attend Latin Masses. The area was also geographically most suitable, because the Mission for Eastern Rites

was supposed to expand into Russia in the future. A plot of land was bought at Esna near Paide for the recently converted Estonians and Russians and an Eastern Rites chapel was built where the Jesuit Fathers Vassili Bourgeois, John Ryder and later Henry Milner conducted church services in Russian and Estonian.²⁴⁶ Father Bourgeois started to publish the Estonian newspaper *Ühine Kirik* (The Church United) to promote the mission and union with Rome and the newspaper was sent or handed out without charge to Orthodox priests. Vassily Bourgeois and John Ryder paid much attention to visiting the local Orthodox clergymen to inform them of the 'ecumenical' efforts of the Pope. Establishing personal relations was considered an important factor by the Jesuits to achieve acceptance of the ideas of Uniatism.²⁴⁷

The Jesuit church historian Christoph Wrembek explains the establishment of the Catholic union-oriented mission with the rumours that the OCE was supposedly interested in union. However, only a few Orthodox sources confirm the existence of unionist tendencies. Firstly, the rumours that the OCE had developed an interest in establishing contacts with the Roman church are confirmed by the diplomatic correspondence between the Republic of Estonia and the Estonian Ambassador to the Vatican.²⁴⁸ Secondly,

²⁴⁴ 'Uniate Church' refers to parishes that belong to the Roman Catholic Church under the canon law (recognise the authority of the Pope) but use the local Orthodox liturgy in their services.

²⁴⁵ Klinke, *Erzbischof Eduard Profittlich*, 39–43, 68.

²⁴⁶ Christoph Wrembek, *Jesuiidid Eestis 1923–1961* (Tartu: Johannes Esto ühing, 2003), 99.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 106–107.

²⁴⁸ EAA, 1655-3-348, 2. Kaarel-Robert Pusta to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, J. Tõnisson, 18.4.1931. Pusta writes in his letter, „the papal nuncio notified him that he heard through Zecchini that the Estonian Apostolic church has developed an interest in establishing closer relations with the Pope...”.

some references to the potential interest in the union can be found in the Orthodox press of the period. An example is the assumption of Archpriest Anton Laar that the union would reinforce the positions of the Orthodox Church of Estonia as a minority and reduce the pressure from local Protestantism.²⁴⁹ Joann Meltsaar, priest of Paide parish, believes that a 'joint front' with Rome would help in the fight against the atheist doctrine.²⁵⁰ Thirdly, the impact of the memoirs of Charles Bourgeois (Hieromonk Vassiliy) should not be underestimated in this context. He came to Estonia in 1932 to promote the Mission for Eastern Rights and communicated actively with Orthodox clergy. According to him, particularly warm supporters of the possible union included Nikolai Päts, Archpriest of Tallinn, and Ioann Randvere, Dean of Võru. The first stated in his journal *Elutõde* (Truth of Life) that the Catholic church is a „kindred church with whom Orthodoxy has a close spiritual connection”. The second had allegedly once asked Father Bourgeois to come and preach in his church and had promised every assistance and support should the union take place.²⁵¹ However, one should be somewhat careful with the claims of

Father Vassiliy. For instance, if Nikolai Päts had a friendly attitude towards the Roman church, he did not particularly emphasise this in his journal *Elutõde*. The same journal published in 1936 a statement that the Orthodox church has not much in common with Catholicism, because the first is more democratic and considerate of the people while the latter is more autocratic.²⁵²

The results of the missionary work of the Fathers in promoting the union with Rome remained fairly modest. They achieved conversion to Uniatism of two Orthodox seminarians from Pechory (Aleksander Kurtna and Juhan Raidal). Both wanted to study in Rome after graduation from the Pechory seminary and to become priests of the Catholic Eastern Rites in Estonia.²⁵³ The news of the conversion of the seminarians was received in the Orthodox circles with indignation.²⁵⁴ The only clergyman who converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism during the first period of independence of the Republic of Estonia was Richard Valdak, priest of the Orthodox parish of the Estonian Swedes in Vormsi. He persuaded some ten Orthodox believers from Haapsalu to join him, bought a house in Haapsalu

²⁴⁹ Anton Laar, „Eesti apostliku-õigeusu ja Rooma-katoliku kiriku ühinemisest” – *Uus Elu* 9/10 (1930), 12–13. Laar writes, „... then it would be better to establish union with the world's most powerful church, which is also kindred to us, than to be slated by the fanatics who learned their trade from the Germans or to fall back in the arms of Moscow. Time will tell.”

²⁵⁰ Joann Meltsaar, „Õigeusu ja Rooma kirikute leppimist takistas vaid inimlik kõrkus. Kiriku ühinemine ühise rinde loomiseks maailma kurjuse ja usuvastase liikumise vastukaaluks” – *Elutõde* 34, 1 October (1936), 3–4.

²⁵¹ Hiéromoine Vassily, *Ma rencontre avec la Russie. Narva-Esna-Tartu-Moscou 1932–1946* (Buenos Aires: Renacimiento Cristiano, 1953), 70–79.

²⁵² „Selgituseks selgitajaile. Katoliku kiriku edu Eestis ei sünni ap.-õigeusu kiriku arvel” – *Elutõde* 45, 17 December (1936), 1.

²⁵³ Wrembek, *Jesuiidid Eestis 1923–1961*, 99.

²⁵⁴ Konstantin Kokla, „Püha Tool ja meie” – *Usk ja Elu* 8, 22 July (1937), 123.

with assistance from Antonino Zecchini, Nuncio to Latvia, and consecrated it in 1929 as a chapel for Eastern Rites. Describing Valdak's conversion to Catholicism, Christoph Wrembek SJ quotes a comment from the 31 January 1930 issue of the Jesuit journal *Aus der Provints*, „May God guide other Orthodox priests to follow suit!”²⁵⁵

Despite some attraction towards the Eastern Rites among some clergymen and the described successes of the Mission for Eastern Rites, it seems that the general attitude in the Orthodox Church of Estonia remained anti-Catholic, which is confirmed by the following evidence:

(1) Booklets published by Professor Vassili Martinson in 1932-34 to discuss certain teachings of the Catholic church that are unacceptable to Orthodoxy, such as the infallibility of the Pope and *Filoque*.²⁵⁶

(2) Various writings that criticise the Catholic church and disapprove of the Mission for Eastern Rites, particularly in the journal *Usk ja Elu*.²⁵⁷ The missionaries of Uniatism were accused of ‘sheep-stealing’²⁵⁸ and excessive harassment and intervention with the work of rural priests.²⁵⁹

(3) The final piece of evidence comes from the statements and travel reports of some respected Orthodox clergymen. For

example, Archpriest Martin Viik who visited Paris in 1931 shares his experiences from the visits to the Russian Catholic and Anglican churches in Paris.²⁶⁰ He compares the Catholic church with the Church of England and concludes that subordination of the Orthodox Church of Estonia to the Pope would not help the church to overcome financial difficulties but it would mean abandoning the Orthodox dogmas.²⁶¹

Consequently, the author considers it an exaggeration to state that the Synod of OCE officially discussed the union with Rome in the autumn 1928. The statement is based on the claim by church historian Lambert Klinke who used mainly Jesuit archives²⁶², but the author has not found any references to such discussion in the minutes of the Synod meetings that can be found in the Estonian Historical Archives.²⁶³ This claim is also disproved by Metropolitan Alexander (Paulus) himself in the Orthodox press. „These rumours could have been created only on the basis of a few private opinions,” he declared in 1930 in the newspaper *Uus Elu*. „May this statement calm those in our own family and in the family of our neighbours who have been agitated by the case!”²⁶⁴

The church historian Klinke can be re-

²⁵⁵ Wrembek, *Jesuiidid Eestis 1923–1961*, 50.

²⁵⁶ Vassili Martinson, *Paavsti eksimatusest. Piiskop Strossmayeri kõne* (Tartu: Eesti Ap.-õigeusu hoolekande ja sisemisjoni väljaanne, 1932); cf. *Konstantinoopoli patriarhi ringkiri 1895. a. paavst Leo XII-nda ringkirja puhul 1894 kirikute ühendamisest*. Toimetanud Vassili Martinson (Tartu, 1934).

²⁵⁷ „Märkmed Rooma paavsti eksimatusest” – *Usk ja Elu* 8, 24 July (1936), 123–125.

²⁵⁸ Admission of converts from another denomination.

²⁵⁹ Konstantin Kokla, „Katoliikluse püüded Eestis” – *Usk ja Elu* 15 (1938), 238; cf. „Õnnelikud preesterlikus riietuses” – *Usk ja Elu* 1 (1939), 13.

²⁶⁰ Martin Viik, „Muljed Pariisi reisilt” – *Uus Elu* 10 (1931), 3–4

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

²⁶² Klinke, *Erzbischof Eduard Profttlich*, 28.

²⁶³ EAA, 1655-3-1137. Minutes of the OCE General Assemblies, unnumbered pages.

garded together with the pre-war Estonian lay press that published exaggerated statements about the planned union between the OCE and the Catholic church. For instance, the visit of Martin Viik, Archpriest of Pärnu parish, to the exhibition of colonial cultures in France was interpreted in the newspaper *Päevaleht* in June 1931 as an official mission on behalf of the leadership of the OCE for sounding out the possibility of union with Rome.²⁶⁵ When Archpriest Nikolai Päts resigned from the position of Chairman of the Synod of OCE in 1931, this was interpreted as a victory for the anti-Catholic faction.²⁶⁶ In its own publications, the church government called these assumptions exaggerations and speculations and refuted them decisively. For example, Archbishop Dionissi Samon, Secretary of the Synod of OCE, wrote on 4 November 1931 to the editor of the newspaper *Waba Maa* (Free Land), stating that the issue of union with the Roman Catholic Church has never been discussed at the Synod meetings and there have been no disputes between members on this issue.²⁶⁷ I am inclined to believe that this was an artificial pretext for establishing the Mission of the Catholic Church, which started from a certain fondness for Catholicism among some Orthodox clergymen. This is partially admitted by Konstantin Kokla in his journal when he interprets his meeting with Eduard Profitlich, priest of the St. Pe-

ter and Paul parish in Tallinn, in December 1930 as an attempt by the latter to „explore the mood of the Orthodox and make preparations for union with the Catholic faith”²⁶⁸.

In brief, the general attitude of the Orthodox press towards the Catholic church in the 1930s was negative. The available sources indicate that any contacts served rather the interests of proselytism than ecumenical cooperation and were primarily based on the active attempts of the priests of the Eastern Rites to establish contacts with Orthodox clergy in order to promote Catholicism. At the official level, the church leadership made every effort to refute quickly any statements about warm relations with the Catholic church – such statements were dismissed as rumours instigated by the Lutheran church or the individual opinions of a few members of the clergy.²⁶⁹ According to the Jesuit Father Rudolf Nikli who worked in Estonia during that period, the ‘schismatics’ of the Orthodox Church of Estonia in the first half of the 1930s were more interested in union with the Church of England. There was not much interest in the union with Rome.²⁷⁰

Conclusion

It could be argued that the relations between the Orthodox Church of Estonia

²⁶⁴ „Kuulujuttude puhul” – *Usk ja Elu* 11 (1930), 1.

²⁶⁵ „Ülempreester Viik välismaale” – *Päevaleht* 152, 8 June (1931), 2.

²⁶⁶ „Iseseiswuslaste wõit õigeusu sinodis” – *Waba Maa* 259, 4 November (1931), 1.

²⁶⁷ „Iseseiswuslaste wõit õigeusu Sinodis. Kirik majanduslikult tugevnenud” – *Usk ja Elu* 11 (1931), 8.

²⁶⁸ Konstantin Kokla, „Huwitawat ajakirjandusest. Katoliiklus.” – *Usk ja Elu* 7, 19 July (1935), 128.

²⁶⁹ E.g., „Ajakirjanduse keskel. – Katoliku usk Eestis” – *Usk ja Elu* 3 (1933), 6.

²⁷⁰ Wrembek, *Jesuiidid Eestis 1923–1961*, 84.

and other denominations underwent several dynamic changes between 1919 and 1940. The Orthodox church, aspiring for autocephaly, established at first closer relations with the Church of England. Ecumenical communication with the Anglican church continued with varying intensity until the dissolution of the OCE in 1940. The predominantly friendly attitude towards the Church of England is confirmed by respective articles in Orthodox periodicals and the booklets of Professor Vassili Martinson on Anglican-Orthodox rapprochement.

Ecumenical relations with the local Lutheran church started to develop only at the end of the 1920s. The first manifestations of cooperation appeared at the official level. Respected church leaders spoke up against demolition of churches (e.g., opposition to the demolition of the Alexandr Nevsky Cathedral in Tallinn). There was increased cooperation in the Estonian National Committee and subsequent National Council of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches. At the 'grassroots' level, there developed a tradition of inviting the clergy of both denominations to the gatherings of county and city institutions and anniversaries of the Defence Forces and Defence League. Cooperation between the clergy of both churches is reflected in several organisations (e.g., Christian Temperance Union, committee for perpetuating the memory of the victims who were murdered in Tartu Credit Bank, or the Faculty of Theology). However, disputes on the issues of the recent past and other kinds of debates and accusations

did not disappear from the pages of the periodicals of both denominations despite the gradual stabilisation of relations.

The contacts between the OCE and Catholic clergy can be seen as controversial and tense, with a few exceptions. There was no official communication between the churches, except exchanges of letters between bishops on major occasions (e.g., Metropolitan Alexander sent a telegram to Catholic Administrator Eduard Profittlich to congratulate him on being consecrated bishop in 1936). Development of ecumenical relations was prevented firstly by social pressure, which was reflected in the speculations on the planned union of the OCE and the Catholic church in the lay press of the 1930s. Secondly, the two churches had different concepts of ecumenical relations and the promotion of the Eastern Rites by the Jesuits caused estrangement rather than attraction amongst the local Orthodox clergy (with a few exceptions).

In a final evaluation of the ecumenical climate in the Orthodox Church of Estonia during the reviewed period, it could be said, on the basis of Orthodox periodicals and archive data, that the clergy were very interested in establishing friendly relations with the Church of England, the relations with the Lutheran church were gradually stabilising and there was a generally critical attitude towards the Roman Catholic church.