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Two Ecumenisms: Conservative Christian Alliances as a New Form of Ecumenical Cooperation

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An upsurge in Orthodox anti-ecumenical criticism in 2016 has raised the question of the current state of ecumenism. Examining this topic, the author describes a new form of ecumenical activity associated with the emergence of conservative Christian alliances in defense of traditional values. This “conservative ecumenism,” or “Ecumenism 2.0,” differs from the “classical ecumenism” that arose in the early twentieth century and that continues to be represented today by the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical institutions. The author considers the phenomenon of “ecumenical consciousness” and demonstrates that it can be found in both types of ecumenism. Some of the Orthodox anti-ecumenists who attack classical ecumenism, however, may eagerly opt for this new, conservative “Ecumenism 2.0.” This article discusses the possible competition between the two types of ecumenisms.

Keywords: anti-ecumenism, conservatism, conservative Christian alliances, ecumenical movement, Russian Orthodox Church, traditional values, World Council of Churches, the Christian Right, World Congress of Families.

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Eastern Orthodox Anti-Ecumenism in 2016

In the Orthodox Church, the first half of 2016 was noteworthy for an upsurge in anti-ecumenical fervor that was unprecedented in scope. In late January and early February of 2016, the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Church published pre-conciliar documents, which they intended to be reviewed and confirmed at the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, scheduled to be held in June 2016, at Pentecost (Holy and Great Council 2016a). This publication — primarily the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World” — served as the impetus for the critical anti-ecumenical declarations (Holy and Great Council 2016b).

The Orthodox hierarchy did not expect such anti-ecumenical declarations in the first half of 2016. During the course of the official, pan-Orthodox, pre-conciliar process, the attitudes toward ecumenism and toward the non-Orthodox were some of the least contentious issues. The project for formulating the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World” was not considered problematic, and it was one of the first documents unanimously approved at the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference in October 2015.¹ The following February, the Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church familiarized itself with the pre-conciliar documents and stated that in their current form, they “do not violate the purity of the Orthodox faith and do not deviate from the canonical tradition of the Church” (Bishops’ Council, 2016).

Subsequent anti-ecumenical statements came from believers (not only clerics and laity, but also several bishops) in various regions of the Orthodox *oikoumene* — Russia, Ukraine, Moldavia, Greece, Georgia, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania. The intensity of the criticism mounted as the date of the pan-Orthodox Council’s opening session drew near. In some local Orthodox churches, anti-ecumenical declarations influenced the official position with respect to the Council’s documents and became one of the arguments (though not the primary argument) brought forward by ecclesiastical leaders of those churches for their withdrawal from the Council.²

1. The participants at the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference did not reach immediate consensus on the following documents: “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World,” “The Orthodox Diaspora,” and “The Sacrament of Marriage and Its Impediments.” The Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Church only passed these documents at the end of January 2016, the latter document without unanimity (see Gusev 2016).
2. In the two weeks preceding the Pan-Orthodox Council, five out of the fourteen local Orthodox churches refused to participate in the Council: the Bulgarian Patriarchate

At the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which was held in Crete on June 18–27, 2016, and in which only ten of the fourteen autocephalous local churches ultimately participated, a discussion ensued concerning the document on the Orthodox Church’s relationship with the rest of the Christian world. As a result of that discussion, they inserted into the document substantial amendments that took anti-ecumenical criticisms into account. Yet, the newly inserted amendments still did not satisfy a segment of the bishops participating in the Council. Twenty-one of the 161 bishops present did not sign the document. Although Serbian Patriarch Irinej signed the document, seventeen of the twenty-five Serbian bishops (a full 68 percent of the Serbian Church’s delegation) did not sign the document (Holy and Great Council 2016c).³ After the Council, some well-regarded Orthodox bishops hastened to explain why they chose not to sign the “ecumenical document.”⁴ Thus, the anti-ecumenical mood exerted an influence on conciliar decisions.

Patriarch Kirill’s “first-in-history” meeting with Pope Francis in Havana, Cuba, which resulted in a joint declaration signed by the primates of the two churches in February 2016, became an additional factor that heightened an anti-ecumenical mood in the Russian Orthodox Church (Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill 2016). Some believers deemed the meeting tantamount to apostasy, an inroad into ecclesiastical fellowship with a heretic, and finally, a betrayal of the Orthodox Church.⁵ The situation repeated itself in October 2016, when Patriarch Kirill met with Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury (Semenko

(June 1, 2016); the Antiochian Patriarchate (June 6); the Serbian Patriarchate (June 9); the Georgian Patriarchate (June 10); and the Moscow Patriarchate (June 13). Yet, the Serbian Church changed its decision on June 15, 2016, and its representatives did actually participate in the Council. Criticism of the Council’s document on relations with the remaining Christian world is present in the written decisions of the Bulgarian Synod, the Antiochian Synod, the Georgian Synod, and the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. For a chronicle of the preparations for the Council and critical commentary on all documents, see the special project of the “Rublev Portal” (2016).

3. The fact that the majority of the episcopal members of the Serbian delegation spoke out against the document calls into question the Serbian delegation’s approval of the document. This, therefore, places the Council’s confirmation of this document into doubt, since the Council’s documents should have been unanimously approved.
4. See, for example, the texts of Irinej Bulović, bishop of Bačka (2016), and Hierotheos (Vlachos), metropolitan of Nafpaktos and Agios Vlasios (2016).
5. Father Dmitrii Nenarokov (2016) provided a characteristic example of a reaction to the meeting: “They [those at the Moscow Patriarchate] have openly betrayed us. They have given us over, like a dumb flock, to the papist heretics, to the disfavored and spiritually helpless whom the powers of Mammon have exclusively guided and led for a millennia. They have given us over to prison.” See also Boiko-Velikii and Khomiakov (2016).

2016). In addition, it is highly possible that the pressure of anti-ecumenical criticism led to the cancellation of the World Summit in Defense of the Persecuted Church (to be discussed further below), originally scheduled to have taken place in Moscow in October 2016.

The upsurge in Orthodox anti-ecumenism has again raised the question of the Orthodox Church's rationale and objectives for interconfessional ecumenical cooperation. Such a strident reaction to ecumenism among a portion of Orthodox believers testifies to the fact that the ecumenical paradigm of cooperation between churches has ceased to be convincing, thereby requiring a new explanation for the reasons the Orthodox Church is entering into cooperative relations with other Christian communities.

Classical Ecumenism

Attacks on the part of anti-ecumenists are related to a particular phenomenon that arose in the early twentieth century and exists to this day: *the ecumenical movement*. Today, the ecumenical movement is represented primarily by the activity of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and regional ecumenical organizations (e.g., the Conference of European Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, and the All Africa Conference of Churches), as well as by ecclesiastical institutions and foundations that are affiliated with these ecumenical organizations and that work for social justice and the defense of human rights. In this article, I will call the entire complex of these entities *classical ecumenism*.

The innovation and revolutionary nature of the ecumenical movement as a form of interconfessional cooperation is linked with the turn toward an acknowledgment of Christians' commonality, whatever their confessional affiliation. On principle, ecumenism has rejected the language that defined Christians of other confessions with the negative terms of "heresies" and "schisms," countering this with the language of Christians' positive recognition of one another and of the proclamation of the necessity for Christian unity. This new mutual openness of Christians has ruled out proselytism — that is, the particular form of missionary activity connected with concerted efforts toward the conversion of a Christian from one confession to another. The idea of openness has also led to the advent of a particular ecumenical form of Christian universalism, which understands universality not through one's belonging to "the true church" (as in Catholicism and Orthodoxy), but through one's belonging to a trans-confessional community that shares common positions on Christian faith. The turn toward openness and to-

ward the recognition of one another has produced the phenomenon of an “ecumenical consciousness,” whose proponents have actively participated in the movement for the unification of Christians and promoted the ecumenical cause within their confessional communities.

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910 is traditionally considered the beginning of the ecumenical movement (Kinnamon and Cope 1997, 1), but separate “proto-ecumenical” initiatives had taken place even earlier (Oldstone-Moore 2001). Since a rich body of literature is dedicated to the history of the ecumenical movement (Rouse and Neill 1993; 2004; Briggs, Oduyoye, and Tsetsis 2004), there is no need to cover these events in detail here. Ecumenism emerged out of separate initiatives whose participants originally pursued different objectives, but then came to a united framework and ideology. In 1992, Konrad Raiser, the WCC’s fifth general secretary, described this process as follows:

The ecumenical movement came into being at the start of this century because a few people had a vision of the future of church and society. This vision was expressed in different terms. John R. Mott was guided by the goal of the evangelization of the world in this generation;⁶ Nathan Söderblom was inspired by the belief in the universal character of the church and sought to establish international friendship through evangelical catholicity;⁷ Archbishop Germanos spoke of the need to supplement the emerging League of Nations by a league (*koinonia*) of the churches;⁸ and lastly, Bishop Brent envisioned the possibility of achieving unity among the separate churches through careful theological dialogue.⁹ The movement did not gain its full momentum, however, until they discovered that these were only different expressions of one integrated vision concerning the calling of the whole church to bring the whole gospel to the whole world. (Raiser [1992] 1997, 71)

6. John Raleigh Mott (1865–1955) was the long-term leader of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), the founder and general secretary of the World Student Christian Federation, and the president of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946.
7. Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931), the archbishop of Uppsala, was the founder of the Life and Work Movement. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1930.
8. Germanos Strinopoulos (1872–1951), the metropolitan of Thyateira, was exarch of Western and Central Europe for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the likely author of the 1920 Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.
9. Charles Henry Brent (1862–1929), the bishop of the Episcopal Church’s Diocese of Western New York, was one of the founders of the Faith and Order Movement and the chairman of the 1927 Faith and Order Conference in Lausanne.

Raiser's summary indicates two basic impulses that were present at the beginning of classical ecumenism: (1) the movement toward the union of Christian churches, and (2) the pursuit of the transformation of the world on the basis of gospel witness.

The ecumenical movement arose out of the need for demonstrated Christian unity and for coordinated efforts in the face of a modern secular world. At the Edinburgh conference, participants were already actively discussing the theme of the criticism addressed against Christianity in relation to the fierce competitive battle "for souls" then underway between Christian churches in non-Christian countries, that is, on the mission field. In the ensuing years, two world wars, the spread of communism and fascism in Europe, a worldwide economic crisis, colonial expansion followed by rapid decolonization, the Cold War and its adversarial blocs, secularism and atheism, and so forth, became further challenges to world Christianity (Kinnamon and Cope 1997, 3).¹⁰ All of these events demanded a Christian response, each in turn addressing its dependence upon another objective — the union of churches¹¹ (see the classical texts of the founders of the ecumenical movement: Mott [1910] 1997, 10–11; Söderblom [1925] 1997, 15–17; Temple [1937] 1997, 17–21). Without ecclesiastical unity, consensus-based Christian activity is impossible. What is more, classical ecumenism understands the union of churches to be a restoration of the *visible* unity of the faith, of sacramental life, and of a witness to the world concerning Christianity (Fitzgerald 2004, 1; World Council of Churches 2013).

The ecumenical movement has considered the union of churches and the active transformation of the world to be aspects of a common, two-fold objective. In the early stages of the development of ecumenism, separate movements were able to focus their activity on one of these aspects, while not forgetting about the second. Thus, the Faith and Order Movement primarily conducted studies on the theological conditions for unification, whereas the Life and Work Movement stud-

10. Eugene Carson Blake ([1965] 1997, 37–38), who was appointed general secretary of the WCC in 1966, said: "How easy it is for all of us to turn our backs upon the door to Christian unity and to busy ourselves with our denominational games, nourished by our past prejudices, and at a moment when the divisions of the beleaguered church militant are crying for the unified command of Jesus Christ to withstand the forces of atheism, skepticism, hatred, and confusion with which the church is faced."
11. This phrase can also be translated "the unification of churches," which seems to be a somewhat common translation of the phrase among Orthodox commentators. Since the wider ecumenical movement seems to utilize the phrase "union of churches" more frequently, however, the translator has chosen to render this phrase as such. In the rest of the article, the term "unification" is occasionally still used, based upon context. —Translator

ied issues of cooperative social responsibility. After the merger of the separate ecumenical initiatives into the World Council of Churches in 1948, both aspects of this dual objective have continued to exist basically unchanged within its agenda.

Danish scholar Peter Lodberg (1999, 529) calls ecumenism a modernist project, namely “a Christian expression of Modernism.” The ecumenical movement seeks to overcome the particularism of separate traditions and to become a genuinely universal “represent[ation of] the whole world (the *oikoumene*)” (Lodberg 1999, 528, emphasis modified). At various historical stages, the participants in the movement have understood this universalism in various ways. According to Raiser ([1992] 1997, 71), classical ecumenism initially “focused on the assumption that Christian culture and Christian values could be extended throughout the world.” The events of the 1930s and the Second World War, in which “the Christian ‘civilized’ parts of humanity” took part, forced the founders of classical ecumenism to reevaluate this viewpoint. Raiser ([1992] 1997, 71) continued, “It was progressively replaced by the notion of salvation history as the inner meaning of world history.” An ideational “transition from international order based on Christian values to universal history centred in Christ” then took place (Raiser [1992] 1997, 71). According to Raiser ([1992] 1997, 71), the WCC’s 1968 General Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, “with its underlying ‘motif’ of the unity of the church and the unity of humankind, mark[ed] the culmination” of this idea.

As the ecumenical movement spread to the South and to the East (i.e., to the countries of Africa and Asia), elements of post-colonialism began to make their way into classical ecumenism. The admission of new members into the movement was accompanied by a recognition of the value of each new member’s distinctive character. Ecumenism became more and more pluralistic and inclusive in its essential tenets. According to Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (1997, 4), ecumenism has been under the powerful influence of accumulated pluralistic experience since 1968: “Until 1968 (or thereabouts), diversity was seen more as a problem to be resolved than as a characteristic of genuine unity.” This pluralistic experience found its expression in the idea of “unity in diversity,” which became an integral part of classical ecumenism by the 1970s and 1980s.

Aside from regional diversity, ecumenism also began to recognize a diversity of social groups, such as women, sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, and so on. Feminist theology, black theology, queer theology, as well as other types of theology found support within the confines of the ecumenical movement. From the perspective of Lodberg

(1999, 529), following Hans Küng, the inclusion of such “theologies of particularity” within the ecumenical movement involves the return to a particularism that undermines the initial universalistic ecumenical ideal. Consequently, the pluralistic approach expressed through the principle of “unity in diversity” concomitantly becomes a form of post-modern criticism of the modern ecumenical project that had reached the peak of its development in the 1960s.

In ecumenical methodology, the affirmation of the idea of “unity in diversity” has provoked a crisis of understanding for ecclesiastical unity. How possible is unity in the context of the ever-increasing growth of pluralism and inclusivity? “The decisive move from the static concept of unity to the dynamic notion of communion/koinonia” has become an alternative for overcoming this crisis (Raiser [1992] 1997, 70). In the early 1990s, the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission initiated an ecclesiological study of this topic, with its final results presented in 2013 at the Tenth General Assembly in Busan, South Korea, in the document “The Church: Towards a Common Vision” (World Council of Churches 2013; on the history of this document, see Mateus 2015). As before, the document declares the goal of a visible union of churches, but the actual unity of “the Church as Communion” is described in increasingly eschatological terms (World Council of Churches 2013). This document also brings up the problem of defining the boundaries of “legitimate diversity,” but it does not suggest any kind of resolution (World Council of Churches 2013, 16–17).

As for the social aspect of classical ecumenism, the idea of “unity in diversity” has led to a significant liberalization of the ecumenical movement’s agenda. The WCC’s principal areas of focus now include the struggle for social justice, the opposition to various forms of discrimination, and the defense of minority rights.¹²

Orthodox Christians in the Ecumenical Movement

It would be wrong to call the project of classical ecumenism “uniform.” A conservative wing — in which Orthodox Christians, who have participated in the ecumenical movement from the very beginning, have played a key role — has always existed alongside the modernistic core.¹³ The Orthodox position has always differed from the ecumeni-

12. See, for example, the section “What we do” on the WCC’s official website (<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do>).

13. Non-Chalcedonians (or Oriental Orthodox) and Roman Catholics (in those capacities in which they participate) are also conservatives in the ecumenical movement.

cal mainstream in both its approach to the union of churches and its attitude toward the modern world.

At the 1927 World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, Switzerland, Orthodox delegates formulated the basic principles of participation in the Faith and Order Movement.¹⁴ Evaluating the ecumenical initiative largely positively, Orthodox participants, in a separate statement, set forth the impossibility of compromise on issues of faith and unification on the grounds of unity in secondary matters:

We cannot entertain the idea of a reunion that is confined to a few common points of verbal statement; for according to the Orthodox Church where the totality of faith is absent there can be no *communio in sacris*. Nor can we here apply the principle of *economy*, which in the past the Orthodox Church has applied under quite other circumstances in the case of those who came to her with a view to union with her. (Ecumenical Patriarchate [1927] 1994, 13–14; see also Bulgakov 1928)

Throughout the entire history of Orthodox Christians' participation in the ecumenical movement, they have viewed the question of the union of churches through the prism of "the most speedy and objective clarification possible of the whole ecclesiological question, and most especially of their more general teachings on [the] sacraments, grace, [the] priesthood, and apostolic succession" (Holy and Great Council 2016c).¹⁵ They regard the method of union alternatively, as well. Since it is permissible from the Orthodox point of view to call only the Orthodox Church "the Church," in the strictest sense of the word, the union of churches must be understood as reunion with the Orthodox

14. Nikolai Arsen'ev (1888–1977), a participant in the Lausanne Conference, wrote: "The following people represented the Orthodox Church: Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateira and three other individuals from the Ecumenical Patriarchate; the Archbishop of Leontopolis and the Metropolitan of Nubia from the Alexandrian Patriarchate; the Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and three professors from the Department of Theology at the University of Athens, from the Churches of Greece and Cyprus; the Archbishop of Chernivtsi from the Romanian Orthodox Church; the Bishop of Novi Sad from the Serbian Church; Metropolitan Stefan of Sofia (a great ally to Russia and the Russian Church); the Proto-deacon and Professor Father Tsankov and Professor Glubokovskii from the Bulgarian Church; Metropolitan Dionysius of Warsaw and Archpriest Turkevich from the Orthodox Church of Poland. No representatives were able to represent the Russian Church, per se, but Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, Father Sergius Bulgakov, and the one writing this text [Nikolai Arsen'ev] were co-opted into the Organizing Committee" (Arsen'ev 1928, 101–2).

15. The basic elements of this position are evident throughout the entire history of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement.

Church. That being said, those Orthodox Christians who are engaged in the ecumenical movement acknowledge the commonality of Christians and the necessity for union, reject proselytism, and refuse to employ the language of “heresies and schisms.”¹⁶ In this sense, they are clearly bearers of an ecumenical consciousness.

Keeping in mind the Orthodox position and taking into account the prospect of incorporating the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement, the WCC adopted the document “The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches” at its Central Committee meeting in Toronto in 1950. In particular, the Toronto statement asserted that “no church need fear that by entering into the World Council it is in danger of denying its heritage,”¹⁷ and that “membership [in the WCC] does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word” (World Council of Churches [1950] 1997, 468, 467). Given how frequently Orthodox bishops quote these statements in their presentations and how copiously they have been included within all key Orthodox documents concerning the stance toward the non-Orthodox and the ecumenical movement, one could claim that, to this day, the Orthodox churches persist in 1950s positions with respect to questions of the union of churches.¹⁸

That notwithstanding, one must distinguish the position of local Orthodox churches from that of the Orthodox theologians “professionally” engaged in the work of ecumenical institutions, some of whose contributions have been quite substantial. For example, in many respects, the concept of “unity in diversity” relies on the theology of John Zizioulas, the metropolitan of Pergamon under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, whose speech “Church as Communion” at the Fifth World Conference for the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission exemplifies this perspective (Zizioulas [1993] 2010).

16. In its language, the ecumenical document “Basic Principles of [the Russian Orthodox Church’s] Attitude to the Non-Orthodox” employed the terms “heresy” or “schism” in the context of the history of the ancient Church without referring to any specific “heretical” or “schismatic” communities (Russian Orthodox Church 2000). The Pan-Orthodox Council’s document on relations with the rest of the Christian world did not use these terms at all (Holy and Great Council 2016b).

17. The official Russian translation of this phrase is rendered: “Upon entering into the WCC, no church is required to change its ecclesiology.” –Translator

18. For example, one encounters citations from this part of the Toronto statement in the Pan-Orthodox Council’s ecumenical document (Holy and Great Council 2016b), as well as in an appendix of the Russian Orthodox Church’s document on relations to the non-Orthodox (Russian Orthodox Church 2000).

As for the modern world, the Orthodox position also seems rather conservative. In their early texts, one encounters a motif of opposition to the antagonistic modern world that was threatening “the very foundations of the Christian faith and the very essence of Christian life and society” (Ecumenical Patriarchate [1920] 1997, 13). The increasing activity of the WCC and its affiliated institutions in socio-political issues has constantly elicited dismay among Orthodox Christians (see, for example, Metropolitan Nikolai [1958] 1999; Metropolitan Nikodim [1968] 1978; Ecumenical Patriarchate [1973] 1994). In addition, Orthodox Christians regard the ever-growing pluralism and inclusiveness in the WCC as a manifestation of liberalism.

An ever-increasing tension has arisen between the Orthodox members with their characteristic conservatism and the Protestant members who constitute the core of the liberally minded movement, especially in moral questions. The Georgian Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church withdrew from the World Council of Churches in 1997 and 1998, respectively. A skepticism concerning the objectives for participation in the ecumenical movement is fueling an anti-ecumenical mood within a greater portion of the Orthodox Church.

A Shifting Objective: From Union to Cooperation

The spread of ecumenical experience has led to the formulation of an ecumenical consciousness, not only among “professionals” engaged in the activity of ecumenical institutions and among activists who support the ecumenical ideal, but also among simple believers in congregations, parishes, and dioceses, as well as in universities and seminaries. This ecumenical consciousness has expressed itself particularly in the organization of collaborative activity concerning social issues, in collective prayer campaigns, in joint asceticism, and so on. In the university environment, projects that draw together theologians of various confessions have begun to emerge. The Catholic Church’s pivot toward ecumenism after the Second Vatican Council played a huge role in the “trickle down” of ecumenical ideas to the grassroots level. In many European countries, the Catholics actually became the main partners for ecumenically minded Protestants in interconfessional cooperation at the parish and diocesan level. The recognition of each other as Christians and the refusal to proselytize or to employ the language of “heresies and schisms” became the basis for this ecumenical collaboration.

Meanwhile, with the widening of ecumenical cooperation, the initial and main objective established by the ecumenical movement —

the union of Churches — has gradually begun to recede into the background or to disappear altogether. Several factors explain this. Participants in “grassroots” ecumenical initiatives could not set unifying goals for themselves, since such goals fall within the purview of the leadership of the institutional churches whose representatives have participated in bilateral or multilateral theological dialogues in order to clarify conditions for union, rather than within the purview of parish- or diocesan-level ecclesiastical superiors. Correspondingly, inter-parish and inter-diocesan ecumenical cooperation has centered on altogether different questions. The Catholic Church has made its own contribution to the relativization of the unifying ideal. On the one hand, it was actively involved in ecumenical collaboration from the late 1960s. On the other hand, it has not become a member of the WCC and maintains a distinctive position on questions of unification.¹⁹

Additional reasons elucidate the fading of the unifying ideal into the background. For some, the union of churches has ceased to be relevant, since the ecumenical experience of recognizing the commonality of Christians has allowed them to take communion together, which in and of itself already testifies to the realization of unification (as in the case of the participants of the Hartford meetings, to be discussed further below). Conversely, having observed the crisis of the ecumenical movement in the 1980s and 1990s, others have become disenchanted with the possibility of a true union of churches, but have still continued their work on interconfessional cooperation concerning other issues that are not tied to the topic of unification.

In 1989, at the height of the crisis of classical ecumenism, the American Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck (1989) published an article in which he observed the emergence of a form of ecumenism that did not concern itself with the objective of the union of churches. He called this ecumenism “interdenominational,” in contrast with

19. Initially, the Roman Catholic Church related rather coldly to the ecumenical movement. However, the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) changed the situation. In 1964, the Second Vatican Council approved the decree on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* (Vatican 1964a). In 1969, Pope John VI visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, where he gave a speech. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church did not become a member of the WCC; its representatives sit on the Council only as observers. In particular, the Catholic documents on ecclesiology — the dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* (Vatican 1964b) and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s declaration *Dominus Iesus* (Vatican 2000) — testify clearly that, despite its openness to the ecumenical movement, the Catholic Church understands ecumenism as a reunion of Christian churches and communities with the Catholic Church. Catholic universalism runs counter to the WCC’s universalism in which Catholics are merely one part of the Christian world and the “Worldwide Church.”

“unitive” ecumenism. Lindbeck claims that these two forms of ecumenism run counter to one another in all spheres of church life. What is more, in his opinion (as expressed in the late 1980s), “interdenominational” ecumenism was then making progress, while “unitive” ecumenism was on the wane (Lindbeck 1989, 647).

Classical ecumenism’s transition from a paradigm of static “unity as union” to a paradigm of dynamic “unity as communion (*koinonia*)” at the end of the 1980s could be perceived as an attempt to preserve the unifying objective in the absence of any prospects for true unification in the foreseeable future. Given that ecumenical documents today describe *koinonia* primarily in eschatological terms (in other words, it has been relegated beyond human history), one could assert that a true union of churches remains merely a stated objective in the ecumenical movement.

The Hartford Appeal for Theological Affirmation

One significant ecumenical project that took place outside the confines of the official ecumenical movement was the “Appeal for Theological Affirmation” (1975) a document drawn up in Hartford, Connecticut (USA), and signed by twenty-five American Christian intellectuals in 1975. The Hartford Appeal is significant, because in a certain sense it is the forerunner for the current conservative ecumenical initiative, to be discussed further below. The American sociologist of religion and Lutheran theologian, Peter Berger (b. 1929), and the priest and theologian Richard John Neuhaus (1936–2009) initiated the Hartford Appeal.²⁰ Among the signatories were Avery Dulles (1918–2008, later a Catholic cardinal), George Lindbeck (b. 1923), Stanley Hauerwas (b. 1940), Richard Mouw (b. 1940), George Forell (1919–2011), and others. In addition, Orthodox Christians — including priests Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) and Thomas Hopko (1939–2015), as well as Dr. Ileana Marculescu — also signed the Hartford Appeal (“Appeal” 1975, 41).²¹

The appeal stated its objective as “the renewal of Christian witness and mission” (“Appeal” 1975, 39). The document presented thirteen “pervasive themes” formulated in a secular key which, according to the authors of the declaration, “are superficially attractive, but

20. At the time of the Hartford Appeal, Neuhaus was a Lutheran pastor. In 1990, he converted to Catholicism, and he became a Catholic priest in 1991.

21. Of the Orthodox signatories, only Schmemmann participated in all face-to-face meetings in discussion of the Appeal’s text.

upon closer examination we find these themes false and debilitating to the Church's life and work" ("Appeal" 1975, 39). Responses to these themes were then given in the form of refutations, such as:

Theme 3: *Religious language refers to human experience and nothing else, God being humanity's noblest creation.*

Religion is also a set of symbols and even of human projections. We repudiate the assumption that it is nothing but that. What is here at stake is nothing less than the reality of God: *We did not invent God; God invented us* ("Appeal" 1975, 39).

...

Theme 6: *To realize one's potential and to be true to oneself is the whole meaning of salvation.*

Salvation contains a promise of human fulfillment, but to identify salvation with human fulfillment can trivialize the promise. We affirm that salvation cannot be found apart from God ("Appeal" 1975, 40).

The appeal became a response not only to secularists, but also to Christian theologians who took a radical modernist position (in the spirit of "death of God" theology or of Harvey Cox's *Secular City*). In this sense, the Hartford Appeal was a conservative Christian manifesto. According to Schmemann (1976, 132), the Appeal was a reaction to "the alarming surrender of religion to culture, to the pervasive secularism of the modern world, and, as a consequence of that surrender, to the 'loss of transcendence.'"

The Hartford Appeal's preamble states, "Today an apparent loss of a sense of the transcendent is undermining the Church's ability to address with clarity and courage the urgent tasks to which God calls it in the world" ("Appeal" 1975, 39). According to Schmemann (2011, 573), the Appeal's authors, who were not official representatives of their churches, nevertheless understood their work as a proposal directed to the whole Church, regardless of confessional differences. Schmemann (1976, 128–32) identified his own experience participating in the Hartford meetings as ecumenical, comparing it to his experience in the official ecumenical movement.²²

Significantly, the Hartford Appeal, as an ecumenical initiative, completely ignores the issue of the division or union of churches. It is ful-

22. In addition to Schmemann, fellow signatory George Lindbeck also had experience in "classical ecumenism" as a member of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission since 1968.

ly focused on collaboration between Christians as a response to the threat from the modern secular world. This absence of the “classical” ecumenical problematic troubled Schmemmann greatly. Since he was a “classical ecumenist” with nearly thirty years of service in events held by the WCC and its affiliated institutions (beginning in 1948), Schmemmann (1976, 128) felt “an inner distance” and “a certain inner *dédoulement*” at Hartford. In his article within a collection of personal reflections of the Appeal’s participants, Schmemmann (1976) constantly returns to the question of division/union. By all accounts, other participants considered this problem completely irrelevant and, in a certain sense, already resolved. (It would be better to say that they simply removed the issue from the agenda.) The participants in the Hartford meetings not only prayed together during the liturgy, but they even took communion together, despite the fact that they belonged to different confessions.²³ It is nonetheless significant that the vast majority of them were conservatives.²⁴

The Hartford initiative bore fruit. In 1990, Neuhaus founded the Institute on Religion and Public Life, which began to publish the journal *First Things*. This journal would become one of the most authoritative conservative Christian publications in the United States. The stated objective for the Institute and the journal is “to confront the ideology of secularism.”²⁵ Some participants in the Hartford Appeal, as well as representatives of other confessions who have come together by way of shared conservative values, are frequent contributors to *First Things*.²⁶

Conservative Christian Alliances as “Ecumenism 2.0”

Scholars of religion today are paying more and more attention to the theme of “conservative Christian alliances” that are forming around

23. In Alexander Schmemmann’s (2002, 85–86) journal entry on September 7, 1975, he writes: “I spent two days in meetings with the Hartford Group. This morning there was a Mass, at which all eighteen participants took communion, except me. Most of the eighteen are conservative Christians from other confessions. Then what is the division of the churches and what other unity do they seek?” Father Avery Dulles conducted the Mass.

24. According to Richard Mouw (2015), one of the signatories of the Hartford Appeal, William Sloane Coffin (1924–2006) “later repudiated it,” which reportedly did not surprise the other participants. Coffin, a long-time peace activist, later became a defender of rights for sexual minorities.

25. “About *First Things*,” *First Things*: <https://www.firstthings.com/about/> (accessed March 13, 2017).

26. For example, Peter Berger frequently writes for *First Things*, including the well-known article, “Secularization Falsified” (Berger 2008).

the fight for “traditional values.”²⁷ These alliances amount to a different sort of ecumenical cooperation, with “the goal of conservative Christian political domination” by way of advocating for common “traditional values” (Stroop 2016, 21).²⁸ In its very conception, such interconfessional cooperation is ecumenical, in that it is built upon its participants’ mutual recognition of Christian commonality and relies upon accumulated ecumenical experience. Conservative Christian alliances have absolutely no connection with the classical ecumenism of the World Council of Churches (which one might call a “liberal Christian alliance” by analogy, in view of the particular nature of the approach toward questions here being examined) and propose a parallel ecumenical network, allowing us to designate it as “Ecumenism 2.0.”

The fight for “traditional values” is associated with “a shift away from a situation where certain aspects of social life are unquestioned (the heterosexual definition of marriage, the simultaneous worldly and religious meaning of Christmas) to a situation where these aspects undergo re-evaluation” (Stoeckl 2016, 103). Conservative religious actors define this shift as an attack on religion from global secularism and liberalism. The agenda of conservative ecumenism includes the questions of the traditional family (anti-LGBT), the sanctity of life (against abortion, euthanasia, and in vitro fertilization), and religious liberty (for religious symbolism in public spaces) (Stoeckl 2016, 104). The interconfessional partnership between various pro-life movements and the activity of such organizations as the World Congress of Families (WCF) constitute institutionalized forms of conservative ecumenical cooperation.²⁹

The WCF is a non-governmental organization that works to defend the traditional family. As American scholars Doris Buss and Didi Herman (2003, xxix) point out, although the WCF does not emphasize its Christian background, it is intimately connected with the Christian Right in the USA, particularly with the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, whose president Allan Carlson founded the WCF in 1997. Buss and Herman (2003, xviii) define the Christian Right as “a broad range of American organizations that have tended to form co-

27. Of particular note is the five-year research project “Postsecular Conflicts,” which an international group of scholars is carrying out under the direction of Kristina Stoeckl at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. Stoeckl (2016) gave a lecture at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, where she provided an informal description of this project.

28. In my opinion, Chris Stroop’s use of the term “bad ecumenism” is too judgmental and does not adequately assess this phenomenon.

29. On the establishment of the pro-life movement in the USA, see Maxwell (2002).

alitions, both domestic and international, around an orthodox Christian vision and a defense of the traditional nuclear family formation,” which they refer to as the “natural family.”

The activity of the WCF and of pro-life movements are organizationally reminiscent of the ecumenical movement in the early twentieth century, such as the “Faith and Order Commission” and the “Life and Work Commission,” which also held joint conferences and public demonstrations, such as joint declarations and petitions and prayer campaigns in which representatives of various Christian confessions participated. In contrast to classical ecumenism, however, one can hardly expect a unification of all conservative ecumenical movements into one organization along the lines of the World Council of Churches, since conservatives do not have a unifying objective. Like the ecumenical movement in the early twentieth century, organizations for the defense of traditional values have emerged as private initiatives, rather than as projects of institutional churches. Moreover, these conservative organizations and movements (much like their ecumenical counterparts in the early twentieth century) seek to recruit church leaders to their cause. For example, the WCF invited the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church — the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Ilia II — to its international conference held in Tbilisi, Georgia, in May 2016 (Gessen 2017). In Russia, the All-Russian Program “Sanctity of Motherhood” (for which the WCF is a partner organization) regularly brings in the Moscow Patriarchate’s Commission on the Family and the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood as a co-organizer for its events. In 2014, Patriarch Kirill opened a forum on “the multi-child family and the future of humanity” (Moscow Patriarchate 2014). At the end of 2016, he publicly supported an anti-abortion petition by the pro-life movement “*Za zhizn*” [For life] by signing its petition (RIA-Novosti 2016). And Brian Brown (WCF president) and Vladimir Legoida (a representative of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Synodal Department for the Church’s Relations with Society and the Mass Media) held negotiations for partnership in February 2017 in Moscow (Legoida 2017; see also TASS 2017).

A shining example of a conservative ecumenical project is the Manhattan Declaration (2009), a document dubbed as “A Call to Christian Conscience” and dedicated to the defense of “traditional Christian values.” The main text of the Declaration begins with some of the following statements:

We, as Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians, have gathered, beginning in New York on September 28, 2009, to make the following

declaration, which we sign as individuals, not on behalf of our organizations, but speaking to and from our communities. . . . We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right — and, more importantly, *to embrace our obligation* — to speak and act in defense of these truths. We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence. (“Manhattan Declaration” 2009, 2)

The Declaration’s signatories not only identify themselves as a collective of sorts (“We are Christians . . .”), but they also speak about unification. Albeit, they are not talking about institutional unity, as in classical ecumenism expressing itself via visible fellowship around the sacraments, but about a unity toward the “defense of truths,” where they do not require any steps in the direction of institutionalization. One could call this unity “ideological” in the sense that it is expressed not in terms of sacramental praxis, but in terms of a common conservative vision that touches on those issues to which the Declaration is dedicated.

The Manhattan Declaration’s structure reflects the suite of basic “traditional values” they are trying to defend. Its section headings are: “Life” (against abortion and euthanasia), “Marriage” (against sexual immorality and against same-sex and polyamorous marriages), and “Religious Liberty” (for the right to stand up for their convictions, including those set forth in the previous two sections of the Declaration) (“Manhattan Declaration” 2009, 3, 4, 7). With the presence of the word “values” in the Declaration, its authors direct the reader’s attention to the claim that “in recent decades a growing body of case law has paralleled the decline in respect for religious values in the media, the academy and political leadership, resulting in restrictions on the free exercise of religion” (“Manhattan Declaration” 2009, 8).

Within two months, 150,000 people had signed the Manhattan Declaration, including more than one hundred Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant leaders (Kwon 2009).³⁰ The Declaration evoked a positive reaction within the Russian Orthodox Church. Archpriest Vladimir Vigilanskii, the head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s press service, and Archpriest Maksim Kozlov, the head priest at Moscow State University’s Church of Saint Tatiana, noted a correspondence between the

30. The organizers of the Manhattan Declaration claimed that nearly 532,000 people had signed by 2012. A list of the Christian leaders who signed the Declaration is available at its main website: http://manhattandeclaration.org/man_dec_resources/list_of_religious_leaders.pdf.

Manhattan Declaration and the Russian Orthodox Church's statement, "The Basis of the Social Concept" (Editors of *Pravoslavie i Mir* 2009; Russian Orthodox Church 2000). They particularly mentioned the point concerning disobedience to state authorities if their demands were to contradict Christian commandments (Editors of *Pravoslavie i Mir* 2009). Kozlov further cited the ecumenical nature of the Manhattan Declaration: "Such unity of Christians on the same side is more productive than previous ecumenical dialogues and conversations. It's all about what really unifies [Christians], about that inner, fundamental unity in following the Gospel and its truth" (Editors of *Pravoslavie i Mir* 2009). The Orthodox publicist Andrei Desnitskii (2011, 221) wrote along similar lines: "The important thing in this instance is that Christians from various confessions, while not forgetting the differences between them, were able to name the values they all had in common and to unite in defense of these values."

Nearly eight years after the Manhattan Declaration, Rod Dreher, an American conservative journalist and popular Orthodox author, came out in favor of conservative ecumenical partnerships in his bestseller, *The Benedict Option*. In it, Dreher (2017, 136) argues for the necessity of traditionalists to create "a 'common front' against atheism and secularism." He continues by stating that "the different churches should not compromise their distinct doctrines, but they should nevertheless seize every opportunity to form friendships and strategic alliances in defense of the faith and the faithful" (Dreher 2017, 136). He follows Richard John Neuhaus and Chuck Colson in naming such an alliance an "ecumenism of the trenches" and calls upon his sympathizers to "reach across church boundaries to build relationships" (Dreher 2017, 136).

The collaboration between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) is yet another example of "Ecumenism 2.0." At the end of March 2016, they announced a joint initiative to hold a World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians in October of 2016 (Moscow Patriarchate 2016c). A visit by BGEA's president, Franklin Graham, to Moscow in October 2015, when he met with Patriarch Kirill, preceded this initiative (Moscow Patriarchate 2015a). In the joint press release, they stated the motive for convening the summit as "the mass persecution of Christians of the Middle East, Africa and other regions in the world, unprecedented in modern history" (Moscow Patriarchate 2016c).

The organizers of the summit were likely including Western nations within the "other regions of the world." For example, Patriarch Kirill, in his October 2015 meeting with Franklin Graham, spoke of Western

Christians who opposed the legalization of same-sex marriage and stood for “Christian moral values” as “confessors of the faith living under various kinds of pressure” (Moscow Patriarchate 2015a). In response to Patriarch Kirill’s words, Franklin Graham reportedly said, “In the West, we see a moral decay of churches. This seriously concerns us. We see congregations of different confessions who are giving up their positions under pressure from proponents of secularism and liberalism” (Moscow Patriarchate 2015b).³¹ The patriarch noted the role and significance of conservative evangelicals in the United States, and particularly of the Billy Graham Association, “as their position gives us an opportunity to continue our dialogue with Christians in America” (Moscow Patriarchate 2015a). In March 2016, Franklin Graham announced the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians, citing a statement made by Patriarch Kirill on February 16, 2016: “I strongly believe that we should work together in order to save our society from de-Christianization — because, while facing increasing atheistic pressure, which has become quite aggressive in some countries, Christians are being squeezed out of public life” (Graham 2016a; Moscow Patriarchate 2016b).

In this collaboration, one can clearly detect an ecclesiological base upon which a kind of ecumenism with respective sides recognizing one another as fellow Christians and as part of “a single Christian civilization” is being built. Thus, Patriarch Kirill, while discussing ecumenical relations during the Cold War, claimed that despite being different churches that had experienced historical divisions, “Our relations were based on the understanding of our belonging to one and the same Christian civilization and our confession of common Christian moral values” (Moscow Patriarchate 2015a).

All of the main conservative Christian leaders — not only Orthodox and conservative Evangelical leaders, but also Catholic, conservative Anglican, and non-Chalcedonian (Oriental Orthodox) leaders — were supposed to have gathered at the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians, which was originally scheduled to take place in Moscow in October 2016. The Summit, however, did not take place in Moscow. One can only speculate about the reasons for the cancellation of the Moscow event. In a May 2016 interview, Yuri Sipko (2016), the former president of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, said he thought the Moscow Patriarchate cancelled the Summit under pressure from anti-ecumenical critics (see also Woods 2016).

31. This is a translation of Franklin’s words as reported on the Russian website for the Moscow Patriarchate. — Translator.

In August 2016, Franklin Graham announced the rescheduling of the Summit to May 10–13, 2017, in Washington, DC. In his announcement, he referred to the Russian Federation’s July 2016 passage of the Yarovaya Law that included “anti-evangelism” or “anti-missionary” provisions (Religious Freedom Institute 2016), all but stating that the persecution of Christians takes place even in Russia: “We were looking forward to this significant event being held in Russia because no one knows modern Christian persecution better than the church that suffered under communist rule. However, just a few weeks ago Russia passed a law that severely limits Christians’ freedoms” (Graham 2016b). The relocated Summit did take place in Washington, DC, as rescheduled and drew more than 800 participants from 136 countries. Hilarion (Alfeyev), the metropolitan of Volokolamsk and the chair of the Department of External Church Relations, headed the Russian Orthodox Church’s delegation to the Summit.

A proposal of the World Russian People’s Council (WRPC), a social organization headed by Patriarch Kirill that has representation at the UN, is an example of a Russian conservative ecumenical initiative. The WRPC’s Expert Center prepared an analytical report entitled “Global Challenges: Religion and Secularism in the Modern World,” which reflects the basic contours of such a project:

There are serious reasons to expect that the Christian congregations of Western Europe and North America will support this strategy of global development, as do the worldly proponents of classical European culture, and will form a united front of traditional religions opposing the onslaught of [secularist] “anti-civilization.” . . . Various religions incorporate systems of values among which can be found such common values as love, unity, and justice. In order to have a fruitful interreligious dialogue, it is necessary to search for common values and to jointly defend them. Yet the idea of the unification of active churches and religious communities into some integrated “mega-religion” has not won serious support in any modern society. . . . We must acknowledge that the formation of international systems of legal and ethical frameworks reliant upon the common values inherent in the great world religions is a much more promising approach. (Vsemirnyi Russkii Narodnyi Sobor 2016, sections 2.10–2.11)

This text makes it clear that the WRPC’s Expert Center proposes not merely an ecumenical project, but rather a super-ecumenical conservative project that goes beyond cooperation between Christians toward interreligious cooperation.

One also encounters hybrid forms of ecumenism that combine both kinds of ecumenism examined above. The conservative agenda occupies a significant portion of the joint declaration signed by Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis (2016, sections 8–23, 28) at their February 2016 meeting in Havana, Cuba. Yet, to designate this document wholly as “Ecumenism 2.0” would be a mistake, since the “classical” ecumenical formula of church unity also exists within the declaration (Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill 2016, sections 1, 4–6, 24–25). In this sense, one could call the Havana Declaration a hybrid ecumenical document. This “hybridity” has led to two approaches to reading this text among anti-ecumenists. Some positively evaluated the “conservative” portion, having ignored the portion that speaks of the division/union of churches (see, for example, Dushenov 2016). In contrast, others have emphasized the “unification” portion, thereby evaluating the entire document negatively (see, for example, Vasilik 2016).

A Competition of Ecumenisms

The existence of two ideologically disparate ecumenical networks — classical ecumenism associated with the World Council of Churches and conservative ecumenism — unavoidably raises the question of their competition in “the religious market.” Classical ecumenism presents itself as a liberal project (by way of the ideals of pluralism, inclusivity, and “unity in diversity”). In particular, it supports minorities, including sexual minorities, in their fight for equal rights. Conservative ecumenism, or “Ecumenism 2.0,” is coalescing around the fight for “traditional values” and is broadly anti-secularist and anti-liberal.

Individual believers and groups of believers, as well as entire churches that exercise their choice through the representation of their institutional leadership, act as the “consumers” for whom the two ecumenisms are battling. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church is currently participating in both ecumenical networks, while giving more and more preference to conservative ecumenism. Church leaders now interpret even their participation in classical ecumenism in the spirit of the fight for “traditional values.” In early November 2016, for example, Patriarch Kirill spoke about this at a World Russian People’s Council meeting:

As you know, our Church has actively participated in the so-called ecumenical movement. It has been a dialogue with Western Christians. And why did this dialogue become possible? Because, we saw Western Chris-

tians as people who hold similar views to us, first and foremost due to their ethical position. We saw that, without a doubt, the Western Christian world shared the very same values concerning the human person; the family; and the relationship to God, nature, and humanity. And this created the preconditions for dialogue. Today, that common values-based platform has been destroyed, because a significant part of Western Christianity is reevaluating fundamental, moral, gospel positions in accommodation to the powers of this world. Thus, the dialogue has stalled, with the exception of our relationship with the Catholic Church, because despite extensive pressure on the side of the external world, the Catholic Church has maintained faithfulness to gospel values — and God grant that it may always be so. Today, for all intents and purposes, our external inter-church, inter-Christian relations do not include a true dialogue with Western Protestantism.³² This testifies to the fact that new dividing lines — not only of an interconfessional nature, but also of a clearly civilizational nature — have emerged. (Moscow Patriarchate 2016a)

The 2016 Pan-Orthodox Council in Crete demonstrated yet another example of a departure from the classical ecumenical paradigm. As mentioned above, under the influence of anti-ecumenical criticism, participants changed the thrust of the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World.” For instance, in section 17 of the document, they shifted the discussion of local Orthodox churches operating within the World Council of Churches from the sphere of “contributing to the witness of truth and [the] promotion of unity” (as stated in the pre-conciliar version: Holy and Great Council 2016b) to the sphere of “contributing . . . to the advancement of peaceful coexistence and cooperation in the major socio-political challenges” (as stated in the official version: Holy and Great Council 2016c).

Given the “natural” conservatism of the Orthodox churches, the active development of conservative ecumenical networks, and the global “conservative turn” in worldwide politics, it would be fair to claim that classical ecumenism risks suffering a defeat in the competitive fight for Eastern Orthodoxy. Skepticism concerning Orthodox participation in the old form of the ecumenical movement will increase. In the final analysis, this could lead to a number of local Orthodox churches choosing to withdraw from membership in the World Council of Church-

32. By “Western Protestantism” here, Patriarch Kirill likely meant those Protestant churches who participate in the ecumenical movement. Evangelicals never became part of the WCC.

es. The exodus of Orthodox churches from the ecumenical movement would subsequently provoke a chain reaction; other churches who hold conservative positions on moral issues and who share ardor in the fight for “traditional values” would join in the exodus.

Conversely, in the event of the creation of a coalition of states headed by conservative governments, the “capitalization” of conservative ecumenism in the “religious market” would continue to grow. Conservatism, which rests on the idea of national sovereignty, does not allow its proponents to elucidate universal conservative values, since American, French, and Russian “sovereign” national values have proven to be heterogeneous, of course.³³ Yet, for the majority of European and American conservatives, Christianity is an integral part of their conservative identity. Thus, conservative Christian universalism could still become the foundation for the establishment of an international conservative coalition.

Conclusion

The issue examined in this article is only a preliminary reinterpretation of the phenomenon of ecumenism. In my proposed analytical framework, this phenomenon proves to be multidimensional. A conservative “Ecumenism 2.0” represented by the activity of various movements and organizations committed to the defense of “traditional values” exists concurrently with the ecumenical network associated with the activity of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical institutions. Moreover, conservative ecumenism is truly ecumenism, in the sense that it depends on the experience acquired by the classical ecumenical movement. As with classical ecumenists, conservative ecumenists are also the bearers of an ecumenical consciousness. They share such “ecumenical values” as the recognition of the commonality of Christians, a refusal to proselytize, and a refusal to use the language of “heresies and schisms.” Nevertheless, since the various ecumenisms’ perceptions of “Christian commonality” do not necessarily coincide, the above statement must be qualified. For example, conservative ecumenists do not necessarily recognize liberal Christians who support same-sex marriage as true Christians. Yet,

33. According to the author(s) of the report “Konservatizm kak faktor miagkoi sily Rossii” (Institutsiia national’noi strategii 2014, 106), one aspect of Russian conservatism is “the historical experience of the USSR, which embodied a widespread and complex alternative to the Western world order.” American conservatism, however, was and continues to be anti-Soviet.

within conservative ecumenism, relations between Christians are being forged according to the ecumenical principle.

This “duplication” of ecumenism also raises a question concerning anti-ecumenical criticism. Some Orthodox anti-ecumenists specifically attack classical ecumenism for its unifying objective and its liberalism, while loyally responding to interconfessional cooperation in defense of “traditional values.” Thus, they only conditionally qualify as anti-ecumenists, since their recognition of conservative ecumenism makes them bearers of an ecumenical consciousness.³⁴ With this in mind, only those who reject the possibility of any contacts with those from other faith traditions (i.e., those who hold consistently isolationist positions) remain the genuine anti-ecumenists. Such anti-ecumenists are opponents of both classical and conservative ecumenism.

One can describe the relations between classical ecumenism and conservative ecumenism as a competition that, admittedly, could escalate into a veritable feud, as one element in the global “culture wars.” The ideological polarization of the two ecumenisms along liberal and conservative lines has created the preconditions for such a feud. What is more, conservative “Ecumenism 2.0,” by its mere existence, subverts the universalism of the traditional ecumenical movement. If classical ecumenism still aspires to be inclusive and universal, its proponents will be forced to seek ways to incorporate the issue of “traditional values” into its agenda. This, however, will require that both sides be prepared to conduct a responsible dialogue and to hear each other’s arguments. Today, it is difficult to say whether the World Council of Churches will become a “parliament” of sorts, wherein the entire ideological spectrum would be represented, or whether it will continue to occupy a liberal niche.

In many ways, the development of conservative ecumenical initiatives is reminiscent of the process of establishing classical ecumenism. It is fair to assume that the formation of a conservative ecumenical consciousness will at one point require the formulation of a single “symbol of faith,” which would not necessarily touch on questions of dogma or be limited by moral teaching. This further raises a question concerning the ecclesiological bases for “Ecumenism 2.0.”

34. Even on the website of radical Russian anti-ecumenists from the “Opposition to a New World Order” movement, one encounters the republication of material about the “persecution of Christians” in the West. See, for example, “V Kanade massovye repressii khristian: Petitsiia” [In Canada, Christians are experiencing mass repression] (Soprotivlenie Novomu Mirovomu Poriadku 2016).

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