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keep the question of the Christian approach to the Jews continually under review; should be linked with the relevant committees of the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches; should seek through articles, conferences, etc., to educate our Baptist churches in these matters; and be a source of information and guidance to ministers and churches which are facing the challenge of the presence of Jews all around them, but feel afraid, because of ignorance, of making any kind of approach to them.

Paul writes of the Jews in Romans x, 1: "Brothers, my deepest desire and my prayer to God is for their salvation".

Is it ours? If so, what can we do about it? Over to you, brethren.

F. W. BOND.

ECUMENICAL ENCOUNTER IN RUSSIA

WHEN the Russian Orthodox Churches lodged application for membership in the World Council of Churches in 1961 it was known that their theologians were anxious for a meeting with theologians of the West. After the New Delhi assembly, plans were formulated for such a meeting to take place in August, 1962. Among the delegation of ten, invited by Archbishop Nikodim of the department for foreign relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, two were Baptists, one from Britain and the other from the U.S.A.

Possibly readers of this journal may raise eyebrows at Baptists participating in conversations with Orthodox theologians. What have we to do with Greek Orthodoxy? I have to confess that up to a few years ago I took it for granted that I would have little or nothing in common with members of the Orthodox Church. My ignorance was shattered and I was rudely awakened by my first encounter with George Florovsky of Harvard. He is a dynamic theologian, whose forceful theological expositions make the Christianity of many Free Churchmen look thoroughly anaemic. He once mentioned in my hearing that he endures living in Harvard because someone ought to be there to teach the doctrine of the Trinity! On more than one occasion I had the strange experience of finding myself ranged with him against the rest of the members of an American and European joint committee on baptism—to my surprise and their amusement. At least I learned from this man what has been abundantly confirmed to me since, how abysmally ignorant we are of Churches at a remove from us and how misleading are our ecclesiastical labels (this works, of course, both ways: multitudes in Christendom look on us Baptists as sectarian purveyors of a suspicious brand of Christianity and need a lot of convincing otherwise).

It was a welcome surprise to be greeted at the Moscow airport not alone by Russian Church leaders but also by Alexander Karev, secretary of the Russian Baptists, with a young pastor trained in England. These two brethren shared freely alike in the theological discussion in Zagorsk and in the social occasions arranged for us. The ease with which the Russian Baptists moved in this group was

remarked by members of our party, for they had not expected it. It reflects the more cordial relations that have existed in recent years between the Orthodox Churches and the Baptists in Russia.

Contrary to our expectations Archbishop Nikodim provided for us to meet with two different groups of theologians—one at the theological academy of Zagorsk, near Moscow, and the other at the Leningrad academy. Since he desired us to grasp the life as well as thought of the Orthodox Churches, he further arranged for us to visit a number of Churches and Christian centres.

At Zagorsk we discussed the doctrine of the Church. A summary of the findings of the Faith and Order Commission on Christ and the Church had already been circulated to the Russian group. A spokesman of theirs produced a lengthy systematic account of their view of the Church, much of which represented common ground ("The Church is the Body of Christ. In a broad sense it is all who are truly believing in Christ and are united with God through Christ. The Church is composed of all free and reasonable creatures who by faith are dead (to sins). The heavenly Church is invisible, the earthly visible and we are called to be in it . . ."). To liven up the proceedings I raised the question how far they were prepared to press the figure of the Church as the Body of Christ: would they so identify it with Christ as to postulate the sinlessness of the Church, or would they be prepared to recognise that the figure needs to be modified by others, such as the Bride of Christ, and recognise the implications of the Church moving towards the judgment of Christ? With that the cat was among the pigeons. In their view, the Church, which is in Christ and is the Body of Christ, must be holy and spotless, otherwise Christ would be charged with being unholy and sinful; sins attach to the imperfect members of the Church but not to the Church itself, and a man belongs to the Church only in so far as he is sanctified. There is a real theological problem here which has puzzled more than one Protestant thinker, but it is easy to fall into an idealistic conception of the Church in one's anxiety to maintain its purity in Christ. Space forbids my describing the progress of the discussion; needless to say we did not resolve all difficulties, though we all learned something from it.

At Leningrad the subject was Tradition and Traditions—the title of another Faith and Order Commission, and a theme at the heart of the Orthodox viewpoint, for they regard themselves as the custodians of the divinely given tradition. Now everybody knows that the importance of tradition has been freshly recognised by Biblical scholars, and the Orthodox regard this as a sign of grace among us. If in the title of C. H. Dodd's book, "The Apostolic Preaching and its Development" the term "tradition" were substituted for "preaching" (which is, of course, what Dodd really means), you have in brief the concern of the Orthodox. For they insist—and rightly so—that the tradition taught by Christ and the Apostles existed before the New Testament Scriptures were written, and that

although the Scriptures are the authoritative embodiment of that tradition, it is unreasonable to suggest that the tradition ceased to be taught when the New Testament writings began to circulate. What then became of that tradition? The answer is given: It continued to circulate in the Churches, determined the dogmatic formulations of the seven "ecumenical councils" (i.e. the Councils of the Undivided Church), and is preserved in the Orthodox Church to this day. Here is ground for lively discussion! Naturally it is an appalling idea for the Orthodox to contemplate the difficulty of a Baptist, who wants to know what happens to the tradition, even of the undivided Church, when it departs from the Apostolic pattern laid down in the Bible. That illustrates the painful side of ecumenical encounter—but let it be said, the pains are pretty generally shared all round!

I have mentioned that opportunity was given to visit Churches. Admitting that we saw only *some* Churches, what we did see was sufficient to discredit the idea that religion is dead in Russia. I doubt if the daily services in any of our English cathedrals have so many worshippers as the Churches we visited, even if most of the worshippers were women (the men, of course, were at work). The services are based on a single liturgy; it is lengthy and largely consists of prayers recited by the priests. The communion is administered to the congregation individually; they queue up, children are served first, and the name of every communicant is announced to the serving priest. The religious fervour of the worshippers is very evident, tears are not infrequent and people will often kneel for long periods on the cold marble floors. I gained the impression that despite the distance of this worship from ours, it was possible to meet Christ in it, and the devotion of many of the worshippers cannot be gainsaid.

The Baptist Churches are impressive to any visitor. There is a far larger proportion of men among them than in the Orthodox Churches. They are a missionary community with a simple worship and a simple adherence to the Word of God that cannot be shaken. Their expansion is not through evangelistic appeals but through direct proclamation of the Gospel and personal witness. If it be true, as some allege, that the Moscow and Leningrad Churches are "shop windows" for Communist "toleration", it would be a grave mistake to allege that the goods displayed are dummies. There is a primitive note in the Christianity of these Churches that is exhilarating to witness and that condemns our Western complacency.

I must not fail to mention the warmth of welcome that was extended to our delegation, both by the Orthodox and the Baptists. Christians are generally hospitable to fellow Christians from another land, but I have never been quite so overwhelmed as by the welcome experienced in the Baptist Church at Leningrad and in the monastery in Skopf (near the old Estonian border). Be sceptical if you will, but one appreciates the language of Christian love,