

GÖSTA HALLONSTEN, *Östkyrkor i Sverige: en Översikt* [Eastern Churches in Sweden: An Overview]. Skellefteå, Sweden: Artos Publications, 1992.

One would normally welcome only with joy a publication on the Eastern Churches, since literature in the Swedish language on this subject is limited. Moreover, what has been published is of varying quality. Probably the very worst publication was that printed by Artos Publications in 1988, under the title *Ortodoxa Kyrkans Tro och Liv—i Sverige* [The Faith and Life of the Orthodox Church—in Sweden]. This treatise, albeit authored by students of theology, is so filled with superficialities and gross errors, that it would have been better had no publisher undertaken its printing. It is with some reservations, then, that I must reproach Gösta Hallonsten, an instructor (Docent) at the University of Lund, for his book on the Eastern Churches.

Hallonsten's book was conceived in connection with two courses that he teaches at the Theological Institute in Lund. It is not meant to be an introduction to the history or theology of the Eastern Churches, but is an overview or survey of Orthodox and Oriental Christian denominations in Sweden. Indeed, one half of the book is dedicated to general questions of concern to religious immigrants in Sweden: the problems facing Eastern Christian immigrants in secularized Sweden; the function of the Swedish system for subsidizing religious organizations; and issues such as proselytism, ecumenism, and Swedish Orthodoxy. As an introduction for the general public to the various Orthodox and Oriental Christian denominations and as a guide in understanding the confusing witness of the Eastern Churches in Sweden, this work is useful. We are none the worse for a book which attempts to clarify that witness.

However, I take great exception to one chapter in the book. As Mr. Hallonsten points out in the foreword to his study, it is his mission to write as a "scientific theologian" for the purpose of "charting out, explaining, and providing correct information." This being the case, he should have exercised great care in selecting neutral nomenclature and strictly avoiding subjective value statements of a personal kind. When the author uses the term "pre-Chalcedonian" Eastern Churches, instead of the terms "Nestorian" or "Monophysite," he *does*, indeed, defer to impartial terms that these Churches themselves accept. Yet, he abandons this principle in his chapter on "the non-canonical" Churches, using an ugly epithet to characterize perfectly canonical and very traditional bodies separated from their Mother Churches for political, ethical, or (ironically enough) canonical rea-

sons (e.g., various movements within the autonomous Churches in opposition to the parent body's capitulation to certain political pressures—such as the refusal of the Russian Church's exiled Bishops to accept Bishops under KGB control—; uncanonical innovations—such as the protest of the Bulgarian, Greek, and Romanian Old Calendarists to the adoption of the Papal Calendar by their Mother Churches—; or an ethos incompatible with the Holy Traditions of the Orthodox Church—such as modernism and the ecumenical movement, the latter constituting a repudiation of the Orthodox Church's claim to primacy).

I cannot imagine that the representatives of Churches in Sweden stigmatized by Hallonsten's arbitrary categorization of them as "non-canonical" are jumping for joy; rather, I imagine that they are deeply insulted and outraged. The author's definition of the Orthodox Church's notion of canonicity is, on the whole, distorted, if not downright misleading. At the root of his use of the epithet "non-canonical" is the assumption that: "Those whom we, in everyday speech, call Orthodox, and those who refer to themselves by this term, are the Churches which are in communion with the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and who accept the seven Oecumenical Synods of the Early Church." In this definition, Hallonsten imposes a Roman Catholic model of Hierarchy and ecclesiology on the Orthodox Church (i.e., anyone who is in communion with the Pope of Rome and accepts the Oecumenical Synods, of which Vatican II is the last, is "canonical"). By moving in this definitional direction, he is not describing Orthodox canonicity. The Patriarch of Constantinople is not an "Eastern Pope," but is the first in honor ("*primus inter pares*") of Bishops having equal authority. Nor are the Oecumenical Synods binding on the Orthodox Church in some legalistic manner, as the eminent Russian theologian, Father Georges Florovsky, has pointed out, except in the sense that they express the "conscience of the Church." In this respect, it is interesting to note that many periods of rich theological thought in the Orthodox Church are rooted in epochs when the Faithful were struggling against the heresies of Constantinople (on the Throne of which See, we should remember, sat none other than Nestorius, the persecutor of the Orthodox).

Let us see, in contradistinction to Hallonsten's view, what a widely distributed volume on the Eastern Church in the West, *The Orthodox Church*, says of canonicity:

The Orthodox Church is...a family of self-governing Churches. It is held together, not by a centralized organisation, not by a single prelate wielding absolute power over the whole body, but by a double bond of unity

in the faith and communion in the sacraments. Each church, while independent, is in full agreement with the rest on all matters of doctrine and between them all there is full sacramental communion. (Certain divisions exist among the Russian Orthodox, but the situation here is altogether exceptional and, one hopes, temporary in character).

Bishop Kallistos [Timothy Ware], Professor of Eastern Church history at Oxford University and the author of this passage, associates Orthodox canonicity with unity in faith and sacramental communion, not with the Patriarchate in Constantinople. He furthermore points out that under extenuating circumstances sacramental communion can be broken between two Churches without compromising canonicity. In his *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, the late Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky writes with some clarity in this regard:

The unity of the Church is not violated because of temporary divisions.... Sometimes a temporary breaking of communion is caused by the personal errors of individual hierarchs who stand at the head of one or another local church; or it is caused by their violation of the canons of the Church, or by the violation of the submission of one territorial ecclesiastical group to another in accordance with anciently established tradition. Moreover, life shows us the possibility of disturbances within the local Church which hinder the normal communion of other Churches with the given local Church until the outward manifestation and triumph of the defenders of authentic Orthodox truth. Finally, the bond between Churches can sometimes be violated for a long time by political conditions, as often happened in history. In such cases, the division touches only outward relations, but does not touch or violate inward spiritual unity. The truth of the One Church is defined by the Orthodoxy of its members, and not by their quantity at one or another moment.

Orthodox canonicity should thus be tied strictly to Apostolic Succession and fidelity to the canons, that is, union in the Faith, and not communion with some self-styled "Eastern Pope."

One must question, then, the very validity of Docent Hallonsten's classification of the Eastern Churches in Sweden under the rubrics "Orthodox," "non-canonical," and "Oriental." (Suffice it to say that, since the Orthodox Church has traditionally considered the so-called "pre-Chalcedonians" heretics, having condemned them at an Oecumenical Synod, Hallonsten's heavy-handed characterization of some Orthodox Churches as uncanonical would, were he to be consistent, ultimately force him to categorize the Eastern Churches as "Orthodox," "non-canonical," and "heretical"). The author should, in fact, have used terms such as "Orthodox Churches," "Eastern Churches," and "independent Orthodox." Likewise, the Orthodox

should have been categorized according to the convention employed by Archbishop Methodios Fouyas (former Exarch in Great Britain for the Oecumenical Patriarchate) in his various books on the Orthodox Churches; viz., dividing the Churches between those in communion with their Mother Churches and those which, for reasons of canonical resistance, have broken communion with their Mother Churches. In the latter group would be the Old Calendar Church of Greece, the Old Calendarists in Romania, and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, who have millions of adherents worldwide. Rather, Hallonsten lists these Churches and their Swedish missions among “non-canonical” Churches and, quoting a Church bulletin published by a Stockholm dealer in Orthodox books (*Ortodox Tidning*), claims that it is “wholly clear” that they are “not accepted by any other Orthodox Church.” One is astounded that Mr. Hallonsten is ignorant of the support given by the Jerusalem Patriarchate to the Greek Old Calendarists and the high regard which the Church of Serbia has always had for the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was established in exile first under the sponsorship of the Patriarch of Constantinople and then, when that Patriarchate adopted the Papal Calendar, under the protection of the Patriarch of Serbia. Here Hallonsten’s system of classification turns ugly and unfairly characterizes a huge population of traditionalist Orthodox Christians. Unwittingly, he also lists as “non-canonical” the Church of Father Salvatore Cajozzo, in Stockholm, a Priest dismissed from the Swedish mission of the Greek Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili but who is now under a Bishop belonging to the Polish Church—hardly an uncanonical jurisdiction.

Under “free Orthodox Churches,” or those which have no canonical ties to world Orthodoxy, I would, like Hallonsten, list the Apostolic Orthodox Church under Bishop Kyrillos Marskog, who, in simply being married, places himself outside Orthodox tradition.

As incomprehensible as Mr. Hallonsten’s incorrect grasp of the Orthodox world and its view of canonicity is, his book is, again, not without merit. Were he to correct his inappropriate characterizations of some of the most respected and conservative Orthodox Churches in resistance, in a coming edition, this book could serve as an informative overview of the Eastern Churches. This correction would also remove from the book an inappropriate polemical tone.

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