

BY JACOB'S WELL

An article on the actual unity of the apparently divided Church: in prayer, faith, and sacrament (John 4:23).

The language of the New Testament frequently contains the term "the Church" or "the Churches." On the one hand there is the mystical unity of the Church as the Body of Christ, on the other hand there are the specific communities in which such life was realized. We still use the same terms, not only in the above-mentioned sense but also in that of different Christian confessions. We must admit that such a use of the word "Churches" often shocks us, for in our own minds, for example, we often think that actually there exists only one Church, namely the Orthodox Church—whereas all that stands outside Orthodoxy is not the Church. But the evidence of the use of language cannot be explained away by mere civility or hypocrisy, for it contains a concept that a sort of these "non-Churches" belongs to "the Church." For actually these Churches are distinct to us from the non-Christian world. Already in the Gospel narrative we trace this relativeness in connection with the idea of the Church. Our Lord, who came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, belonged himself to the Jewish Church. He was a faithful Israelite carrying out its precepts, and this in spite of all its exclusiveness. And yet we get a solemn witness about the Church universal in our Lord's conversation with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well. We are equally struck here both by the very fact that this conversation (which so astonished the disciples) took place, and

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by the universal "good news" of Our Lord's message: "Believe Me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . . but the hour is coming, indeed is already here, when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks" (Jn 4:21, 23). And he then reveals to her, a Samaritan, that he is the Christ.

All the events in the life of Our Lord have not only a temporary but also an eternal significance, and this is also true of this conversation with the Samaritan woman. For even at the present time we find that we stand by Jacob's well and also ask Jesus Christ about where and how we must worship the Lord. And even now we, who are the "Jews," know what we worship "for salvation is from the Jews" (*Nulla salus extra ecclesiam*—"Outside the Church there is no salvation"). And in our day also our Lord reveals himself to the Samaritan woman and calls on all to worship in spirit and in truth. The harsh, unbending, unrelenting institutionalism of the one saving Church conflicts here with a service in the Spirit, which "blows where it pleases, and you can hear the sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going" (Jn 3:8). There exists between the Church and the Churches not only a relationship of mutual expulsion but also one of concordance. This unity is simultaneously something already given and something we must attain to. No single historical church can so confine its attention to itself alone as to ignore the Christian world beyond its own limits. Even heresies and schisms are manifestations taking place only within the life of the Church—for pagans and men of other faiths are not heretics and schismatics to us. One can picture differently the ways to Church unity, but its very existence already assumes the fact of actual unity. The Church is one, as life in Christ by the Holy Spirit is one. Only, participation in this unity can be of varying degrees and depths.

Therefore, quite naturally, there are two aspects in the relation of Orthodoxy to non-Orthodoxy: a repulsion in the struggle of truth with an incomplete truth, and a mutual attraction of Church love. History and a sad realism apprehend more of the former aspect of this relationship, for the spirit of schism and division is not only a characteristic of "heretics" and "schismatics." The will for division is the evil genius that first split up the West and the East, and which ever since pursues its devastating work further and further.

But can the realization of the truth of our Church be silenced even for a moment, or conversely, can we ever fail to be aware of the untruth of those who think differently? Might not such an attitude result in the sin of lack of faith, which seeks to avoid confessing its own truth and perhaps suffering for it? And so in repulsion and attraction, unity and division, we see a peculiar dialectic of church life, which comprises the thesis and the antithesis, and we observe that the greater the exertion of the one, the acuter the other. The way of "ecumenical" church life, which strived for Church unity, is simultaneously associated both with a fuller realization of confessional differences and a growing

consciousness of unity. But although there seems to be no escape from this antinomy, the Spirit of God actually transcends it through a new kind of synthesis that is brought about, not by means of a new agreement or compromise, but by a new inspiration. The distinction between various confessions lies first of all in dogmatic differences, and then in the religious and practical discrepancies that result from them. These are on the surface and are apparent to all. But that which constitutes Church unity (that which is already given), and the striving toward unity (which actually exists as the basis of unity)—this is hidden in the very depths. Meanwhile this task is a duty both of Church love and of practical utility. One must realize and express the positive spiritual basis of Christian "ecumenism" not only as an idea but also as an actuality existing by grace. We experience it as a breathing of God's Spirit in grace, as a revelation of Pentecost, when people begin to understand one another in spite of the diversity of tongues.

Let us try to express quite concisely this positive basis of unity, which actually exists even now in the Christian world.

PRAYER

The division that occurred in the Church, whatever its origin, was associated with a separation in prayer and remains as an unhealed wound in the Body of the Church. Such is the logic of our frail nature, which cannot contain the entire truth, but only parts of it. Dissociation in prayer, having once arisen, strives to become permanent, lasting, and constant. We are now faced by the strange and provoking sight of Christians praying to God and their Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, in separate communities. Moreover, this division is enforced in the rules of the Church, which arose, it is true, in the fourth and fifth centuries, but which retain even now the force of actual law. They have not been cancelled formally, although life itself cancels them. The general purpose of these rules in the first place was of course to banish "indifference" by applying protective measures, which were then in accord with the acute struggle with heresy. But measures of defense lose their significance when there is no attacking party—and we see this state of affairs in a whole range of interconfessional relationships in our own time. We are bound to recognize not only that which separates us, but also that which remains common to us all, notwithstanding all divisions. The ability to distinguish in life all that constitutes the common heritage of the whole Christian world is the great achievement (only possible through grace) of contemporary "ecumenism," namely the movement striving for Church unity. An encounter between Christians of different confessions, as Christians, is a great joy that is bestowed on us in our time by the Holy Spirit and a new revelation of the universal Pentecost. Nothing is easier to criticize than this "pan-Christianity" by pointing out that there can exist no "Christianity in general,"

but only one true Church in its indestructible concreteness and wholeness. This is true, no doubt, in the sense that the fullness of worship in an ordained and divinely inspired cult can only exist in unanimity. But even so there still remains Christianity as such—as faith in our Lord, love for him, and worship directed to him—and this Christianity endures not only in Orthodoxy but as something common to all confessions. We are particularly clear about this and aware of it in missionary work where Christians are compelled, when confronted by pagans, to get a fuller and deeper consciousness of their own Christianity.

The united prayer of Christians, belonging to different confessions, in Churches and outside them, is becoming a more and more usual occurrence at the present time. This new practice is not merely a liberty that is quite out of place where strict discipline is exercised, but a common Christian achievement, a capacity for uniting in that which is an actual reality. A time will dawn when the Orthodox Church will define certain rules for this practice and will give the required directions. Meanwhile all this is done in a groping manner, as circumstances demand. This united common prayer can be based dogmatically on the fact that the name of our Lord is hallowed and called on by all Christians. Christ is present in his name to each one who prays thus, "For where two or three meet in My Name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20). In truth all Christians who call on Christ's name in prayer are already actually one with Christ; when we lift our eyes to heaven, earthly barriers cease to exist for us.

But is this actually so? Do these barriers remain even in our union in prayer? Yes, in a certain sense they remain. For we cannot unite in everything with our brethren in prayer. For example, we cannot pray together to the blessed Virgin and to the saints with Protestants. We can find differences in worship even with Roman Catholics, although these differences may not be so essential. But we are not compelled to be silent about these differences, and, if so, is this not treason to Orthodoxy? We must not close our eyes to the fact that such dangers, generally speaking, do exist. The position of Orthodoxy in its relation to the Protestant world is especially unfavorable in this case, precisely because Orthodoxy, for the sake of communion in prayer, is forced to adapt itself by, as it were, minimizing itself, and thereby losing some of its fullness. Of course, if this is done out of love for the sake of Church "economy" it is permissible, for it is then regarded as a sacrifice of love, in accordance with the apostle Paul's principle of being "all things to all men." Our brethren, however, should realize that this is only a sacrifice of love and a condescension to their weakness, not a denial of our own faith.

However, in communion in worship with the non-Orthodox we must "know our measure" so that no distortions or poverty may result in our prayer life. But there is also a positive side to this communion in prayer. We are wont to pride ourselves on our liturgical wealth, as compared to the severe and simple rites of the Protestants. And yet we must not close our eyes to the fact that, in actual practice, we are far from realizing to the full this wealth of ours, so that in some instances it lies upon us as a dead weight of custom. Protestantism, in spite of

its apparent liturgical poverty, knows a living extempore prayer, in which the human soul in a childlike way turns directly to our Father in heaven. This is the wealth of Protestantism even though it is associated with liturgical poverty.

THE WORD OF GOD

The Holy Gospels are the common property of the entire Christian world. Through the Gospels Christ himself speaks directly to the human soul. The soul listens to him and adores him in worship. Generally, in our attitude to the non-Orthodox, we underestimate the power of the Gospels. The four Gospels give us a marvelous icon of our Savior, drawn by the Holy Spirit of God—a veritable icon in words. When the Eternal Book is studied not only by the mind but also with the heart, when the soul "bows down over the Gospels," then the sacrament of the Word, born in that soul, is celebrated.

People incline to minimize this direct impact of the Word of God (*efficacitas verbi*—"efficaciousness of the Word"), addressed to every single soul, stressing in an exaggerated way the significance of holy tradition for its correct understanding. In practice the significance of holy tradition for a living response to the Word of God should not be exaggerated. It has bearing on theology and on certain disputed questions of a dogmatic nature. One might add here that the importance of tradition does not in any way exclude, but actually presupposes, a direct response to the Word of God, which has its life in the Church—both in its *sobornny* (Catholic, communal) consciousness (tradition), and in personal interpretation. And what is especially important is the fact that nothing can replace our personal life with the Gospel (the same applies to the whole Bible). We should be ready to admit the fact that among Orthodox nations the personal reading of the Word of God is considerably less widespread than it is among Protestants, though this is partly replaced by its use in divine worship. The Bible and the Gospels are common Christian property, and the entire Christian world without distinction of confession bends in prayer over the Gospels. It may be urged that a true understanding of the Gospels is only given to the Church. This is, of course, the case in one sense, yet sincere and devout readers of the Gospels through this alone are already within the Church—that is, in the one and Evangelical Church.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

A Christian who lives in the Church necessarily has also his personal life in Christ, which is simultaneously both personal and "of the Church." Dogma and dogmatic peculiarities cannot fail to be reflected in this personal experience. But in the absence of Christological differences there is a very wide field of common faith, even where dogmatic divergences actually do exist. For can one

say that "Christ is divided" for a contemporary Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or believing Protestant? In their love of our Lord and their striving toward him, all Christians are one. This is why the language of the mystics and their experience is common to all. We find that spiritual life, in which the divine is really tasted, unites Christians to a far greater extent than does dogmatic perception. When we sense these tremulous contacts our souls respond to them independently of confessional relationships. It may be that this is the most important result of interrelations of various confessions, which though not reflected in formulae and resolutions, represent a spiritual reality. During the Lausanne Conference this feeling of a kind of common spiritual experience of unity in Christ was remarkably strong. It became clear to all that something had happened above and beyond anything written down in the reports and minutes. On the other hand, apart from this kind of experience as such, there cannot be any Christian unity; for this can only be realized through Christian inspiration in a new vision of Pentecost, for which we aspire and which, in part, we already obtain. This unity in Christ, established by the similarity of Christian experience, is a kind of spiritual communion of all in the one Christ, established long before Communion from the same chalice can take place. This *de facto* similarity in the experience of the Christian world, in spite of all its multiplicity, is insufficiently realized. Unfortunately, we tend to stress our dogmatic disagreements much more than our common Christian heritage. A mystical intercommunion has always existed among Christians, and in our days more so than previously. Mutual fellowship among the representatives of theological thought, an interchange of ideas, scientific and theological research, a kind of life in common "over the Gospel"—all this tends to make the existing division between Christian confessions already to a certain extent unreal. Symbolic theology is also tending more and more to become "comparative" instead of being "denunciatory." This is even more evident when we come to mystical, pastoral, and ascetic works, and especially to the lives of the saints. With what attention and devotion the Western world (for example Anglicanism) gazes at the images of the Russian saints, or conversely, with what interest we ourselves regard the images of the Western saints, such as St. Genevieve, St. Francis of Assisi, and others. And we ought to cultivate deliberately this spiritual interpenetration, which is naturally increasing more and more. In this way we shall appropriate to ourselves the gifts that have been bestowed on others, and through comparison we shall come to know our own nature more fully and deeply.

Thus there exists even now a certain spiritual unity within the Christian world, although this is not expressed in any formulae. But we should add to this mystical, adogmatic unity of the Christian world the reality of its dogmatic oneness. Owing to certain one-sidedness, Christians of various confessions are acutely sensitive to their dogmatic differences, while they do not feel their mutual agreement in the same way. The definition "heretic," which is really only applicable to certain features of a world outlook, is extended to the entire man, who is com-

pletely anathematized for a particular heresy. This was so throughout the course of Christian history. But it would be absolutely inconsistent for us to adopt such language today. For it is time at last to say openly that there exist no heretics in the general sense of the term, but only in a special and particular sense. Such an interpretation, among many others, can be given to the words of the apostle Paul: "It is no bad thing either that there should be differing groups among you" (1 Cor 11:19). Of course, in itself, a special heresy stands also for a common affliction, which is detrimental to the spiritual life without, however, destroying it. And it is perhaps difficult and impossible for us really to define the extent of this damage during the epoch when the particular dogmatic division arose. We must not also lose sight of the fact that in addition to heresies of the mind there exist heresies of life, or one-sidedness. One can, while remaining an Orthodox, actually tend toward Monophysitism in practice, by leaning either toward Docetic spiritualism or Manicheism, or toward Nestorianism by separating the two natures in Christ, which leads in practice to the "secularization" of culture. And perhaps in this sense it will be found that we all are heretics in various ways. Yet it by no means follows from this that Orthodoxy and the Orthodox do not exist. It only shows that heresy, as such, impairs (though it does not destroy) life in Christ and in his Church. The notion of a heresy, as of a division, only exists within the limits of the Church and not outside it, and it implies a defectiveness in church life. It is therefore a mistake to interpret dogmatic anathematizing as a spiritual death warrant or a complete severing from the Church. As a measure of discipline, an anathema is a spiritual death warrant for a particular Church community, for it represents a separation from the fellowship of the Church. But this disciplinary measure cannot and must not be extended to the whole life of the Church, for even the heretics remain in the Church, and it is not given to us to know to what degree they are condemned because of their heresy.

From this it follows that if heresy is only partial damage, we must take into account in dealing with heretics not only that which is heretical but also that which is Orthodox in them. For example, through having an incorrect doctrine on the *Filioque*, do Roman Catholics cease to believe in the redemptive work of our Lord, or in the sacraments of the Church? And although this seems obvious, all Christians must yet realize not only their divisions but also their agreement. Our Creed, the Nicene Creed (it is true, in its defective form owing to the *Filioque*), together with the ancient Apostolic and Athanasian Creeds, constitute the general confession of Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism, and we must never lose sight of this basis of our dogmatic unity.

THE SACRAMENTS

At the present time it is in the sacraments that the Christian confessions are most effectively separated from one another. Sacramental fellowship is still only

a remote aim, which still remains unaccomplished in the relationships between Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. In the relationship between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism on the one hand, and Protestantism on the other, the main barrier is the absence of valid orders and apostolic succession. This barrier does not arise between the first two confessions. Now, in the vast majority of Christian confessions, sacraments are recognized, in spite of all the diversity of theological teaching associated with them. What attitude ought we to adopt toward the efficacy of these sacraments, and in what measure can this or that theological interpretation associated with them be considered decisive? Although the latter can effect the efficacy of sacraments (only, however, from the side of *ex opere operantis*, and not of *ex opere operato*), nevertheless, given the existence of a common faith (say in the Eucharist), the significance of doctrinal diversity in the realm of eucharistic theology may be greatly exaggerated.

We ought to insist first of all, as a general principle, on the efficacy of the sacraments in various Church communities. But can we adopt such a principle as our guiding line? Or are sacraments, generally speaking, ineffective beyond the canonical limits of a Church organization, to be regarded only as devout customs, or according to the blasphemous opinion of some as "sacraments of the demons?" The latter opinion is the child of confessional fanaticism that can never be confirmed by theological arguments, and is on the contrary in direct contradiction to the true mind of the Church. One might also add that a mere recognition of the power of the sacraments outside Orthodoxy is sufficient, for such a reduction of the question merely to that of their subjective effectiveness (*ex opere operantis*) evades a direct answer to the question as to their objective value (*ex opere operato*). It undoubtedly holds that, in the absence of canonical Church fellowship, the sacraments celebrated outside the canonical limits of a given church organization—canonically and practically, as it were—cease to exist. But does this canonical ineffectiveness (*nonefficitas*) imply their mystical invalidity (*nonvaliditas*)? Does it mean that on being separated canonically, and in a certain measure dogmatically also, we find that we are separated from our mysterious unity and fellowship in Christ and in the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Has Christ been really divided in us, or are the non-Orthodox thereby no longer "in Christ," being estranged from his Body? One ought to think deeply before answering this question, which is perhaps the most essential for us in our relations with the non-Orthodox. This question falls into two parts: the significance of canonical divisions and that of dogmatic divisions, in relation to effectiveness of sacraments.

The first question is answered by stating that canonical divisions (*raskol*) only prevent the possibility of a direct and unmediated communion in the sacraments and do not destroy their efficacy. The invisible fellowship therefore of those who have been separated is not broken. This constitutes great joy and consolation when we are faced with the sad and sinful fact of canonical divisions

in the Church. We ought to consider that although we are canonically divided from the Roman Catholic Church, we never ceased to remain with it in an invisible sacramental communion (*ex opere operato*, so to speak). Generally speaking, if one wanted to be consistent in denying the efficacy of the sacraments on a canonical basis, one could only do it by accepting the Roman Catholic teaching on the supremacy of the Pope and obedience to his jurisdiction as an essential condition of belonging to the Church. However such a deduction is not made even by the Roman Catholic Church, which admits the effectiveness of sacraments in Orthodoxy. The Romanizing tendency in Orthodoxy sometimes goes further than Rome in this direction, conditioning the effectiveness of the sacrament by canonical stipulations, though theologically such a point of view cannot be supported. Conversely, one could say that the divided parts of the Church, at least where apostolic succession exists, are in an invisible, mysterious communion with one another through visible sacraments, although these are mutually inaccessible.

Now let us consider to what extent a digression from dogmatic teaching can destroy the efficacy of the sacrament. We ought to mention here, first of all, the cases where the damage affects not separate sacraments but their celebrants. We speak here of Protestantism, where, through the destruction of a rightly ordained priesthood through grace, the question of the actual efficacy of the sacrament is raised in spite of its full recognition in principle. Can one speak of "sacraments" in Protestantism? Fortunately there are grounds for answering this question not only in the negative. The basis of the answer lies in the fact that the Orthodox Church recognizes the efficacy of Protestant baptism, which is evident from the fact that it does not re-baptize Protestants who join it. This admission is of extraordinary significance. It testifies to the fact that, at least in regard to the sacrament of spiritual birth in the Church, we abide in fellowship with Protestants as Christians and members of the one Body of Christ. Baptism also contains within itself the general possibility of a mysterious life in the Church; in this sense it is the potential of all future sacraments. In Protestantism there is only a partial existence, both because of the diminution of the number of sacraments, and especially, through the absence of priesthood. But even so, does this allow us to draw any conclusion as to the complete inefficacy of sacramental life in Protestantism, in particular, for example, regarding Holy Communion? Strictly speaking we have no right to come to such a conclusion, and not only because of the subjective basis pointed out by Bishop Theophanes, but also because of the objective principle of a sacrament, according to which the sacrament belongs to the entire Church—although it is realized through the priesthood by virtue of its inevitable participation. There is no such priesthood in Protestantism, but the people of the Church—the "royal priesthood"—remain there, and the potential power of Holy Baptism is fulfilled and revealed there in other ways, in certain devout rites and prayers instead of in effective sacraments. But if these are ineffective, can we say that they are nothing? One

cannot say this, for the priesthood is not a magical apparatus for the celebration of sacraments, but a ministration of the Church that exists in the Church and for the Church. Therefore we ought to interpret Theophanes' expression "according to their faith it shall be given them" in the sense that our Lord does not deprive this flock of his grace, although it has been separated from the fullness of Church life. Nevertheless we can speak of communion in sacraments (apart from baptism) in relation to Protestants only in the general and indefinite sense of their participation in the life of the Church through grace, but of nothing beyond this. A more direct and true communion in sacraments with the Protestant world is hindered by the absence of a rightly ordained priesthood: this is the threshold over which Protestantism must pass, the reestablishment of an apostolically ordained hierarchy.

These barriers do not exist, however, for those sections of the divided Church that have retained this succession and have therefore a correctly ordained priesthood. Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism belong to this category, together with the ancient Eastern Churches (as well as the Episcopal Church in Protestantism and Anglicanism, particularly in the case of a positive solution of the question of Anglican ordination). The priesthoods of Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy are mutually uncanonical owing to the existing schism, but this does not prevent their mutual recognition of each other. The following conclusion, of the utmost importance, follows from this: Churches that have preserved their priesthood, although they happen to be separated, are not actually divided in their sacramental life. Strictly speaking, a reunion of the Church is not even necessary here, although generally this is hardly realized. The Churches that have preserved such a unity in sacraments are now divided canonically in the sense of jurisdiction, and dogmatically, through a whole range of differences; but these are powerless to destroy the efficacy of the sacraments.

What is required for a complete reunion, and where do we start? The predominant formula runs: sacramental fellowship must be preceded by a preliminary dogmatic agreement. But is this axiom so indisputable as it appears? Here on one scale of the balance we have a difference in certain Christian dogmas and theological opinions, and an estrangement that has been formed through centuries; on the other we have the unity of sacramental life. May it not be that a unity in the sacrament will be the only way toward overcoming this difference? Why should we not seek to surmount a heresy in teaching through superseding a heresy of life, such as division? May it not be that Christians sin now by not heeding the common eucharistic call? And, if this is so, then for Orthodoxy and Rome there still remains a way to their reunion on the basis of a fellowship in sacraments.

Of course, the Holy Spirit alone can make it clear that reunion is not far away, but already exists as a fact that only needs to be realized. But it must be realized sincerely and honestly for the sole purpose of expressing our brotherhood in the Lord. And the way toward the reunion of East and West does not

lie through tournaments between the theologians of the East and West, but through a reunion before the altar. The priesthood of the East and the West must realize itself as one priesthood, celebrating the one Eucharist; if the minds of the priests could become aflame with this idea, all barriers would fall. For in response to this, dogmatic unity will be achieved, or rather, a mutual understanding of one another in our distinctive features. *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*—"In what is necessary unity, in what is of lesser importance freedom, in all things, love."

A realization of our unity as something given, and at the same time, of our disunity as a fact that we cannot ignore is present, is a vital antithesis in the soul of the modern Christian. This antinomy cannot leave him in peace. He cannot remain indifferent to it, for he must seek its resolution. The ecumenical movement of today is the expression of this search.

The icon depicted on the front cover is from a series of frescoes done by Sister Joanna Reitlinger (1898–1988) in 1947 for the chapel of St. Basil's House, Ladbrook Grove, London. St. Basils, now closed, for many years was the home of the fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, an ecumenical community of Anglicans, Orthodox, and others started in the late 1920s and still existing today in the United Kingdom. When the fellowship center was moved to Oxford and St. Basil's House closed, these wall paintings were installed in the chapel of the monastery of Christ the Savior in Hove, a monastic house of the Anglican Community of the Servants of the Will of God. Sister Joanna, who lived in the Russian emigration of Paris from the late 1920s until the end of the war, had as her spiritual father and teacher the great theologian Fr. Sergius Bulgakov. A trained and gifted artist, she was asked, along with Leonid Ouspensky and Fr. Gregory Krug, to learn iconography so that the Orthodox communities in France might have icons for their churches. Along with her colleagues, she became an important figure in the contemporary renaissance of icon painting.

The chapel of St. Basil's house had two series of icons on its walls and all were dedicated to the memory of Fr. Bulgakov, who had died in 1944. The upper level depicted scenes from the Book of Revelation, views of the heavenly Church, the Kingdom of God present but yet to come. It is from the lower level, namely the historical Church throughout the world, that the icon represented on the front cover was taken. Each of the four icons from which this was selected depicts a gathering or assembly of saints from a particular local church or region. In this fresco, the saints of Russia (gathered before the Sarov forest, hermitages and cathedrals of Moscow, and Kiev-Holy Wisdom) are Seraphim of Sarov; Tikhon, bishop of Zadonsk; Prince Alexander Nevsky; Alexis, metropolitan of Moscow; Juliana the merciful; Philip metropolitan of Moscow and martyr; Olga, grandmother of Vladimir; Theodosius, founder of the Caves monastery in Kiev; and Vladimir, apostle of Russia.

The vision of Fr. Bulgakov's theology was the inspiration for Sr. Joanna's work; the chapel thus contained the undivided Church across time and space and beyond these in the Kingdom. This was not only the Church about which Fr. Sergius wrote, lectured, and preached, but also the Church presumed in the eucharistic liturgy's prayers and in the scripture. It was also the dream of his work at the very start of the modern ecumenical movement, both in what would become the World Council of Churches and the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius.

Brother Christopher Mark, CSWG of the Monastery of Christ the Savior, Brighton/Hove provided the image from its current location at the monastery.

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