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The Ecclesiological Foundations of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov's Project for Partial Intercommunion

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Fr. Sergius Bulgakov's project for the establishment of Eucharistic communion between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches in the context of the history of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, paying special attention to the project's ecclesiological foundations, including: a "molecular" method to acquisition of church unity, "spiritual intercommunion", and unity of faith as expressed in common prayer, "substantial dogmatic agreement", and the "sacramental blessing" of church hierarchy. The study is accompanied by and concludes with the first-ever publication in Russian language of the 1935 edition of the project's text, entitled "partial intercommunion". Upon the founding of the Fellowship in 1928, Fr. Sergius expressed doubts as to the possibility of Eucharistic reunion between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches in the near future, though by five years later he had completely changed his opinion and become a primary advocate of intercommunion. It is important to note that initial conceptions of partial intercommunion differed from those of open intercommunion, as practiced in Protestant churches where any baptised Christian is invited to receive at the Remembrance of the Lord's Supper, and were based upon an understanding of church unity as a gift of the Holy Spirit, rather than as an achievement of ecclesial-political agreement. In addition to sacramental (eucharistic) paths toward the attainment of church unity, Fr. Sergius acknowledged the charismatic path for building communion steadily through the sacrament of Soborovanije, accompanied by communion in prayer, life and theological dialogue. This accent on the sobornal nature of the Church, understood as the common fellowship of the whole Christian world through acceptance

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of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, makes it possible to call Bulgakov's teaching on the Church "charismatic ecclesiology".

KEYWORDS: Theology, Ecclesiology, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, ecumenical movement, church unity, partial intercommunion, charismatic ecclesiology, church unity

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Introduction

In the first third of the 20th century, representatives of the Paris school of Theology, including Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii), Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, Fr. Georgy Florovsky, Anton Kartashev, Nikolai Zernov and others, actively engaged with the ecumenical movement for the restoration of Christian unity [*Jillions*]. Rather than developing a united position in relation to their ecumenical activities, each proposed his own vision and suggested approaches. That being said, the contribution of the Paris school to the ecumenical movement overall would be hard to overstate, given that the most significant resulting events which brought Christian churches together to one degree or another rested upon the labours of our fellow countrymen².

1. Sergij Bulgakov Bibliographie / Erstellt von Regula M. Zwahlen und Ksenija Babkova. Münster Westfalen : Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2017. 150 s.

2. Fr. Michael Plekov considers the most significant ecumenical events of the 20th century to be: the founding of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius and its Publishing House, "Sobornost"; the confer-

ences on "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work"; the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948; the participation of non-Roman Catholic observers at the Vatican II Council in 1962–1965, among these number being representative of the Paris school (Bishop Cassian (Besobrazov), Pavel Evdokimov, Fr. Nikolay Afanasiev and Fr. Alexander Schmemmann; the meeting between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Athenago-

Amongst the Russian theologians who had a part in ecumenical dialogue, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov holds a very special place. The uniqueness of his role is in many ways determined by his bold proposal, in 1933, to establish Eucharistic fellowship between Anglicans and Orthodox members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius — so-called partial intercommunion³. This proposal cemented his reputation as a charismatic, inspired and radical theologian. Below, what came of this proposal will be considered in the context of the history of the Fellowship.

Today we have a relatively obscure impression of the theological contents of Bulgakov's ecumenical project. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that the texts of the project and their discussion became accessible to Russian-language readers only decades after the events themselves. On the other hand, a whole series of texts remain inaccessible even to this day, given that the greater part of the relevant publications and correspondence is in English, and has never been translated into or published in Russian⁴. Because of difficulties accessing source material, a lacuna developed in this field of research relating specifically to Russian authors; the most significant works in the field date from the 1980s⁵ and seem to be the result of a response to the unique ecumenical work of Nikodim (Rotov), Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod.

ros in 1964 and their mutual repeal of the churches' anathematization of each other; the founding of the Taizé, Chevetogne, Bose, New Skeet and other monasteries [*Plekon 2005, 141*].

3. A complete translation of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov's "Partial Intercommunion" became possible in part because Brandon Galagher found this document in the archives of the Fellowship and brought it to the attention of the academic community by publishing it as an attachment to an article of his own in 2013 (see: [*Partial Intercommunion*]). The publication of the document is accompanied by the comment: "This document is in the Archives of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (www.sobornost.org) in Oxford, United Kingdom, in a white envelope signed "to Deacon Stephen Platt". It is being reproduced with the permission of the Fellowship, with thanks to its General Secretary, Fr. Stephen Platt for his help" (see: [*Gallaher, 119*]). The translation was prepared by this article's author, and is published here, as an attachment to the original article in Russian (see: Антипина Ю. Н. Эклесиологические основания проекта частичного интеркоммуниона протоиерея Сергия

Булгакова // Вестник Свято-Филаретовского института. 2023. Вып. 45. Приложение: Частичный интеркоммунион. С. 23–25).

4. Lev Zander, for instance, mentions thirty nine articles on the issue of ecumenism by Fr. Sergius, only five of which were written in Russian. He divides these articles into two basic groups: works on the nature, goals and paths of the ecumenical movement, and works which explicate the essence of Orthodoxy to those of other faiths [*Zander, 160*]. Nun Elena (Kazimirchak-Polonskaya) makes a more thorough bibliography of Fr. Sergius works on ecumenism, using a different system of classification. She breaks down the works into groups based on language, "in order to highlight Fr. Sergius's personal approach to the interests, needs and typical particularities of various confessions [of faith]". According to her lists, Fr. Sergius wrote up to 30 works on ecumenism in English, and up to 20 in German [*Elena (Kazimirchak-Polonskaya), 285*].

5. See, for instance: [*Vladimir (Sabodan); Tikhon, Nikitin; Mustafin*].

It is primarily western scholars who have produced contemporary scholarship on Bulgakov's ecumenical activities (Brandon Gallaher, Bryn Geffert, John Jillions, Andrew Louth, Michael Plekon). In terms of Russian studies on partial intercommunion, S.V. Nikolayeva's paper from the 2006 international theological conference "Russian Theology in a European Context: Bulgakov and Western Religious-Philosophical Thought" [*Nikolaev*] is the most significant. Thanks to this paper for the first time ever extracts from the archives of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius became available to Russian-language readers. Although we agree with Nikolaev that the proposal for intercommunion, as well as Bulgakov's overall position on ecumenism, were based on his experience of spiritual union within the Fellowship, we can hardly go on to affirm with him that Bulgakov interpreted this experience as a "new source of religious law", and that the proposal for intercommunion was the "practical result" of a new type of relationship in terms of ecclesial law [*Nikolaev*, 112]. Such an affirmation immediately raises doubts, because Bulgakov considered the development of the ecclesial legal structure to be a historical establishment and a distortion of the nature of the church which was related specifically to the Constantinopolitan period of church history. After the revolutionary catastrophe of 1917, the "Constantinopolitan Era of church being linked with state has passed, and the Orthodox Church has entered the post-Constantinopolitan Era" [*Bulgakov 1935*, 46]. Mother Maria (Skobtsova), Fr. Sergius's spiritual daughter, defined the beginning of the post-Constantinopolitan period as "a position, in which the Church has never been [anywhere] in the world" [*Kuzmina-Karavaeva*, 236]. This position required of the church that she rethink "her particular calling, her freedom, and the possibility of proposing new paths for church consciousness and spiritual creativity" [*Struve*, 94]. Fr. Sergius strove to critically rethink the hierarchical-canonical structure of church life. As such, it follows that Nikolaev's suggestion that Fr. Sergius strove to lean on "religious law" as a basis for his ecclesial activities, would seem to contradict the theologian's own convictions at their very root. From these convictions, we can affirm that Bulgakov's proposal for partial intercommunion has ecclesiological foundations and marks the beginning of a new, post-Constantinopolitan period in the life of the church. The perception of the church as a sacramental-charismatic movement and the conception of unity as the realization of the church's sobornal nature become primary in this new period.

Bulgakov's Proposal for partial intercommunion in the Context of the History of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius

The Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius was founded in 1928 and exists to this day⁶. The Fellowship's chose British protomartyr St. Alban (3rd c.) and Abbot of the Russian land St. Sergius of Radonezh (14th c.) as its patron saints and heavenly protectors. The first Chairmen of the Fellowship were Anglican Bishop Walter Frere and Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii). The first Vice Chairman was Fr. Sergius Bulgakov⁷.

Although the members of the Fellowship declared that it had “only an indirect relation” to official discussions about reunion [between the Anglican and Orthodox churches], they were sure that “the life of the Fellowship itself evoke and deepen the desire for the restoration of the visible unity of the Church”⁸. Common living arrangements during fellowship conferences which might last up to several weeks, and all Fellowship members' participation in daily service of the liturgy (alternately using Anglican and Orthodox rites), albeit without receiving the Holy Mysteries of the “other” church, created a very special quality of common life:

The stress, especially in the first few decades, on life together and the sharing of practical tasks and activities (from ecumenical potato-peeling to ecumenical cricket-matches) gave to the Fellowship conferences a quite unique flavour [*Williams, XI*].

As concerns Eucharistic communion between the members of the Fellowship, in 1928, Bulgakov referred to this as “a matter for the distant future”⁹. The enthusiasm which is usually attributed to Bulgakov, actually belonged to Nikolaj Zernov, who evaluated the very appearance of the Fellowship as a precursor to the reestablishment of communion between the Anglican and Orthodox churches. He was certain that “this reunion will be a great triumph of the Oecumenical

6. Today the Fellowship's headquarters, which publishes the journal “Sobornost”, is in Oxford. There are branches of the Fellowship in Great Britain, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. Information from the official site of the Fellowship: <https://fsass.org/>.

7. For detail on the history of the Fellowship, see: [*Salapatas*].

8. See: Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. 1933. N. 22, back cover.

9. “Fellowship in the sacraments, which presupposes unity among hierarchs according to the apostolic succession, of course remains a matter for the distant future (it doesn't yet exist because of dogmatic differences, despite mutual acknowledgement of both the power of the sacraments and holy priesthood” [*Bulgakov 1928, 77*].

(Universal) Church and that all must strive to bring it about as soon as possible” [*Zernov 1928, 22*]. Fr. Sergius’s proposal for the establishment of Eucharistic fellowship as partial intercommunion appeared only in 1933, i. e. five years after the founding of the Fellowship. Over that time, seven Anglican-Orthodox conferences were held, in which Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii), Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, Vasilii Zen’kovskii, Fr. Georgy Florovsky, Fr. Sergii Chetverikov, Archimandrite Lev (Gillet), Anton Kartashev, Vladimir Lossky, Nikolay Afanasiev, Nikolay Berdyaev, Georgy Fedotov, and many others, took part. According to A. Karpov’s memoirs, the contents of these Anglican-Orthodox conferences was neither dogmatic argument nor the search for compromise via mutual concession, but “positive church building in a spirit of love” [*Karpov, 87*]. Papers given at the conferences and ensuing discussion were published in the Fellowship’s Journal, which became a unique forum for ecumenical dialogue [*Antipina 2022, 13–26*].

Bulgakov’s suggestion for co-communion of Anglicans and Orthodox led to animated discussion over the course of three years. The first stage of this discussion involved Bulgakov’s proposal for partial intercommunion at the 1933 conference [*General, 11–16*] and annual discussion of this proposal in the confidential correspondence of the Fellowship¹⁰. The second stage began at the Fellowship conference of 1934, which bore the telling title “The Healing of Schism”, and included subsequent annual discussion by the members of the Executive Committee and Paris theologians (with practically the same list of participants). In the report on this conference published in the 25th issue of the Fellowship’s journal, Rev’d Bernard Clarke warned that he didn’t expect an easy resolution vis-à-vis the issue of reunion, as “The cost of Redemption is the Cross”, though on the other hand he couldn’t help but note that Bulgakov’s proposal had both changed the course of life and fellowship within the Fellowship, and after six years of discussion the members of the Fellowship looked at the issue of reunion “far more concretely and dynamically than they have yet done” [*Clarke, 3*]. Finally, the third stage of discussion was a presentation by Bulgakov of an amended version of “partial intercommunion” at a discussion in 1935, at the Fellowship conference on “The Nature of Catholic Action”. This version of intercommunion was a specific proposal to allow Christians of another confession (both clerics and laity) to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy, and can therefore be understood as a manual for

10. An archive of this discussion is available on the Fellowship’s website. Many of the documents are marked “top secret”: The Fellowship’s response to Fr. Sergius Bulgakov’s proposal for limited inter-

communion. 21.X.1933. URL: <https://fsass.org/shop/archives/the-fellowships-response-to-fr-sergius-bulgakovs-proposal-for-limited-intercommunion/> (16.01.2022).

the liturgical expression of Eucharistic reunion of different churches. With this document, Fr. Sergius completed his multi-year preparation for the establishment of Eucharistic reunion, and his ecumenical project became not only a wish for good, but a concrete proposal anticipating reception within the church. Bishop Frere and A. F. Dobbie-Bateman welcomed the final version of the document, however the Fellowship came to the conclusion — after several debates — that the time to propose some form of eucharistic interaction had not yet come, and therefore made its recommendation to continue researching the issue. The tense polemic surrounding Bulgakov's sophiology constantly edged out the topic of partial intercommunion on Fellowship meeting agendas.

The fact that the idea of partial intercommunion was not realized and embodied in 1935 can hardly be considered the end of its history. As Fr. Michael Plekon notes, discussion must continue, insofar as “despite all the disappointing, discouraging turns in ecumenical activity in the last years”, our current era is no less favourable for church reunification than Fr. Sergius, given the fact that the “permanent Pentecost”, of which he wrote is, “is no less real” [Plekon 2014, 46].

Fr. Sergius's conviction that the attainment of Christian unity is the will of God, and his inspiration in connection with the Christian calling to attain such unity, have extreme relevance for Christian dialogue in today's church — not only ecumenically, but also in terms of relations inside the Orthodox Church.

The Contents of “Partial Intercommunion”

Conditions in Bulgakov's time, in his opinion, did not contribute to the success of negotiations on full reunion between the Anglican and Orthodox churches at the highest levels of the church. Bulgakov was stating the obvious fact that neither the Anglican nor the Orthodox churches were manifesting internal unity: “The division of the Orthodox Church into national units makes it very difficult for the Church to speak canonically with a united voice. Within the Anglican Church there are radical dogmatic differences” [General, 12]. Many Anglicans agreed that there was no single canonical authority within either the Anglican or the Orthodox Church at that moment. This meant that they, along with Bulgakov, felt the route of official negotiation to be unrealizable [Clarke, 6]. Given the absence of any chance to solve the problem by means of negotiation between heads of the churches, Bulgakov judged endless waiting without purpose to be “spiritually dangerous” [General, 12]. He believed that any division within the church is sin, given

that it destroys the very nature of the church as unity. Sin must be defeated and not discussed. The route of discussion leads to a dead end, insofar as “theological tournaments” [Bulgakov 1933, 31] reveal and underscore, rather than eliminate differences. “The reunion must be a spiritual act, unattainable by negotiation” [Dobbie-Bateman 1933]. Therefore Bulgakov proposed overcoming differences via a route of creative church effort and common action, the goal of which was not discussion, but the construction of unity.

Although reunion between churches is traditionally understood as the full union of all their members, Bulgakov proposes “partial reunion”, or the Eucharistic fellowship of separate representatives of the Anglican and Russian Orthodox Churches — members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius — the so-called molecular method approach for the attainment of church unity. In Bulgakov’s opinion, “molecular action” cannot be equated to total reunion, nor should it replace total reunion, though it could serve as its beginning and foundation.

Although the Fellowship’s members belonged to different Christian confessions, Bulgakov insisted that over the five years of the Fellowship’s existence, its members had achieved unity amongst themselves, i. e. a common faith expressed in common prayer. Therefore, formal membership in different churches began to take a back seat to the unity which was accessible within the boundaries of the Fellowship. It was also assumed that within the Fellowship itself the experience of spiritual unity between its members might be different, therefore the invitation to intercommunion was not a feature of formal membership in the Fellowship, but extended only in connection to “an extremely personal movement of the spirit” [Partial Intercommunion, 119], i. e., personal calling.

Bulgakov believed the foundation of spiritual unity between members of the Fellowship to be communion in the church’s living Holy Tradition. He believed that all Christians are Orthodox to one degree or another, if by “orthodox” we mean not the historical community, but the unity of church tradition. In this way, “Bulgakov literally turns the traditional structure of discourse on unity upside down, putting the primary accent not upon that which divides Christians, but upon that which unites them” [Arzhakovsky, 395]. Bulgakov believed that to complement and complete their expression of church, Anglicans would need to restore an authentic understanding of church ministry, veneration of the Theotokos and the saints, and recognize the sacrificial and salvific nature of the Eucharist. He declared that members of the Fellowship had achieved such agreement, or “substantial dogmatic agreement” [General, 11], and moreover that this dogmatic

agreement was “more complete than that which exists within the Anglican Church itself” [*General*, 12]. He insisted that the Fellowship's achievement of a particular measure of dogmatic agreement and shared experience of prayer was the beginning of spiritual intercommunion, and Eucharistic intercommunion was invoked “to raise this present fact to its highest possible power” [*Dobbie-Bateman 1933*]. In the words of A. F. Dobbie-Bateman, “Bulgakov had placed his finger on the theological problem of reunion and would refuse to remove it, whatever the consequences” [*Dobbie-Bateman 1944*, 7].

Bulgakov related the embodiment of partial intercommunion to sacramental service of the hierarchy which, in his opinion, reveals the sobornal nature of the gathering of the church. Bulgakov believed that fellowship in the sacraments requires sanction by the church's bishops, though he understood this sanction not only as a sign “consent of canonical authority” [*General*, 12], but as a charismatic event. If the division of churches is sin (“spiritual discord”), then the overcoming of sin requires not only the agreement of hierarchs but the blessing action of the Holy Spirit, which implies some sort of sacramental act: “the action which will express the restoration of Church reunion is inconceivable without a certain sacramental meaning, for it has to be sealed by the Grace of the Holy Ghost and attempted under His guidance” [*Zernov 1933*].

The idea of “sacramental blessing” arose in connection with Bulgakov's understanding of episcopal service as a ministry which is, first and foremost, charismatic. Bulgakov calls it “regulated charismaticism through the hierarchy after the fashion of Old Testament priesthood” [*Bulgakov 1935*, 23]. This concept of “regulated charismaticism” would be questionable (“for God gives the Spirit without limit”^{*1}), if Fr. Sergius himself had not admitted that in addition to the sacramental source within the Church, direct reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit also exists: “the authority of this gift isn't given to anyone sacramentally, but abides in the hands of God as unmediated, continuous Pentecost” [*Bulgakov 2005*, 313]. This understanding of two paths for receiving the Holy Spirit in the Church lies at the foundation of the Brotherhood's concept of sacramental and spiritual unity as stated by Bulgakov in his suggested provision for the establishment of eucharistic and spiritual intercommunion. Spiritual intercommunion is the path of embodying unity as acquisition of the gifts of the Spirit through shared prayer, ascetic feats and applied participation in living Church Tradition in theological dialogue. Spiritual intercommunion is embodied in the sacrament of Soborovanije (which Bulgakov saw as distinct from the liturgical sacrament of Holy Unction which is one of the seven

*1 Jn 3:34

sacraments) [*Antipina 2021*]. He understood the sacrament of Soborovanije as an act which embodies existing Christian unity:

Coming together in unity in Christ, established by kinship of Christian experience, is a sort of sacrament of spiritual life and spiritual communion, as it were, in the unity of Christ long before actual communion from a common cup can take place [*Bulgakov 1933, 19*].

On the basis of spiritual intercommunion, eucharistic intercommunion becomes possible and takes place in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

On Bulgakov's idea, sacramental blessing of the bishop should be administered to both priests and laypeople from both the Anglican and Orthodox sides. Sacramental blessing, in the case of an Anglican priest (and the corresponding rite also for laypeople) wouldn't amount to reception into the Eastern Orthodox church, but would mean elimination of his isolation:

"The sacramental blessing" was not to be confused with reordination or conditional ordination or any other sacrament of the Church; it was to be related to the purposes of partial intercommunion and was defined as expressing the need for sacramental action in an effort towards restoring the violated sacramental unity of the Church [*Summary*].

For an Orthodox priest, the blessing of an Orthodox bishop will amount to "an insurance" in case his flock should doubt, because "the Orthodox clergy who took part in acts of intercommunion at Mass might be accused of having lost their priesthood" [*Dobbie-Bateman 1933*].

Bulgakov insists that only those members of the Fellowship who have received the "sacramental blessing" of their bishops, who are the bearers of sacramental ecclesial authority within their specific eucharistic communities, be admitted to eucharistic intercommunion: "Such fellowship in the Eucharist should not be hap-hazard, but must receive the sanction of a Church action... Therefore such intercommunion can only take place when the blessing of the diocesan bishop has been received for the purpose" [*Partial Intercommunion, 119*]. For Orthodox members of the Fellowship, sacramental blessing was to be given by Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii) or the Patriarch of Constantinople, under whose canonical authority they were. Anglicans were to receive the blessing of their local diocesan bishop or the Archbishop of Canterbury [*Partial Intercommunion, 119*].

Bulgakov presumed that before celebrating the liturgy, during the first hour, the Orthodox bishop should give his blessing to the Anglican priest “through the laying on of the hands of the bishop on the Anglican priest with the words of the prayer from the ordaining of priests, however, with the words changed in an appropriate manner: “The grace divine... cleaveth through the laying-on of hands on the priest N. for intercommunion with the Orthodox members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. Wherefore let us pray for him, that the grace of the all-Holy Spirit may come upon Him” [*Partial Intercommunion*, 120]. Likewise, it was envisaged that an Anglican bishop would administer a blessing with the same meaning to an Orthodox priest. Laypeople could be admitted to intercommunion via chrismation with the words “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. Bulgakov’s idea was that “It would imply the conveying of a special gift, to one who has already been confirmed, for the purpose of intercommunion with the Orthodox in the Eucharist” [*Partial Intercommunion*, 120]. Here, Bulgakov makes use of the ancient Christian understanding of chrismation as transmission of “the Holy Spirit together with all His grace-filled gifts necessary for spiritual life” [*Makarius (Bulgakov)*, 358]. In Fr. Sergius’s thought, the basic ecclesial economy (up to and including Eucharistic fellowship as its culmination) is the grace of the Holy Spirit, and unity is one of the gifts this grace brings. This makes it possible to call the ecclesiology Bulgakov proposes “charismatic ecclesiology”, and to understand the church, first and foremost, as a spiritual movement of Christians called to common service and ministry.

In recognizing the possibility and desirability of partial intercommunion between members of the Fellowship, Bulgakov denies the possibility of “open intercommunion” with members of Protestant denominations. In his letter to Hiermonk Lev Gillet, Bulgakov insists that it is necessary to “clearly differentiate between spiritual fellowship through our faith in Christ and our love of Him (‘when two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them’) and Eucharistic fellowship (even when this is spiritual)” [*Bulgakov 1953*, 4]. As such, “spiritual fellowship through our faith in Christ and our love of Him” can be understood as church unity within the bounds of the broad ecumenical movement. By “spiritual Eucharistic fellowship”, Bulgakov probably meant the church unity that existed in the Fellowship. Thus, having recognized the sacrificial character of the Eucharist and its salvific action, members of the Fellowship (Orthodox and Anglican) could testify, in the words of Bishop Frere: “we make acts of spiritual communion at our Eucharists and experience common

worship and a very real, though not fully sacramental, communion with each other” [*General*, 13]. As concerned Protestant brothers, Bulgakov affirms that their Eucharist, “is not the same Eucharist which was appointed by Our Lord for the purpose of a full and complete union with Him, and through Him between ourselves”. Therefore, only “the so-called ‘Apostolic Succession’ combined with a faith in the true Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, represents an objective condition, independent of our will, for making Eucharistic fellowship possible or impossible” [*Bulgakov 1953*, 5].

Conclusion

Bulgakov considered the acquisition of unity — as a gift of the Holy Spirit by every member of the Church and the gift of communion with Christ and others — to be the foundation of the church gathering. In addition to the sacramental (eucharistic) path to acquisition and realization of church unity, Bulgakov also recognized the charismatic path for the creation of unity through the sacrament of Soborovanije. Sacramental unity is a shared responsibility of the bishop as the president of the eucharistic community and the community itself as the gathering of the faithful. Soborovanije is also a calling of all members of the Church. This accent on the sobornal nature of the Church understood as the mutual fellowship of the whole Christian world through acceptance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, makes it possible for us to call Bulgakov’s teaching on the church “charismatic ecclesiology”. A vision of the church as a sacramental-charismatic movement (as per this “charismatic ecclesiology”) distinct from a vision of the church as a hierarchical-canonical organization (as per universal ecclesiology) or a sacramental-hierarchical community (as per eucharistic ecclesiology), is what stands behind Bulgakov’s idea of partial intercommunion.

The idea of partial intercommunion differs from the idea of open communion which is practiced by Protestant churches, where any baptised Christian is invited to partake in the Remembrance of the Lord’s Supper. Bulgakov did not consider the Eucharist to be a means of reunion, but a visible sign of church unity already achieved — so-called spiritual intercommunion — of common faith expressed in prayer.

Without calling Fr. Sergius’s understanding of sobornost as a whole into doubt, we are tempted to criticize his affirmation that the sacramental ministry of the hierarchy reveals the sobornal nature of the church gathering. Drawing upon early Christian forms of church order, Fr. Sergius fails to take into account that in his own contempo-

rary ecclesial reality the bishop does not always act as president of the eucharistic gathering. In the majority of contemporary Orthodox parishes, the sacramental ministry of the president is completed by the parish priest, and the bishop has very little connection with the eucharistic gathering in the shared celebration of the sacraments. This practice calls the role of the bishop in the life of the church into question, including his role in the embodiment of the church's sobornal nature.

Fr. Sergius's hopes for the rebirth of the church's sobornost through the service of church communities also seem unfounded, if by "community" he means the autocephalous local church. The sacrament of Soborovanije as acquisition of church unity can't happen in a local parish community if this community isn't in itself one which already embodies unity of life, prayer and faith. For this sort of commonality, unity must be expressed in agreed formulae which all members of the community confirm and consciously and voluntarily share. The Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius was exactly this sort of community, which embodied mutual fellowship of Orthodox and Anglicans in prayer, life and theological dialogue. Both from the Orthodox and from the Anglican sides, the Fellowship was represented only by those members who desired this unified life, and not by parishes or dioceses. The example of the Fellowship testifies that it is more appropriate to link Soborovanije's experience with the ministry of charismatic groups (spiritual movements) such as communities and brotherhoods, than with the ministry of autocephalous local churches.

A reading of the ecumenical works of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov gives us relevant research tasks for today. These works convince us that it is possible to keep our eyes open with regard to canonical and dogmatic contradictions which may arise on the path to church unity, while endeavouring to search for theological paths to the resolution of these contradictions through the development of theology as living Holy Tradition. In researching Bulgakov's works, the related task of translating these works also arises. While our western colleagues are hard at work translating Fr. Sergius's works into European languages, the task of translating his foreign language works and their analyses into Russian remains ahead of us.

Sources

1. *Bulgakov 1928* = Bulgakov Sergii, archpriest (1928). "The Lausanne Conference and the papal encyclical". *Put'*, 1928, n. 13, pp. 71–82 (in Russian).

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