

informativ sein will als unbedingt das Schöne oder Vergangene abzulichten. Das Wundern über die Pracht und der Schmerz über den Verlust stellen sich als zwei Seiten der Medaille einer Jahrhunderte langen kulturhistorischen Entwicklung bei der intensiven Betrachtung der Bilder und beim Studium der Begleittexte ganz von allein ein. Ob diese ungemein wichtige Bestandsaufnahme nun aber dazu dienen wird, den zuständigen Stellen wenigstens Mittel zur Konservierung der noch erhaltenen Bausubstanz zu entlocken, oder aber Ikonendiebe anlockt, wird sich zeigen. Auch die *tsās-sons* sind der Letzteren wegen heute verschlossen – dass Gegenstände aus diesen Gotteshäusern zu stehlen als kaum wiedergutzumachende Sünde gilt, hat als Abschreckung leider offenbar ausgedient.

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МИХАИЛ ДОЛБИЛОВ, ДАРИУС СТАЛЮНАС: *Обратная уния: из истории отношений между католицизмом и православием в Российской империи 1840–1873* [A Reverse Union: An Episode from the History of the Relationship between Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire, 1840–1873]. ЛП. Вильнюс 2010. 274 pp. ISBN 9789955847328.

The book, which is actually a collection of documents with a thorough introduction of roughly 100 pages, is the result of a productive collaboration between two historians, both of whom already have made an undoubtedly valuable contribution to the study of the Imperial policies on the Western borderlands of the Russian Empire.¹

This publication under review deals with an ambitious project of the union between the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church that was conceived in the Russian Empire's Northwestern provinces (Lithuania and Belarus, hereafter NWP). After the Union of Brest in 1596 several million of Orthodox Christians on the territory of the *Rzeczpospolita* joined the Roman Catholic Church with permission to retain their liturgy. In the course of the centuries, the Byzantine rite has been mingled with the Catholic one, producing hybrid forms of religious culture. Following

¹ Михаил Д. Долбилов: *Русский край, чужая вера. Этноконфессиональная политика империи в Литве и Белоруссии при Александре II* [Russian Region, Foreign Faith: Ethno-confessional imperial politics in Lithuania and Belarus under Alexander II], Москва 2010; DARIUS STALIŪNAS: *Making Russians. Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863*, Amsterdam 2007 (On the Boundary of Two Worlds. Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics, 11).

the Polish uprising of 1830/31 the Russian Imperial government encouraged measures to purify the Uniate church from the Catholic rite, which have resulted in the official abolition of the Uniate Church in 1839. After the Polish Uprising of 1863 the policy of de-Polonisation directly affected the repressions against Catholicism, resulting in mass conversions and the closing down of churches and monasteries. Thus, in just a few years after 1863 there were 75,000 conversions of Catholics to Orthodoxy in NWP; while in five provinces alone 375 Catholic churches, monasteries and chapels were closed.² Even in view of the Orthodox clergy, the so-called “return” of the peasants back to their forefathers’ faith has been carried by administrative, rather than missionary methods, often giving priority to ritual rather than to dogmatic differences between two churches (pp. 19–20).

In this context, the project of a so-called “reverse Union” has emerged within a small circle of the local Catholics and converts from Catholicism. In a nutshell, the idea was the creation of the Russian Catholic Church, autonomous from Rome, politically loyal to the state and in unity with the Orthodox Church. They envisaged the incorporation of the Catholic Church in the structure of the religious administration in the Russian empire alongside other confessional groups. The authors of the project were the renegade Bishop Antonii Zubko, a graduate of Polotsk Jesuit Collegium and the Seminary at Wilno University, who converted to Orthodoxy after 1839; an editor of a local paper Adam Gonorii Kirkor and the Minsk *maréchal de la noblesse* Evstafii Prushinskii. The project advocated the subordination of the Catholic Church to the Holy Synod and the dogmatic union with the Orthodox Church (including the abolition of filioque and the doctrine of the supremacy of the pope). Bishop Antonii believed that the support of the Union by the elites would ensure the disposition of the masses. The initiative of Antonii, submitted already in 1840, however, was not supported by the Imperial government of Nicholas I, who saw in the Roman Church an instrument of stability, while at the same time searching for dynastic ties with the Catholic Hapsburgs, the position, which in 1847 resulted in the Concordat with Rome.

The attempts to launch a reverse union were resumed after the uprising of 1863, when the negative association between Polish nationalism and Roman Catholicism was quite typical for the official thinking. A new memorandum “How to terminate the abnormal situation in the western provinces” was submitted to the Ministry of the Interior in 1865. The authors of the plan criticised the existing wave of mass conversions to Orthodoxy as detrimental to public order and proposed the institutional reorganisation of the Roman Catholic Church with the aim of creating a “Russian Catholic Church” with the centre in St Petersburg, not Rome. This proposal, written in 1873, has become known in the West in a distorted form translated into French by the Russian Jesuit Ivan Martynov. The version is also

² Ibid., pp. 134, 150.

published in this volume. The other documents are related to this project: “The present situation of the Northwestern provinces” (1866), for example, features a detailed account of the corruption in the administration of Konstantin Kaufman, the Governor-General of Wilno.

The goals and intentions of the authors of the project, as Dolbilov and Staliūnas argue, could be quite contradictory. The Orthodox proponents expected that the union would lead to the absorption of Catholicism by Orthodoxy; the Catholics, on the contrary, cherished a hope that by splitting from Rome they could preserve their religion and dissuade the government from the persecution of Catholicism. The authors of the projects emphasised that the administrative approach to religious life was doomed because it only strengthened the Catholic faith. In the words of the authors of the project “How to get out of the abnormal situation in Western provinces”: “the prohibitive measures can cause hypocrisy but can hardly change people’s beliefs. We could build hundreds of Orthodox churches, we could convert thousands to Orthodoxy but the Latin faith will not be shaken and will only grow stronger” (p. 123).

Dolbilov and Staliūnas trace the parallels between the Brest Union of 1596 and the project of the “reverse union”, pointing out that in both cases the proponents (who represented a small circle) tried to preserve the ritual identity of the respective confessional groups. The project has not been implemented. Moreover, there are very few signs indicating any serious interest of the Imperial bureaucrats in the “reverse union”. The Imperial government had followed the path of a “confessional state” (Robert Crews) in which “the institutions of various religions were integrated in the bureaucratic apparatus and, moreover, mediated civil relations between the authorities and subjects” (p. 267).

The volume is divided into two parts: the first one provides a detailed discussion of the context, authorship and the outcomes of the projects. The second one provides an edited publication of the six documents, unearthed from the archives. The publication of these documents, accompanied by a thorough commentary, is an important illustration of the complexity of the confessional politics in the imperial context, which was as contentious as ethnicity and nationality.

It is difficult to judge the significance of these unfulfilled projects in the history of the Western borderlands. As we learn from this honest historical study, the projects were neither marshalled by the imperial administration, nor were they enthusiastically supported by some wider circles of either Orthodox or Catholic sections of society. It seems that this publication will be of interest to the narrow circle of specialists working in the field of the history of the Russian Empire, and historians of Poland, Lithuania and Belarus.

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