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## The Orthodox Church and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

*Abstract:* This paper presents and analyses the views of Roman Catholic theologians on the mutual influences of the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council and liturgical renewal among Roman Catholics and the Orthodox. These can be summed up in the following way. The Roman Catholic liturgical reform made much use of the liturgical richness of the East, of its testimonials, theology, and ethos. All of this is worked into the theology of the representatives of the Liturgical Movement and also found its expression in the decisions of the Second Vatican Council. On the other hand, this new liturgical theology, already during the process of its emergence and coming to life, reciprocally influenced the Orthodox theologians: it faced them with challenges, opened new perspectives and, in a specific manner, brought them back to themselves. Though the situation in the Orthodox Churches was not identical to the one in the West, there also existed certain departures from the true Eucharistic life and deformations, which had to be drawn attention to. The liturgical reform of the West and its great liturgical movement can serve the East as a stimulus for thought and for the implementation of similar measures, with necessary modifications.

*Keywords:* liturgical movement, ethos, law, *Typicon*, mutual theological influence, Byzantine rite

*Povzetek:* **Pravoslavna Cerkev in *Sacrosanctum Concilium***

Prispevek predstavi in analizira poglede rimskokatoliških teologov o vplivu liturgične reforme drugega vatikanskega koncila in liturgične preнове med rimskokatoličani in pravoslavni. Te poglede lahko zberemo na različne načine. Rimskokatoliška Cerkev je pri preoblikovanju bogoslužja zajemala iz bogastva vzhodnega bogoslužja, iz njegovega pričevanja, teologije in etosa. To je mogoče najti v teologiji liturgičnega gibanja, pokazalo pa se je tudi v odločitvah drugega vatikanskega koncila. Po drugi strani je ta nova teologija že v času nastajanja vplivala na pravoslavne teologe; soočila jih je z izzivi, odprla jim je nove poglede in jih na poseben način spodbudila, da se vrnejo nazaj k sebi. Čeprav stanje v pravoslavni Cerkvi ni bilo enako kakor razmere na Zahodu, je mogoče opaziti nekatere napačne poti in deformacije v euharističnem življenju, na katere moramo opozoriti. Liturgična prenova na Zahodu in njeno močno liturgično gibanje sta lahko Vzhodu spodbuda za razmislek in za implementacijo podobnih smernic s potrebnimi prilagoditvami.

*Ključne besede:* liturgično gibanje, etos, zakon, *typicon*, vzajemni teološki vpliv, bizantinski obred

It is impossible to talk about Council's Decree *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as well as its content and ways of implementation in life of Church, without taking into account the Liturgical movement - phenomenon that most directly has caused basic ideas of this Decree. Therefore, in the year when the whole Christendom pays special attention to fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, it is, also, impossible not to recall the basic ideas that promoters of the Liturgical movement brought before conciliar doors and that are incorporated into basic ideals of the Council's Decree *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which we specially deal with in this paper. The Liturgical movement has put before itself two aims. On the one hand, to make humankind of the age free, to raise it up, to live the liturgical life in its fullness. Here it is important to mention that the basic idea was that the man of today is not to be taken as a perfect subject to whom everything has to be adapted. It demands of him an ascetical effort - something that, in post-conciliar era, was sometimes neglected – demands that he also take a step forward, that he also goes out to meet a true experience and understanding of Divine Services. The belief that modern man is the absolute measure and perfect criterion for everything and that only what he accepts, likes, affirms has some value, is totally erroneous. Balthazar in a characteristic fashion comments on this, stating that:

»If a generation is not able to provide any authentic religious images for the Church, it should not claim that bare walls more effectively concentrate the spirit on what is essential. If we have become small people, we should not try to reduce the mystery we are celebrating to our own size.«  
(Balthazar 1986, 138)

The question of the phenomenon of inculturation is also similar. The danger of an erroneously understood inculturation has been correctly pointed out, and one is called to a Biblically based teaching in which culture also, in as great as measure as possible, mirrors the Liturgy that should bear a certain ascetic tension in relation to the cultural milieu. (Kavanagh 1982, 103)

On the other hand, the Church in the Liturgical movement attempts to express the truth of the Gospel in a comprehensible and receptive language. Faithfulness to the task that the Church has – to at all times bring the Gospel closer to the faithful, to make it understandable to the world – is what that faithfulness is about.

Roman Catholic theology has many times focused its attention on the liturgical life of the Orthodox, as before the Second Vatican Council itself, so also after it as well. The manner in which they thought about the relation between Orthodoxy and the liturgical renewal of the Roman Catholic Church, as it showed through liturgical movement, and also codified on Second Vatican Council, is not simple, and has passed through differing phases. We remark at the very beginning that throughout whole presentation we will comparatively discuss on the Council's Decree *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as well on the fertile and important Liturgical movement that preceded and led to it, at the end.

The first approach to this problem consider that the liturgical life of both Churches, Eastern and Western, is mutually conditioned; and that is seen best preci-

sely in the questions of the Liturgical movement and conciliar liturgical reform. In his study on Alexander Schmemmann, Aidan Nichols, paraphrasing Father John Meyendorff, writes that Schmemmann greatly depends upon the theology of French Patristics and Liturgics, especially on the theology of Bouyer and Danielou. (Nichols 1995, 148) Before we continue with Nichols's arguments we want to remind that the most obvious impact of mutual exchange between Orthodox and Roman Catholics was in French-speaking areas. Robert Taft noticed it, saying that:

»... Liturgical movement among francophone Catholics drew inspiration from contacts with the Orthodox of the Russian emigration who had found refuge in France in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. As a protagonist and historian of the liturgical movement, Dom Olivier Rousseau, O.S.B. (1898–1984), explained, this was because »the Orthodox Church has preserved the liturgical spirit of the early Church, and continues to live by this spirit, to drink from it as from its purest source ... This Church has never departed in its piety and its offices from the liturgical spirit of the early Church, to which it has always remained faithful.« (Taft 2008)

Nichols underlines the fact that the greater part of research on the history of the Liturgy was done in the West; but that scholars more and more called upon the testimony of Orthodoxy, attempting to renew those accents and categories that in a certain fashion were lost in the Churches of the West. (Nichols 1995, 152) This type of thinking could imply a certain scientific-research inferiority of the East, and a subordinating of Eastern theology to a status of protector and conservator of tradition. Nichols here does not forget the reciprocal influence of Orthodoxy on Roman Catholic researchers, i.e. the discovery of the fundamental principles of the liturgical life that were preserved in Orthodox spirituality, but forgets (or does not know) about huge contribution of Russian prerevolutionary liturgical science, disabled to take a deserved place on the world theological scene by language barrier on the one hand, and breakdown of normal scientific work on the other, brought by October Revolution (A.A. Dmitrievskiy, 1754–1828; M.N. Skabalanovitch, 1871–1931 and many others). Anyway, that mutual expanding of horizons – the passing of the results of scientific research of the West into the theological thought of the East, and its later development and adaptation, as well as the adoption of the richness of the liturgical life of the East by the West – enriched liturgical life of both Churches. Nichols characteristically concludes this thinking on the relation between the liturgical renewal of Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Churches stating that the idea of liturgical theology understood in this way belongs equally to Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and classical Protestantism. (Nichols 1995, 151)

The second approach starts from the assumption that the awakening of interest for liturgical problematics among Orthodox Christians (in all theological disciplines and thematic-problemic totalities) coincided with the growth of the Liturgical movement and the fruits of the liturgical renewal achieved through it in the West. They are characterized by a certain type of uni-directionalness in presentation:

while, for example, they point out the existence of similar or identical theological and pastoral aims that the representatives of both Churches put before themselves, they experience this process as one-dimensional. The East is turned towards the research and interests of the West, but the East does not offer the West much in exchange; at some times, nothing. Thus, for example, Vaggagini writes:

»It is well known that the Orthodox ... who are in contact with the realities of the Catholic Liturgical Movement, have been considerably and favorably impressed by it, not only because a whole series of prejudices and accusations made against the Church in this area are put to flight thereby, but also because pondering upon the situation, they have thereby been forced to an awareness that the dimension of the Mystery of Christ in which in the past they frequently gloried as if it were a traditional characteristic of the Eastern Church in contraposition to Catholic is in reality much more developed and more profoundly viewed by Catholics than in their own Churches.« (Vaggagini 1976, 835)

Third approach to this problem share authors whose most eminent representative is Robert Taft. Taft's approach to this problem is not simple and requires serious analysis. Referring to the question of the relationship between Liturgical Renewal and the Christian East, he writes that:

»In the pre- and post-Vatican II Roman Catholic liturgical renewal, the following were *directly inspired by the East*: the restoration of Holy Week and the Easter Vigil under Pius XII, liturgy in the vernacular, the Spirit-epiclesis in the new post-Vatican II Roman-rite anaphoras (which calls on the Spirit to consecrate these gifts), eucharistic concelebration, Communion under both species, the permanent (and married) diaconate, the recomposition of the ancient unity of Christian initiation in the justly famous Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, revisions in the rites of ordination and confirmation, and the attempts (in my view unsuccessful) to restore the Liturgy of the Hours.« (Taft 2008)

However, being in status *directly inspired by the East* for Taft is not easy and self-evident phenomenon. Liturgical movement representatives have not, in Taft's opinion: » ... so much imitate existing Eastern usage, as make decisions on the basis of perceived pastoral need and then find justification and support in patristic and Eastern precedents, as interpreted in the light of those needs.« (Taft 2008)

In other place Taft will put into question the idea of a priori identifying Eastern Liturgy with ancient and unimpared expressions of liturgical forms and shapes. While he was speaking of the concelebration practice in Roman Catholic Church, he said that:

»It has long been a theological device to turn eastwards in search of supporting liturgical evidence for what one has already decided to do anyway. Something like this was at work in certain pre-Vatican II discussions on the possibility of restoring concelebration in the Roman rite. The un-

derlying presupposition seems to be that Eastern practice will reflect a more ancient—indeed the ancient—tradition of the undivided Church. Let's review the evidence.« (Taft 1984, 82)

Reminding that, »nor, as both Jungmann and Dix showed a generation ago, can one simply presume that *Eastern* equals *ancient*« (89). Taft points to something deeper than the concrete liturgical expression that East can provide the West and that is *liturgical ethos*, i.e. modality of liturgical living and understanding on the East:

»What is ancient about Eastern eucharistic practice is not its various modes of concelebration, some quite admirable, others less so, but its preservation, by and large, of the ancient ideal of Eucharistic unity: one community, one altar, one Eucharist.« (89–90)

On the other hand, let us not forget, Taft reminds us that the entire conception of liturgical renewal in the manner in which it was conceived and realized in the West are as a whole foreign to the Orthodox experience and liturgical self-consciousness. They should not, and they must not, therefore be entirely taken over into Orthodox environments. That does not, at the same time, mean that the Orthodox Churches do not have the need for *another form* of liturgical renewal.

Taft bases his understanding of the problems on the view that, contrary to Western Christians, the Eastern did not see in the Constitution on the Holy Liturgy anything revolutionary nor new – we would add this is only partially true. Faithfulness of the Orthodox Church to the liturgical spirit of the golden age of the Holy Fathers conditioned this situation. (Taft 1984a, 11) On the other hand, the attempt to import the question of liturgical renewal, in the manner it was conceived of in the West, to the Orthodox East represents a problem in itself. It is an expression of a type of violent reduction of differences and riches in the liturgical expression and consciousness to one of their variants, the Western. (116)

The situation among the Orthodox is, according to Taft's thinking, essentially different. In the first place, the experience of absolute liturgical unification, of the type the Council of Trent brought to Western Christianity, was unknown of in the East. (116) This does not presuppose for Taft an existence of liturgical chaos and a predominance of individualism and personal judgment, of personal caprice, as, he writes, happened in the West when liturgical law was made more relaxed at and after the Second Vatican Council. (118)

The Orthodox East has a totally different stance toward the problems of the relation between the liturgical law and personal freedom:

»In the East the alternative to an imposed legalism and rubricism is not anarchic individualism, but spontaneous fidelity to the common tradition. Take for example the Byzantine Rite. Except for some Synodal decrees and a few novella of Justinian, there is no corpus of liturgical law obligatory in the Byzantine Churches. Incredible as it may seem, this most splendid, complex, highly ceremonialized worship in the whole of Christendom has evolved and maintained itself for the most part in a natural way, without

the need of formal law. This is precisely what we mean by living liturgical tradition. Of course it results in any number of loose ends, hard to reconcile practices, customs that overlap or even contradict one another – but they are the loose ends of the living, rather than the well-ordered immobility of the dead.« (116)

The liturgical life of the East is not clericalized in the manner that was done in the West. For example: The fact that it is mostly sung allows the active participation of all the faithful. The non-existence of pews and seats in churches eliminates that passive, theatrical dimension of the participation of the faithful at the service. The liturgical procession of the priest through the church even more emphasizes that all-encompassing participation at the service. (118)

Taft therefore considers that a Liturgical movement which would be a copy of the Roman Catholic one is not necessary to the Churches of the East:

»... worship in the East has remained a true *leitourgia*, or public service of the whole community. Hence there is no question of any need for a »Liturgical Movement« to bring the piety of the people back to its source in the prayer of the Church. The East has never known the separation of spirituality, theology and ecclesiology from liturgy, with the consequent degeneration of piety into individualism finding its expression in private prayer, meditation and devotion in the face of inaccessible, clericalized public rites.« (119)

On the other hand, the spirit that that Movement brought is not to be rejected; that is, the spirit of a free relation towards liturgical tradition, towards pre-existing forms and shapes of divine services that are neither ideal nor perfect (Taft 1984b, 81.), and that should at all times be better and of greater quality. That freedom is always directed and guided by faithfulness to the spirit of Tradition, to the internal logic and meaning of the services; but it does not by that cease to be what it in fact is: the possibility of a legal and legitimate intervention into the structure and constitutive elements of the services.

Orthodox liturgical theologians, whose most famous representative is Father Alexander Schmemmann, have noticed long ago that representatives of the Liturgical movement being not satisfied with the situation they found themselves in, sought for solutions that had been deeper than the Medieval scholastic heritage. For this reason they retreated to the common undivided inheritance of the Churches, as well as to the manners that it actively preserves and lives today in the Orthodox milieu. The contribution of Orthodoxy to the Liturgical Movement, he said, is made up of offering an *internal theological meaning of the Liturgy*, of its *ethos* and its *praxis*, that was discovered anew in the East, though greatly dimmed. (Schmemmann 1977, 101–102)

This means that the Liturgical movement started the theologically fruit-bearing dialogue among the Churches, and enabled the exchanging of experiences that brought about a theological enriching of all participants, not only with Orthodox

Churches but with some Protestant communities, because, as we all know the theology and spirituality of Protestant communities have also positively influenced the Liturgical Movement. In some way, the Liturgical movement established a relation with almost all main ideas of the Protestant reformers of the 16th century: the question of the vernacular as the liturgical language, communal singing, accentuation on sermonizing, frequent reception of Communion and highlighting the general priestly charisma of the faithful. (White 1995, 95) Of course, the relation was not unilateral in any of the mentioned cases – both the Protestant, but neither the Orthodox; they take over much from the Roman Catholic Liturgical Movement.

Although liturgical renewal as an organized movement came to life and developed mostly among the Christians of the West, it still without a doubt has a deep internal bond with the Churches of the East; and as such is of special interest for Orthodox theologians. (Schmemmann 1977, 13) In this is seen the truthfulness of the words of another prominent orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas Metropolitan of Pergamon, and co-President of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church, according to whom not one tradition can say to the others: *I do not need you*. (Zizioulas 1988, 39)

This is especially important when one speaks of liturgical theology. Robert Taft, pointing out Baumstark's contribution to Liturgics through comparative research, correctly notices that for a true knowledge of the Liturgy, knowledge of more than one tradition is necessary, as for a true knowledge of philology one must know more than one language. (Taft 1993, XII) This means that familiarization with the historical development and theological problematics that the Liturgical movement in the West had, as well as the liturgical renewal that it brought forth, represents a necessary part of quality consideration of similar phenomena and problems in Orthodox environments. In other words, for an Orthodox theologian the material and experience that the Liturgical movement in the West has accumulated and Second Vatican Council promulgated are not something foreign; but just the opposite, one of the most valuable aids in his work. (Schmemmann 1977, 13) Entering in dialogue with the liturgical renewal of the West does not mean coming into a situation of passive acceptance of already given views and solutions. Orthodoxy in that dialogue needs to give its own fruit-bearing contribution, to enrich the theological thinking of the western Churches, to give fuller theological-spiritual bases to the liturgical renewal. And again, dialogue would not be dialogue if we could not learn something from it also.

The classical distinction between two mentality: the Eastern and the Western is literally no longer possible nowadays.. The division of Christianity into the Western and Eastern Church, older and deeper than the Great Schism, the division of mentalities and approaches, of theological languages, of types of piety, although today not totally erased (probable never will be), still become less and less expressed and sharp. The situation in which Orthodoxy finds itself today in traditionally Orthodox Countries even becomes all the more similar to the Western situation. The problems are similar, and that so especially because they are caused



by the similar social, cultural and psychological situation. This is seen also in Church life, especially in the phenomenon of individualism that has here acquired religious components and gains its specific expressions in Western culture; precisely by this it will also participate in the problems such as the Western Church have (Zizioulas 1985, 141) – in the opinion of Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas. Due to all of this, the answers to those problems which have already been given, their successes and misses, become truly important for us Orthodox.

Robert Taft thinks that Eastern Christianity has found itself in a crisis because it has not yet learned to meet with the modern, a lesson that the West has learned with much pain and many failures. Orthodoxy, in his opinion, has no reason to fear the modern. On the other hand, Taft thinks that Orthodoxy would not be hurt by some of the Western virtues, as facing the modern in a courageous, open manner, a manner that has its own integrity and vision. (Taft 1996, 296) A feeling for the unity of modern culture, in which no one is nor can remain an island, is also vital to Eastern Christianity. (297)

The complicated and in-much delicate relation that Orthodox Church has with the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the Balkans regions, whether one wants to admit it or not, throws a shadow on this theological optimism, and for one part of Orthodox Christians (whether only them?) surely asks the question of whether there is any point to it. This simply cannot be neither avoided nor ignored. But still this is not crucial when the problematics we are dealing with essentially are in question. Without desiring to more expansively enter upon the great question of the relationship between Roman Catholics and Orthodox, we remain firm in the belief that the liturgical renewal of the Roman Catholic Church is not a phenomenon that affects only Western Christianity.

It is our opinion that the Liturgical Movement, begun with Dom Prosper Guéranger, that so stirred up the spirits in the ecclesial circles of Western Europe (both Roman Catholic as well as Protestant), and having *as one possible solution* the Second Vatican Council, has continued to persevere and continues to be present in all Christian environments. Its fundamental ideas are common, its demands are necessary to all, its ideals have still not in any environment been totally realized. The Liturgical movement has still not yet fulfilled all its goals. Because of that we are now talking about need for *new liturgical movement*, or to put it in wider context – need for *new evangelization*, in which way this need was named at XIII Ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops held on 7–28 October 2012 in Rome.

But let us conclude this paper. One can see from the examples given that in the thinking of both Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians the relation of the mutual influences of the liturgical reform and renewal among Roman Catholics and the Orthodox can be summed up in the following number of views. The Roman Catholic liturgical reform made much use of the liturgical richness of the East: its testimonials, theology, ethos. All of this is interwoven into the theology of the representatives of the Liturgical Movement, and also found its expression in the



decisions of the Second Vatican Council. On the other hand, this new liturgical theology, already in the process of being vitalized, reciprocally influenced the theology of Orthodox theologians: it placed before them issues, it opened perspectives, and in a specific manner brought them back to themselves. Even though the situation in the Orthodox Churches was not identical to the one in the West, still there also existed in them a certain departure from and deformation of the true Eucharistic life, and they as such should be reclaimed. The liturgical reform of the West and its great Liturgical movement can serve the East as a stimulus for thought and an implementation of similar, situation appraised, phenomena.

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