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Once More Unto the Breach, Dear Friends: Orthodox and Catholic Views on the Papacy

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Paul McPartlan, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, the Eucharist, and Church Unity* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), x + 100 pp.

John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), xix + 102 pp.

I was invited as one of nine scholars in November 2014 to the “private” Holy Spirit Colloquium at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, where the Catholic theologian Paul McPartlan gave a keynote lecture on Vatican II. I was looking forward to seeing dear friends in the city and to conversations with my fellow colloquists from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox universities around the country. I was not looking forward to the lecture. Since 2012, it seemed the entire Catholic world was consumed with nearly fetishistic commemorations of the council. Worse, this commemorative memorializing carried on into 2013, 2014, and 2015, observing the fiftieth anniversary of each conciliar session. After about two years of this gross surfeit, I said to myself that I never wanted to hear another

paper or attend another conference on the council for at least twenty years.¹

Then I heard McPartlan's lecture.² It is (as I said to him after) the hallmark of superlative scholars that they can take what is well-trod material and find fresh, interesting insights in that material and use it to make edifying conclusions as McPartlan did last November in Pittsburgh, as he has done here in *A Service of Love*, and as the Orthodox philosopher Manoussakis has also done with skill equal to McPartlan. McPartlan, an English Roman Catholic theologian, has been teaching at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC for a decade or so now and is a member of the official international commission for dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox church. Manoussakis is a Greek Orthodox priest and professor of philosophy at the (Jesuit) College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts. Both have authored very short but very thoughtful books that are at once respectfully critical of their own traditions where warranted but also deeply immersed in those traditions with obvious filial loyalty to them – a loyalty which, nonetheless, does not blind them to the gifts of the Orthodox tradition (in McPartlan's case) and of the Catholic (in Manoussakis's case).

It is worth dwelling on this latter point for a moment, especially in regards to Manoussakis's Greek Orthodox context, where too often today those involved in ecumenical dialogue are ipso facto presumed guilty of disloyalty to Orthodoxy and guilty of the "pan-heresy of ecumenism," an eye-wateringly tedious term one encounters with some regularity. It is obvious to those who will bother to read these books that neither author is willing to water down his church's respective truth claims in order to appease others. It is equally obvious

¹ As if ruefully to prove that one should be careful in what promises or oaths one makes to oneself, I was asked earlier this year to contribute to another commemoration of Vatican II, and thus my essay "A Critical Look at *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* Fifty Years Later" is forthcoming in Matthew Levering and Matthew Lamb, ed., *The Reception of Vatican II at 50: Retrospect and Prospect* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

² It is available here: <http://www.duq.edu/events/holy-spirit-lecture-and-colloquium/2014>.

that neither author is willing to engage in confessional polemics to score points against the other side.

These slender books show two scholars with laser-like focus on key questions offering cogent suggestions to the ongoing dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox. Moreover – if I may be permitted one further, and final, personal comment – both books also show a graciousness of spirit in engaging others on these issues, including my own 2011 book *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy: Ut Unum Sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity*. Both McPartlan and Manoussakis engage my book to some extent, agreeing with parts and disagreeing with others; and in their disagreement I came away the wiser and better for it, happy to re-think things in the presence of friends.³ Thus my title for this review – from, of course, *Henry V* (a.3, s.1), though without the martial spirit which follows this opening line (uttered on the eve of an English invasion of France)!

McPartlan's book is more tightly focused on the papacy and was published first, so let us begin with that. The introduction uses the 2007 Ravenna document of the official international Orthodox-Catholic dialogue as its point of departure.⁴ McPartlan sums up the key insights of the document before offering some ideas of his own in what he humbly terms “a proposal for an understanding of universal primacy that may be agreeable to both Catholics and Orthodox” (12; my emphasis). McPartlan analyzes Ravenna in the context of recent advances in eucharistic ecclesiology – including those of Vatican II – about which he has written several insightful books.⁵

He further – if very briefly – situates his whole discussion in the history of primacy going back to the early Church and coming up to Vatican II, noting its progress beyond the limita-

³ Further instances of this friendly engagement come in the interview I conducted with Manoussakis about this book and some of his helpful criticisms of my own work: <http://easternchristianbooks.blogspot.com/2015/03/philosophy-theology-and-search-for.html>.

⁴ Cf. my “Ravenna and Beyond: the Roman Papacy and the Orthodox Churches,” *One in Christ* 41 (2008): 99–138.

⁵ *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (T&T Clark, 1993); *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (T&T Clark, 2000).