

CELIBACY AND EASTERN TRADITION



Originally published in *Celibacy: The Necessary Option*, edited by George H. Frein (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp.32-72. Reprinted here with permission.

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PREFACE

Today for many reasons an attempt to write authoritatively on any of the subjects pertaining to the history or life of Oriental Christianity appears to be an almost insurmountable task. First of all, it seems that we are now only at the very beginning of scholarly research in this area, that is, at the very beginning of the discovery, organization, and critical evaluation of its sources.¹ There is also a very profound change in attitude, approach, and mentality taking place in the Western scholarly world in respect to the Oriental world in general and Oriental Christianity in particular.²

In the past, Western theology, philosophy, historiography, and

¹ This is exemplified by such collections of documents as *Monumenta Ucrainae Historica*, Rome, I (1964), II (1965).

² The best example of this among the official documents seems to be the *Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches* of Vatican II. Further, there is the publication of the Sacra Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, *Oriente Christiano: Cenni storici e statistiche*, Vatican City, 1962. There are many collections and periodicals concerned with the Christian East, among which excels *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* published by the Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies in Rome. The same change of attitude is also noticeable among the Orthodox theologians in respect to Western Christian theology. J. Meyendorff-N. Afanasieff-R. P. A. Schmemmann-N. Koulomzine, *The Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church*, London, 1963, represents an achieve-

generally all areas of investigation and scholarly research, were arguing from the point of view of strength, conviction of superiority, and a profound, almost blinding persuasion that Western civilization in its material and spiritual aspects, including Western Christianity, is the highest and the most perfect expression of the human achievement, possesses a universal value for the whole of mankind and for all times, and is the only one entitled to establish some authoritative patterns for future development.³

Needless to say, Oriental cultures, ancient civilizations, and especially religious systems and Churches were looked upon as exotic museum pieces, antiques, as well as sterile, puerile, or senile goods incapable of enriching and fructifying the future development of mankind and especially of Western Christianity. Fortunately today, because of many factors and an ecumenical spirit, this attitude is changing rapidly, and along with it the very appearance and structure, and partly even the contents, of Western Christianity. Because of political, economical, and social changes Western Christianity reviews its own historical past and is surprised to find in its foundation very definite Oriental Christian forms and ideas, which are able to revive the life of the whole Church of Christ or his divided body.

Some of the Oriental elements rediscovered by Western Christianity, and especially by the Latin Church, are in the liturgy: vernacular languages, concelebration, liturgical litanies, holy communion under two species for the laity in certain circumstances, procession around the altar, etc.⁴ In theology, major "orientalizing" elements are: the decision of Pius XII about the

ment which was unthinkable in the Orthodox Church just two decades ago. The same must be said of John Meyendorff, *Orthodoxy and Catholicity*, New York, 1966.

³ Even such excellent work like M. Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium*, I-V, Paris, 1926-1935, is not entirely immune to this attitude of superiority.

⁴ See *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican II.