

Thirty Years Later: Reflections on Vatican II's *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*

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Підсумок

Архимандрит монастиря студитського уставу в Каліфорнії, о. Боніфатій (Луйкс), аналізує два споріднені декрети Другого Ватиканського Собору: *Про Екуменізм*, і *Про Східні Католицькі Церкви*. Автор, який брав участь у Соборі як спеціаліст (*peritus*) вважає, що загал Церкви забув про ці Декрети. Вони однак переважливі, бо з'єднання християн було одне з головних цілей Собору. Декрет про Екуменізм підкреслює важливість святості та всепрощення в ділі з'єднання. Щодо Східних Церков, Собор наголосив, що вони саме помісні Церкви, а не тільки «Обряди». Їхня ідентичність не обмежується до відмінних літургічних форм. Автор вважає, що східні католики самі собі шкодять бо нерозуміють свою ідентичність національними категоріями, замість думати про себе по-богословськи. Щодо патріархів, західні єпископи на Соборі як слід не розуміли можливості поєднання папського примату з відповідною патріаршою владою і тому Декрет вповні не розвинув цього питання, обмежуючи юрисдикцію патріархів до своїх історичних територій. «Східні Церкви» треба розуміти в духовному змислі, як Церкви, які живуть спадщиною східних отців і т.д. Тому бодай в принципі остаточно могло б бути колись більше східних християн на Заході як на Сході. Сучасні папи дуже підкреслюють важливість цієї спадщини для вселенської Церкви. Латинізація, це велика перепона до розвитку східних католицьких Церков згідно з бажанням Собору та папів, які пригадують про потребу відродження їхньої автентичної спадщини. Автор тоді аналізує реакцію римо-католиків, східних-католиків, та православних до Декрету про

Східні Католицькі Церкви і висвітлює як то всі три сторони по-своєму не доцінюють його.



November 21, 1994 will mark the 30th anniversary of both *Unitatis Redintegratio* [UR],¹ and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* [OE],² the Second Vatican Council's decrees on ecumenism, and the Eastern Catholic Churches, respectively. In spite of their continued relevance, both of the decrees—especially the latter, seem to have fallen into oblivion in some circles. Only the post-conciliar popes and ecumenical patriarchs have consistently taken them seriously. For the rest of the Churches and bishops of East and West, they have been almost a *quantité négligeable*. Two citations from these Decrees should suffice to indicate why they remain important, and why it is appropriate that we in the Kievan Church Study Group are according them attention:

The restoration of unity among all Christians is *one of the principal concerns of the second Vatican Council* [my emphasis]: Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only (UR, par. 1).

The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous *the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the Universal Church* [my emphasis]. This sacred ecumenical council, therefore, in its *care for the Eastern Churches which bear living witness to this tradition, in order that they may flourish and with new apostolic vigor execute the task entrusted to them* [my emphasis] has determined to lay down a number of principles, in addition to those which refer to the

¹ Walter M. Abbott, SJ, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 339–66.

² *Ibid.*, 373–86.

Universal Church; all else is remitted to the care of the Eastern synods and of the Holy See (*OE*, par. 1).

What I propose to do is offer some personal reflections on these two Decrees. I do so as a former *peritus* of Vatican II. If at times my presentation seems less than systematic, it is because I simply desire to suggest insights regarding discreet elements of the Decrees as the former come to mind after so many years of reflection.

Unitatis Redintegratio

The style and contents of the Decree on Ecumenism are very different from its twin document, the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, as well as from many of the other conciliar decrees. It is as if the Decree on Ecumenism were not the fruit of the kind of lengthy and painful discussions which preceded the others. For example, the whole problem of ecumenism is seen from within the confines of Roman Catholicism: "we" are "here," and "over there" are "the others" (*UR* par. 15, sec. 3); and the others must join "us" in order to share in the true Church, successor of the Apostolic community with Peter at its head (see par. 3, sec. 5).³ The "others" are divided into two groups: the Eastern Orthodox, who have almost everything in common with "us," and the Protestants, who are much farther away.

Such an approach is problematic because even now and in spite of everything that separates them, the *Catholic Church is already present in all the separated brethren*—especially the Orthodox Churches, baptized in the one Trinity (par. 4, sec. 10), and united by common faith, prayer, celebration, etc. This is so even if the expression of this faith might be different (par. 17).

Because of this contrasting "we" and "they" division, *Unitatis Redintegratio* still holds to a Western approach to the Eastern Churches in paragraph 14, section 2. Ironically, however, it is the West which is a full-fledged daughter of the "Eastern" Church in almost all its institutions; Christianity derives from the East—its centre of gravity for many centuries. But in spite of this rather parochial Western viewpoint, the chapter on the Eastern Churches in *Unitatis Redintegratio* is very beautiful and forms a

³ As we will see further on, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, to the contrary, had in view the whole Eastern Church and viewed the problem from the perspective of the *totality of the Church*.

worthy complement to the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, as we shall see below. It shows a deep respect, knowledge, and love for Eastern traditions, and indicates why Pope John XXIII insisted so much on fully restoring the links between East and West. He saw this as a condition for enabling the Church to play her rightful role in society; her true and life-giving common heritage, often lost in the West, had to be revived. For this reason, the ecumenical apostolate should pay special attention to the ecclesial relations between East and West pre-dating the events of 1054. Needless to say, this is a very important principle for future inter-Church relations.

Emphasis on Holiness

The Decree on Ecumenism insists several times on *holiness* as the first ecumenical task, and this holiness will be the fruit of our atonement for our own sins in the West and of repairing all the injustices we have committed in the past against each other. They are the sins of *all* Christians that have broken the Body of Christ; therefore, *all* Christians are called upon to build up this unity again (par. 4, sec. 6; par 7, sec. 3; par. 8). Hence, all work for unity should be inspired not only by Christ's strong command of mutual love as a special testament, but also by the strong awareness of our sins, past and present.

How then does *Unitatis Redintegratio* see the unity of the Church? This unity comprises unity of faith, sacramental worship (especially the Eucharist), fraternal love and sharing, common service to society – and all this secured by the apostolic succession of the bishops in union with Peter. Differences are inevitable and even willed by the Saviour, as an expression of the fullness of the Mystery of the Incarnation and the need to adapt this Mystery to different cultures. However, separations cut deeper than differences; they attack the core of the Revelation and thus defy Christ's solemn command and ignore the Holy Trinity – paradigm of all unity. Yet, meanwhile, *imperfect unity* should be worked for and can exist while awaiting its fullness in a later period; this is especially true for the Eastern and Roman Churches, who already are united in the same faith, sacramental worship, apostolic succession, and especially in their approach to the Eucharist, Mystery of all anticipated unity in Christ.

The Decree on Ecumenism then stresses the *means* to foster this full reunion. While the exhortation is addressed to Catholics first (for whom the whole text has been composed), every Christian would profit by using these

means; they apply to all ecumenical work, with Orthodox as well as with Protestants, although our interest here extends primarily to the former.

The first means involves avoiding in speech, writing, action, etc., all that could constitute a barrier to building up good relations, on the personal and corporate levels. Secondly, the Decree comes back to the primary need for inner conversion to holiness, awareness of our own faults, sincere mutual forgiveness, and humility in rejoicing in all the good "the others" have done, and recognizing their spiritual riches. Thirdly, we should employ all opportunities for co-operating in social, educational, and charitable initiatives, and in praying together. Fourthly, a special and very important means is the dialogue on different levels, especially the theological, carefully distinguishing between the deposit of the faith and its wording, recognizing the hierarchy of truths within Revelation, and avoiding a false irenicism that confuses the blurring of differences with their real solution. Finally, all those who work for Church unity have to be totally under the impact of the Holy Spirit as the main Principle and Author of unity, who has to bring us all together in Christ, the Centre of all true unity, in the Holy Trinity.

Orientalium Ecclesiarum

After this hasty survey of the Decree on Ecumenism, we now turn to a deeper look at the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches. First, some incidental remarks.

Had the Fathers not been constrained by time, the shape and purport of this Decree may have been quite different. To begin with its title would probably have been "Decree on the Eastern Churches" instead of "...Eastern Catholic Churches." The Fathers saw the Eastern Churches, Catholic and Orthodox, as on the way to becoming one, as is shown in paragraphs 5 and 6. Therefore, the original title was "De Ecclesiae Unitate." This was not due to triumphalism; rather, it arose from a sense of how close the Orthodox Churches are to the Catholic. The Decree treats of the specific institutions and heritage of the Eastern Catholics as being the same as those of the "non-united" Eastern Churches. Of course, the Council could not legislate for the Orthodox, and so this document is not intended for them directly. However, when it legislates for the Eastern Catholics as distinctively Eastern Churches it sees no difference between the Orthodox and the "United." It treats them in the same way, as living from the same, common heritage and according to the same institutions, having, for example, their own Synods who run the

Churches as independent units, on the same level as the Roman Church—with only one difference: the recognition by the Eastern Catholics of the Petrine Ministry of the Pope as the supreme servant, the instrument for the unity of all the Churches of God. But *all the rest the Council supposes to be the same* in the two Churches, Catholic and Orthodox.

From this altered approach arises a new attitude toward the Eastern Churches, not only on the level of abstract appreciation but also in daily practice. This change will be elucidated below.

Some important points of the Decree regard the whole Church and, hence, should have been included in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. For example, it is the *Universal Church that has a patriarchal structure*, and not just the Eastern Churches—the Bishop of Rome being the patriarch of the Latin Church, as well as universal hierarch as successor of Peter. If this point could have been brought to the fore, many subsequent misunderstandings could have been avoided.⁴

“Rites” vs. “Churches”

Several Popes before Vatican II, especially Leo XIII, issued solemn statements about the Eastern Churches.⁵ They all reaffirmed Rome’s respect for the latter. Unfortunately, however, these Bodies were seen more as “Rites” than as complete Churches, or Sister-Churches. They were viewed as accidental variations of the Catholic (i.e. universal) Church which allegedly was represented fully only in the Roman Church.

The Vatican II document is of a totally different inspiration: it treats Eastern Catholics as full-fledged Churches, on par with the Roman Church, *equally of apostolic origin, equally faithful to the same apostolic heritage, equipped with the same apostolic institutions*, so that all these Churches together constitute the one, true, complete and universal Church, instituted by Christ, one in its lawful diversity—lawful because it derives from their

⁴ For more on this point see my article “Response to the Presentation by Bishop Vsevolod of Scopelos: ‘Does the Restoration of Communion between Constantinople and the Greco-Catholic Church of Kiev Require a Break of Communion with Rome?’,” *Logos* 34 (1993): 172–99.

⁵ For a list of these statements see Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 374, note 5.

apostolic origin.⁶ They are no longer treated as having merely *liturgical* differences—but as full-fledged, yet different, *Churches*, with all that this entails. The term “Rites” is still used, but henceforth it means more than just liturgical customs.⁷ It is a whole style of a community’s Christian life, concretely expressed in its own worship, canon law, customs, traditions, theology, spirituality and monasticism; and all of this, not only on the theoretical plane, but also in concrete, practical life. Thus Eastern Catholics have a married clergy; a different sacramental theology, etc.

The Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches

The question of the Eastern Catholic Churches’ identity is first a *theological* question. Since the Council decrees that they must be treated as real, full-fledged Churches, equal in dignity with the Roman Church because of their apostolic origin and uninterrupted faithfulness to the heritage of Christ (Holy Tradition), their identity is *not constituted* by their ethnic origin or association. Ethnicity can have many merits, e.g. as a cohesive power keeping a people together and protecting them from the encroachments of others. But ethnic values, however important they may be in a certain period of history, have a character that is *essentially temporary*. And as soon as ethnicity blurs the perspective of the common apostolic heritage and of the theological value of the Church or Holy Tradition as such, this ethnic dimension becomes a liability.

The term “Eastern,” in the mind of the Decree, does not only mean the opposite of “Western,” nor does it refer to ethnic association, but to a Church’s apostolic origin in the East and its continuity with this origin. Thus, it could very well happen that a greater number of theologically Eastern

⁶ See *OE*, par. 2 and especially par. 3; also note 7, p.374 of Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*: “By stressing the equal dignity of the different Catholic rites, the Council condemns clearly the theory of those who, mostly in the 18th century, taught that the Roman rite enjoyed some kind of preference over the others.” This has been (and often still is) the policy of several officers of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches and most of the Western missionary orders.

⁷ The Abbott edition of the conciliar decrees, p. 374, note 6, makes, very pertinently, the following observation: “The word ‘rite’ means more than liturgical customs. It could be called the style of Christian life of a community which, according to the Decree on Ecumenism (art. 15, 16, 17) is to be found in the particularities of worship, of canon law, of asceticism and monasticism and also in the peculiar theological system. The consideration of the Church for the Eastern rites is emphasized in the Decree on Ecumenism, art. 14.”

Christians might emerge in the geographical West than in the geographical East, especially if the situation, for example in Lebanon (to cite just one area), does not change. We insist on this right understanding of the term "Eastern" because it touches the essence of the Decree: *the problem of the Eastern (or Western) Churches is not a geographical but a theological question*. And as stated in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* at the end of paragraph 3, all these different Churches have the same rights and obligations, even with respect to preaching the Gospel to the whole world (Mk.16: 15). Hence, when Eastern Churches work as missionaries among Western Christians, this is entirely legitimate.⁸

Respect for Eastern Catholicism's Proper Heritage

This explains the *second level* on which this new approach of Vatican II is built: respect and consideration. On this level, both the Decrees on Ecumenism and on the Eastern Catholic Churches corroborate each other. The two are full of strong declarations of respect for what the Eastern Churches represent in the *oikumene*. This respect and consideration for the Eastern Churches was often missing from the Western side; because of its numbers and power, the West came to identify the Church as a whole with its own Patriarchate. Another reason derived from Eastern Christians themselves. As mentioned above, they identified themselves too easily with ethnic interests instead of their universal mission, rights, and obligations, which the Decree praises so highly because of their venerable apostolic origin and Holy Tradition.

This second point is closely related to a third: the preservation of the Eastern Catholics' spiritual heritage. The importance of this point is shown by the fact that it constitutes practically the heart of the Decree (*OE*, pars. 5-23). Paragraph 5 gives the reasons: this heritage belongs to Christ Himself or to the early Church, and hence transcends both East and West; it thus belongs to the heritage of the Universal Church. Consequently, to work for the

⁸ The tragic victims of Western Christian "chauvinism and protectionism" are spread all over the West, but especially in India where the Malabar Christians were resolutely forbidden to found Churches outside their own (very restricted) home area of Kerala unless they gave up their "Rite," as is still required of the Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. At the International Missionary Meeting in Nymegen, Holland, 1959, I myself was a witness of painful "prises de bec" of right-minded Indian bishops by the ultra-romanizing Cardinal Gracias.

preservation of the venerable heritage of the Eastern Churches is to contribute to the very essence and enrichment of the Church Universal.

Paragraph 6 gives some applications of this basic principle. This very practical section suggests that Eastern Catholics themselves are the main agents for preserving their heritage; or, indirectly, that they themselves have been the principal despoilers of their own heritage. Such mutilation has resulted from: (1) undue latinizations, and (2) the compromising of their own future by identifying their Rites with ethnic interests. These mutilations are very serious and should inspire resolute action among all spiritual leaders, Orthodox as well as Eastern Catholic. A sheer instinct of self-preservation as well as apostolic zeal to enrich the whole Church with a contribution that only the Eastern Churches can give should provide the incentive.

Paragraph 7 and those that immediately follow give some practical applications showing the value of this heritage. Some elements of the latter are of apostolic and some of ecclesial institution; some are very important and others secondary; but together they all constitute the full reality of what paragraph 6 calls the "Eastern way of life." A special emphasis is given to the patriarchal government of the Eastern Churches (and in fact of the Church universal, since the Bishop of Rome is Patriarch of the West as well as bearer of the Petrine Ministry, pars. 7-11). In his otherwise positive reaction to the Decree,⁹ the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann criticized the Decree for attributing an exaggerated importance to the patriarchal structure of the Eastern Churches. He especially scores "the personal jurisdiction of the Patriarch over other bishops which is alien to the Eastern canonical tradition, where the Patriarch or any other Primate is always a *primus inter pares*." Although Schmemmann is essentially correct, he apparently did not realize that the issue of patriarchal structure was the main stumbling block for the Western Council Fathers. They had no idea of any other relationship in the Church than that of power and jurisdiction. Hence, the only way that the Decree Commission could promote this important point of the "Eastern way of life" was by presenting it obliquely and in a way their opponents would understand. As Abbott notes, paragraphs 7 to 11 did not even meet the expectations of many Eastern Fathers at the Council, but it was the best that could be obtained at the time.¹⁰

⁹ See Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 387-88.

¹⁰ *The Documents of Vatican II*, 377, note 16.

The whole concept of jurisdiction resonates differently in Eastern and Western ecclesiology. In the East, it forms an integral part of a harmonious whole of personalistic, symbolic, and eschatological thinking and interacting, which generates in turn a very different content and approach to Church realities, as, for example, the Patriarchate. This is shown in the daily functioning of good Eastern Catholic Patriarchates where the Patriarch is the real spiritual father,¹¹ the mediator of life, the heart of his ecclesial family, and the keeper and guarantor of Holy Tradition. Thus, it is very easy to misinterpret Schmemmann's statement that in the Eastern canonical tradition "the Patriarch or any other Primate [e.g. the Pope of Rome] is always a *primus inter pares*." Note, however, the very special place of the Ecumenical Patriarch vis-à-vis the so-called "minor Patriarchs," or of the Coptic Patriarch, Pope Shenouda, in relation to his bishops. Finally, even in the West, the approach to "personal jurisdiction" has changed ever since Vatican II revived the ancient theology and practice of episcopal collegiality to counterbalance Vatican I's one-sided emphasis on papal primacy. The West thereby made a noticeable step toward the East and the original Tradition, especially under the direction of Pope John Paul II.

Patriarchates

As to the Eastern patriarchs, recent custom increasingly makes a greater distinction between the major and minor patriarchs. The former head the original Pentarchy, the five principal apostolic Sees established once and for all by the ecumenical councils¹² and dating back, at least indirectly, to the apostolic Church. Hence, it is incorrect to say that these major patriarchates are on the same level as the minor ones, for the latter, e.g. the Slavic Churches,¹³ in fact derive from one of the apostolic, or major, patriarchates. Although these minor patriarchates function according to the theological sense and canonical rights of the major ones, they maintain the special relationship of daughter to mother with their founding apostolic patriarchates.

¹¹ See *OE*, par. 9.

¹² Nicea I, can. 6; Constantinople I, can. 3; Chalcedon, can. 28; and Constantinople IV, can. 21.

¹³ The case of Moscow is special because it is a minor patriarchate that obtained the honours of a major one after pressuring Constantinople.

At times Western theologians desiring to belittle the importance of the Eastern patriarchates, especially that of Constantinople, have emphasized that the apostolic origin of the latter patriarchate, for example, rests upon sheer legend about St. Andrew's visit there. Thus, in their view, Constantinople's claims are false. This is faulty reasoning, although superficially understandable, first, because Byzantium has been solemnly recognized as an Apostolic See by several ecumenical councils, regardless of the status of the legend; consequently, the whole Church has accepted Constantinople's apostolicity. Secondly, the real foundation of its apostolicity is not the St. Andrew legend, but the fact that Byzantium is the successor to the very important *apostolic* See of Ephesus, the See of St. John.¹⁴

Another difficulty Western Christians have with Eastern patriarchates is the historical fact that the only apostolic patriarch in the West is at the same time bearer of the Petrine Ministry (Mt. 16: 18 ff) for the Universal Church. Primate and patriarch have been constantly identified, to the detriment of all the Churches. This identification has caused a constant confusion in the relationships and the exercise of apostolic powers. Already in 1972, one of the West's best theologians, Joseph (now Cardinal) Ratzinger, urged a deeper study and a clear distinction between primate and patriarch in the person of the successor of Peter, in order to avoid a further blurring of the relationships.¹⁵ Let us hope that as a result of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* Church authorities and theologians from both sides will heed the wise advice of the present Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith.

Before concluding this discussion concerning patriarchates we must draw special attention to sections 2 and 3 of paragraph 7. There it is said that the patriarch has jurisdiction over all of the hierarchs, clergy and laity "of his territory *or Rite*" and that all the hierarchs appointed outside the territorial bounds of the patriarchate remain attached to the hierarchy of that Rite. From the combination of these two paragraphs it apparently follows that "jurisdiction" is not bound to territory but to "Rite." Hence, the restrictions imposed by the new *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* upon Churches in the diaspora (canon 78, §9) seem to run counter to this canon of the

¹⁴ Who has, for that reason, so profoundly influenced Byzantine theology, as St. Paul, the co-founder of the Roman See, has influenced the spirituality of Rome and of the West.

¹⁵ *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1972), 54–56.

Council, even though this canon includes the clause, "in accordance with canon law" (can. 7, §2). The same must be said of paragraph 19 of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. The distinction made by the Eastern Code between the eparchies of the same Church in the diaspora and those in their homelands is untenable, and does more harm than good. This is a most infelicitous application of the "principle of accommodation," which is merely accidental. It undermines the "principle of apostolicity," which is the only one that matters in this case. Therefore, we sincerely hope that the canonical commission for the Eastern Code of Canons finds a way to attenuate this detrimental application as soon as possible, for it is each and every particular Church that is charged by Christ with the mission of evangelizing the "whole world." This suggests that no Church can be restricted to a particular territory as this would run counter to the Gospel itself.

Worship

In *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* paragraphs 12 to 18 deal with the Sacraments, and paragraphs 19 to 23 treat divine worship in general. Unfortunately, both are viewed quite legalistically, as a set of rubrics or positive prescriptions, with scant reference to their proper theological background. "Sacraments" are thus understood entirely in the Western sense as "means of salvation" to be "used" by the faithful (in keeping with the adage, *Sacramenta propter homines*) and not as *Mysteries* of Christ, to be *celebrated* with the result that Christians are saved by "celebrating the Mysteries in the communion of the redeemed," (rather than "by using means of salvation"). In spite of this limited theological background, the Decree still provides very appropriate practical prescriptions. Perhaps one may find in this vital connection a justification for the Eastern Churches having been called "Rites" for so long: the "celebration of the Mysteries in communion with the redeemed" is indeed the principal *raison d'être* of a Church. "Rite" is the concrete way of organizing a worshipping community and enabling the latter to live out its vocation as Church.

Hence, Eastern Catholics should not judge short-sighted Westerners too harshly when they (of course, quite wrongly) keep speaking of the former as "Eastern Rites." For, as *Churches*, they are, or should be, characterized by being exactly that: Churches whose whole spirituality, practical life, personal devotions etc., are totally penetrated by and centred around worship. Thus *a)* Eastern Catholic theology must be drawn from the full celebration of Divine

Liturgy and Divine Office, of the Mysteries of salvation in the Liturgical Year and in the "Sacraments"; and *b*) these celebrations must permeate home customs and a whole way of thinking and praying, of relating to God, to other people and to the world. I know that even some Eastern Christians brand this as "wishful thinking." However, it need not be. Consider our good and genuine monasteries, venerated and visited from of old as paradigms of true Christian life, as keepers of the true Eastern (i.e. early Christian and patristic) tradition. One can ask then why our Churches, especially their hierarchs, do not make the foundation of such monasteries one of their top priorities?

We Eastern Catholics should also avoid betraying our most precious "way of life," what the Decree calls a "Rite," through latinization, giving up this God-given heritage in favour of something inferior or at least something which does not nourish our true identity and spiritual growth. Especially vigilant should be those whose obligation it is to vindicate this heritage.

This tragic result was foreseen in the last part of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (pars. 24–29.) Paragraph 24 summarizes the principal means for promoting unity with Eastern Christians; after prayer and an exemplary Christian life "*religious fidelity to the ancient Eastern traditions*" is listed as the third important means. This "religious fidelity" is to be confirmed by a greater knowledge of each other and a brotherly regard for objects and feelings that belong to these Eastern traditions. Each of these means needs a more thorough exegesis, for they open up a whole new field of relationships for which the Eastern Catholic Churches are meant to be a bridge toward—and not a replacement for—their Orthodox Sister-Churches. Yet, among these different means toward unity, the "*religious fidelity to the ancient Eastern traditions*" has pride of place, because of the emphasis given it.

Here I should like to dwell on individual components of the above-cited paragraphs. As regards "religious fidelity," the term "religious" is often used for solemn pronouncements in similar documents. This attitude is a combination of love and reverence for something holy and greater than ourselves, which we are not allowed to manipulate according to our own whims or benefits. This is certainly the case with the Liturgy.

As regards "ancient," the term refers to something which belongs to the original values and norms that make up the very identity and future of a Church as she was founded by her Fathers in Christ, as opposed to later

changes and deviations from this ancient pattern, which therefore can never be proclaimed as belonging to "our traditions."¹⁶

As for "collaboration and brotherly regard for objects and feelings," this includes some current applications of the two terms mentioned above. For example, very often "uniate" church buildings look more like Roman churches, with almost no icons and no iconostasis, but with Western devotions. One also notes an absence of Eastern atmosphere, structure, or interior arrangement, etc. All of these elements are very important not only to avoid "hurting the feelings" of our Orthodox brethren but even more because such an absence of the *cultural expression* of our Eastern spirituality deprives our people of the indispensable food for building up and nourishing their spiritual identity for the glory of God, as the above-mentioned principle of incarnation demands. In all of the above, we should keep in mind that both Churches, the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic, have in common the same "objects and feelings," and the same institutions and future. Hence, vilifying theirs comes down to vilifying all.

The conclusion of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, paragraph 30, is a very beautiful text. Three points are particularly salient. First, there is the famous statement that has rightly impressed many Orthodox: "All these directives of law are laid down in view of the present situation *till such time as the Catholic Church and the separated Eastern Churches come together into complete unity.*" Second, the Council "earnestly asks all Christians, Eastern as well as Western, to pray to God fervently and assiduously, nay indeed, daily, that, with the aid of the Mother of God, all may become one." Third, the Decree ends with the strong command of St. Paul: "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour (Rom.12: 10)."

Reception and Impact of Orientalium Ecclesiarum

I. Reception in the West

Not so long ago, I was asked to give a talk at a prestigious Roman Catholic College on "Byzantine Spirituality and the West." As friendly as the reception was, it soon dawned on me, after discussions with individual

¹⁶ When such happens it blatantly contradicts pars. 2 and 24 of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. There is no doubt that both these paragraphs directly target all latinizations, whether more recent or those from 1720 and earlier.

professors, that none of them had ever read, or had even heard of the existence of, a Vatican II Decree about the Eastern Churches. It also seemed that they did not want to be bothered by it in their exclusively Western stand toward the Church. While the talk was received enthusiastically as a revelation by the student body, this aggressive indifference of the staff soon turned into hostile rejection. It would take us too far afield here to give some examples of this inconceivable blindness and prejudice which proclaims that there can be but one true Church, and that is the Western Church; only one true spirituality, and that is the Western; only one true theology, and that is the Western etc.

Although this extreme bias has perhaps become an exception, I am inclined to fancy that a general indifference and latent hostility persist among the clergy and interested faithful, not so much in the large cities, where churches of different denominations are plentiful, but more in rural areas. In episcopal cities where there is an active and well-trained ecumenical officer, one may even encounter a general attitude of good-will and interest. However, even there, as yet even more in all the other areas, Roman Catholics seem to feel more at home with Protestants than with Eastern Christians, whether Orthodox or Catholic. Many still feel uncomfortable with Eastern Christians who allegedly are bent on being "different,"—worshipping differently and retaining their traditions while everyone else has consented to being recreated by the general culture. Nobody has ever told such Catholics that what is at stake is not some eccentricities or archaeologisms, but a venerable spirituality and faithfulness to a genuine Tradition rooted in early Christianity, of which they themselves could profit very much.

This situation shows how necessary it still is to bring the principles of our Decrees, especially on the Eastern Churches, to the general awareness of Western Christians. Therefore it is not enough that we ourselves fully live accordingly. Because Eastern bishops generally enjoy good rapport with their Western colleagues in national Church bodies, our Eastern Catholic Bishops' Conferences could launch initiatives to create a strong and grace-filled presence of the Eastern Churches in order to overcome that general indifference or negativism. They should especially support the work of the local and regional Eastern Clergy Associations who are in the best situation to change that atmosphere of hidden hostility, ignorance, or indifference into an openness and willingness to learn from the East. Our two Decrees, especially the one on the Eastern Churches, demand such a deep reversal of thought, judgment, and Church practice. A wholesale inner renewal of the Western

Church herself could follow, by drinking again from the authentic wells of the true Christian Tradition as preserved in the East.

In Rome itself, the election of a Slavic pope has benefited the situation. Countless facts indicate the personal impact of John Paul II, who since his youth has been familiar with Eastern Christianity. He has fully backed the recovery of the Eastern Catholic Churches in their homelands as well as in the diaspora.¹⁷ It is John Paul who launched the slogan: "The Church must learn to breathe again with her two lungs, the Eastern and the Western." Under his impulse, Cardinal Baum of the Congregation for Catholic Education issued a strong mandate on January 6, 1987, stating the general lack of understanding of the spiritual traditions and values of Eastern Christianity and stressing the vital importance of these traditions for the life of the whole Church, thereby ordering a thorough formation of all Western priests in the Eastern Churches' heritage, especially the Greek Fathers. The impact of this mandate could be enormous for bringing the Churches together again.

Pope John Paul II himself has given the example of this changed attitude of openness and appreciation for the Eastern Churches in so many ways. He is among the few relentless defenders of Christianity before Islamic encroachments in the Near East; he encouraged and participated in magnificent celebrations of the millennium of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine, issuing two letters to mark the event; he proclaimed the two holy brothers, the Apostles of the Slavs, Saints Cyril and Methodius, as patrons of Europe, enjoying equal status with St. Benedict; he presided over the celebration of the Marian Year with a solemn Akathistos to the Mother of God, celebrated together with half a dozen Eastern Patriarchs and inviting all of the *Western* bishops of the world to celebrate the same *Eastern* Akathistos in union with him and with all the Churches of the East; by virtue of his Petrine Ministry he urged the Eastern Catholic Churches to organize themselves as autonomous Sister-Churches; and finally, his humble and friendly relationship with the Ecumenical Patriarch resulted in the establishment in 1979 of the international Orthodox-Roman Catholic theological dialogue commission. He has developed a truly brotherly rapport with his Brother-Patriarch of Constantinople, after his predecessor, Pope Paul VI, and his fellow-Patriarch, Athenagoras of Constantinople, had simultaneously lifted the mutual excommunication of 1054 in 1965. All of the

¹⁷ See the deserved encomium of the papacy in Bishop Basil Losten's paper, "The Roman Primacy and the Church of Kiev," *Logos* 34 (1993): 73-75.

above-mentioned initiatives of Pope John Paul II are of the greatest importance for the future relationships between East and West, and are indirectly or directly a fruit of our two Decrees, especially *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Churches did not sit still but took "peaceful revenge" on their Western Sister, mainly during that same Vatican Council: several of the most "revolutionary" aspects of renewal at Vatican II would never have occurred without them. One thinks, for example, of the full active participation by the faithful and the use of the vernacular in the Liturgy, concelebration by priests, communion under both species, the Divine Office as the prayer of the Church, the restoration of the permanent diaconate and especially of the collegiality of bishops. These would never have been accepted, had they not been backed by the age-old and successful apostolic practice preserved in the Eastern Churches. One might even say that some of them have been simply borrowed from the East or discovered among Eastern Christians. Also, the granting of annulments of invalid marriages would probably not have developed, had the West not familiarized itself with the practice of the "marriage of mercy." On the level of theology the influence of the East goes even deeper, especially through the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. Here I have in mind the emphasis on the priority and collegiality of the local Churches.

So we see that the Holy Spirit is moving in His Church, and certainly in favour of the Eastern Churches, because what the Western Church needs in her crisis is exactly what the Eastern Churches represent. So let us look ahead with optimism, with much prayer, and with a willingness to sacrifice.

II. Reception by the Orthodox Churches

It is known that Pope John Paul II is convinced that the real causes of separation between Roman Catholics and Orthodox are objectively so minimal that the enduring separation has become entirely anomalous. Consequently, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* should be implemented with the principles of *Unitatis Redintegratio* serving as its real goal and matrix. Where do our Orthodox brothers and sisters stand on this problem? It would seem to me that the Orthodox approach is represented by three main groups.

A. The *first group* is represented by those who *reject all ecumenical contacts* (e.g. the Orthodox jurisdiction centred at Etna, California and others). Their main argument is that the one true Church can exist a

priori only in Orthodoxy and, then, only in *their* branch of Orthodoxy, because there is no grace in any of the others—especially not in the Roman Church, which, according to them, is wholly in sin. We will not dwell much longer on this group, since any ecumenical openness is excluded here *a priori*. For them, “ecumenism” is a great curse and heresy, because it is misunderstood as an evisceration of Holy Tradition by secularism and the domination of the lowest common denominator, i.e. “Western, diluted and heretical, Christianity.” We had to mention this group, though with sincere pain, because most of these groups are inspired by a deep love for the authentic Orthodox tradition, a love and a zeal of which the whole Eastern Churches could profit if they could open up in mutual, loving respect instead of in unjust recriminations.

B. The *second group* of Orthodox accepts, or even promotes, ecumenical contacts, but still carries an image of the Catholic (especially Roman) Church of the pre-Vatican II period as the “great triumphalist.” This group tends to keep record—painfully, of the latter Church’s past flaws and historical misdeeds.¹⁸ Such an attitude is perfectly understandable but it should evaporate in the face of Jesus’ command of love and unity. On the other hand we also realize that some real roadblocks, both theological and cultural, still remain on both sides. The true ecumenist, however, works untiringly to remove them instead of magnifying or dramatizing them. Let us look at some examples of badly needed changes of attitude on both sides.

Some deny the very right of existence to the so-called “Uniate” Churches. In our response to Bishop Vsevolod’s paper in Oxford,¹⁹ we have already given a theological and ecclesiological answer to this painful objection and we refer the reader to that paper. However, viewed humanly and ecclesially, one wonders how this objection could gain new power on the lips of otherwise well-intentioned Churchmen from both sides of the fence. No doubt the media have played a role here with reports of alleged crimes perpetuated by Ukrainian Greco-Catholics in recovering properties

¹⁸ Thus, some Churches still seem to be mesmerized by the atrocities of the Fourth Crusade of 1204, the ensuing Latin rule of Constantinople, and the misinformed approval of it by Pope Innocent III. Is it not time for the West to atone for it and for the East to forgive and forget?

¹⁹ See *Logos* 34 (1993): 177ff.

rightfully their own. The reports are usually quite contrived as Bishop Basil (Losten) has shown at this very meeting in Stamford. Viewed historically, "Uniates" have always existed, before and after the break of 1054. Also there are several Churches that never partook of the schism, for example, the Maronites, and the Italo-Byzantines with the famous Monastery of Grottaferrata. The Melkites and Ukrainian Catholics stem from a legitimate Synod. Many of the Eastern Churches, like the Ukrainians, had always maintained lively contact with Rome as the "head" of the Church universal, even after 1054. And when the movement of union after 1595 became strong all over Ukraine, it was only as a result of vigorous political pressure from Moscow and a renewed Byzantium that a major part returned to Orthodoxy, while the others remained staunchly "Uniate" for 400 years (the Carpathian Ruthenians for 350 years after the agreement of Uzhhorod). Moreover, these Churches have produced great Churchmen who are truly the crown of the Eastern Churches, "Orthodox" or "Uniate," e.g. Patriarch Maximos Saigh of the Melkites, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, the Confessor Josyf Slipyj.

Looking to the future, we suggest that the very concept of "uniatism" should be nuanced. More frequently today the latter is correctly seen as an attitude of moral or political pressure and "missionary" methods aimed at "converting" the Orthodox (seen as "dissidents or heretics") to the fullness of the faith in union with Peter. How does this concept correspond to the reality of our times? The 43rd meeting of the U.S. Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of May 1992 spoke to this issue in a spirit of true love and mutual understanding by stating the following: "[T]he dialogue recognizes that 'uniatism' as a method of achieving union has been justly renounced by both Churches [i.e. East and West], but the right of religious freedom of those Eastern Churches who have united themselves in communion with the See of Rome must be recognized. The Joint Statement thus clearly states, 'A distinction should be made between "Uniatism" understood as an inappropriate, indeed, unacceptable model or method for Church union, and "Uniatism" understood as the existence of convinced Eastern Christians who have accepted full communion with the See of Rome as

part of their self-understanding as a Church!'.²⁰ This text speaks for itself and needs no further clarification.

C. This brings us to the *third group* of Orthodox and their reception of the two conciliar documents. This group is convinced that the Spirit of God is pushing the Church forward on the way of mutual understanding and forgiveness in an irreversible evolution.²¹

This group is represented by those positive-minded theologians who gather around the table of dialogue supported by the many hidden saints throughout the Church who have offered their very lives for the sake of Church reunion, and prepared by the humble scholars who patiently did the groundwork at the different centers, as e.g. in Rome, Chevetogne, Münsterschwarzach, Oxford, etc.

Before the recent crisis in relations broke out, some members of the International Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission told me: "There is a growing consensus among all the members about practically all the major issues, so that you often hear the conclusion: 'Why keep meeting? There are no real points of divergence of discussion. Why still stay apart as Churches? Why not just lay aside old resentments and crib-biting, born from political clashes in the past that are passé?'"

III. Reception by the Eastern Catholic Churches

It has often been said that the "Uniates" themselves (especially the Ukrainian Catholics) are their own greatest enemies in matters of Church union. I would like to probe this question and analyze the possible roadblocks to true reunion set up in some of their circles, roadblocks derived from an ignorance or rejection of the spirit and letter of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Naturally, any such behaviour prevents them from acting as "Sister-Churches" and deprives them of the possibility of being treated as such, either by the Orthodox or the Latins.

Now although this reproach against the Eastern Catholics is greatly exaggerated, one thing seems undeniable: Greco-Catholics would soon become their own best friends instead of now being their own worst enemies

²⁰ "U.S. Orthodox/Roman Catholic Dialogue—Eastern Europe: Antipathy Between Churches," *Origins* 22 (11 June, 1992): 80.

²¹ See Paul McParklan, "Towards Catholic-Orthodox Unity," *Communio* 19 (1992): 305-13. McParklan's study is truly commendable.

if they finally were to start obeying the prescriptions of their own highest authorities—the prescriptions of Vatican II. What, then, are the roadblocks hinted at above?

The first is *ethnic nationalism*. This could be a great blessing, as it was in the very beginning and in times of oppression, but it becomes self-destructive as soon as it starts identifying the Eastern Churches' enormously rich spiritual heritage and universal responsibility for the whole Church²² with more narrow ethnic or national concerns and needs—or even subordinating the former to the latter. We all know that the Byzantine Tradition has contributed greatly to building up and preserving the Ukrainian nation, which is a great blessing. However, if language, national aspirations, or politics blur or obliterate this enormous responsibility towards the universal Church, and if ethnic nationalism becomes dominant, then we vilify our nobility and lose God's election as a Church, which is called, above all, to witness to and channel salvation in Christ to all.²³

Unfortunately, this kind of nationalism is not the monopoly of Greco-Catholics, and it is usually a reaction to the national and ecclesial chauvinism of neighbouring nations. But this chauvinism and the reaction thereto are among the most harmful roadblocks frustrating the Eastern Churches' calling to evangelize the world. How is it possible that we, the Eastern Churches, who possess the "messages of life" so needed by our world, continue to bicker over trivialities and old wounds, while the world starves for our life-giving message? If we have become so encrusted in a haughty sense of excellence, then we have ceased being Christians *tout court*.²⁴

The second roadblock is rather proper to the "Uniates:" their *latinizations*, past and present, as mentioned earlier. We understand very well how the first generations of Ukrainian and Melkite Catholics needed the strong support of clear-cut customs, backed by the powerful Roman Church, in order to encourage a feeling of well-being and self-worth (and add to this the heavy moral oppression by Latins, especially in eastern Europe). But the effect was

²² See, for example, *OE*, pars. 1, 3, 5.

²³ Mk 16: 15, "Go out to the whole world: proclaim the Good News to all creation."

²⁴ We must never forget Matthew, Chapter 23. The reader will hopefully forgive my outburst—the frustration of an old advocate of the spirit of the Gospel, tired of seeing Christians themselves continually destroying the beautiful work of Christ...

just the opposite of what they aimed at, and it broke the solemn agreement between the two Churches.²⁵ A few examples will suffice:

a) The provisions of the Synod of Zamość of 1720 contradict the exhortation of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (par. 24) to return to "ancient Eastern traditions."

b) The singing of the *Filioque* in the Creed deeply alters our vision of the intra-trinitarian life of God, which then changes the deeper inspiration of our worship and the specifically Eastern (i.e. trinitarian) approach of our spirituality and traditions.

c) The separation of infant Baptism–Chrismation from its fulfilment in Holy Communion indicates a typically Western, activist approach to Christian initiation.

d) The tendency to view marriage primarily under the aspect of (horizontal) mutual consent, diminishes its (vertical) character as a Mystery and a consecration performed by the presbyteral Crowning.

e) The gradual transformation of Eastern Catholic monastic life into Westernized Orders deprives these Churches of the salt and yeast that keeps them from becoming bourgeois, from making a pact with the world, and from losing their evangelical and patristic moorings. Eastern Catholics sorely need to work for a wholesale return to true monasticism.²⁶

f) The exclusion of married men from the priesthood (in the diaspora), separates Eastern Catholics from the age-old, legitimate custom of all the Eastern Churches, the former's Sisters-in-the-Lord.

All these areas, which are just some examples, are very important, for they represent the "ancient Eastern Traditions" which the Council demands us to restore. They are the expression and nourishment of the authentic theology, spirituality, and pastoral traditions of the Eastern Church, that is, of *our* Church, where we truly belong. What sense is there in "being united with

²⁵ See the text of the agreement of 1595 in Osyp Zinkewych and Andrew Sorokowski, eds., *A Thousand Years of Christianity in Ukraine: An Encyclopedic Chronology* (Baltimore: Smolokyp Publishers, 1988), 107: "We have sent our legates with the request that the Pope, as the highest pastor of the Universal Catholic Church, accept us into his jurisdiction...under the condition, however, that our rite and ceremonies of the Greek–Ruthenian Church remain intact, and that no changes be initiated in our churches, but that all remain true to the tradition of the Holy Greek Fathers for ages unto ages. All this has been truly granted to us by the Holy Father, who has sent us the privileges and documents to that effect..."

²⁶ See my book, *Eastern Monasticism and the Future of the Church* (Redwood Valley, CA: Mt. Tabor Monastery, 1993).

Rome" if we do not follow the most solemn dictates of that Church's highest authorities? Moreover, these are the venerable traditions of our Orthodox Sister-Churches as well. If we do not care for them, then where do we belong? What is the justification for our existence? The articles of the Union of Brest are very insistent that we should fully keep our Orthodox heritage as "Orthodox in Union with Rome"²⁷ in order to demonstrate that in recognizing the Petrine Ministry, a Sister-Church does not lose her authentic Orthodox character.

Alexander Schmemmann correctly indicates in his response to *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*,²⁸ that perhaps the most important statement in this Decree is that the "Uniate" Churches should no longer be viewed as substitutes for the Orthodox Churches, but as bridges to full union with both. Therefore the time has come for the Ukrainian Catholic Church to fully restore her mother-daughter relationship with Constantinople, without breaking her union with Rome, as Bishop Vsevolod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (in union with Constantinople) so convincingly proposed at the Ukrainian Catholic Synod of L'viv and at the Theological Consultation in Oxford. This would be a significant first step towards restoring unity, as I showed at the same Consultation.²⁹

In the modern era several beautiful gestures have been made by Eastern Catholic hierarchs. The Melkite Catholic Patriarch offered to resign in favour of his Orthodox brother as soon as full union is reached. Previously, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky had vowed to do the same should unity be restored to the Church of Kiev. In the same spirit of sincere goodwill the Ukrainian Catholic Major Archbishop Myroslav Ivan (Lubachivsky) twice offered his apologies to his colleague, the Patriarch of Moscow in hopes that mutual forgiveness would help both Churches to recover from the damage done by the illegal Synod of L'viv of 1946.

There is from the side of the Greco-Catholics an enormous amount of goodwill which should be recognized and utilized by Church authorities, in the urgent conviction that Christ's command of unity for all His followers is an

²⁷ See text in Zinkewych and Sorokowski, *A Thousand Years*, 107.

²⁸ Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 383.

²⁹ See *Logos* 34 (1993): 153-71 for Bishop Vsevolod's paper, and pp.173-99 for my response.

absolute "must" and not just a hobby or convenience left up to one's feelings and opportunities.

Conclusion: Looking Forward

As *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* mentions in its conclusion (par. 30), the Decree is intended as a "log book," *un document de voyage*, providing guidelines for the journey to full unity. It is not perfect; owing to human limitations it still has some lacunae that came to light during the discussions at the Preparatory Commission and on the Council floor (e.g. the denial of full jurisdiction of the patriarchs outside their historically limited territories; the lack of integration of Eastern theology into Western seminaries; the lack of experience of Eastern liturgy, monasticism, parish life, etc., as an integral part of Western seminary formation.) Both *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, but especially the latter, presuppose a fundamental change of mentality, a true conversion, on the part of both Catholic and Orthodox sides. As mentioned above, this will not happen without deep holiness, without a strong involvement of the privileged "organs" of holiness in the bosom of the Church, the monasteries. And if the reunion of the Churches will not come *now*, and if it will not be the fruit of holiness in the Holy Spirit, the Lord of the Church will reject us as useless servants and call others to accomplish the task.

In the present article we have viewed the ecumenical problem more from the narrow perspective of the Ukrainian Church, Orthodox and Catholic. Naturally, however, the drastic changes during the last years have shown its universal dimensions, from which no committed Christian can stay aloof. These changes are threefold: the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the massive emigration of Eastern Christians from the Near East, and the strong movement of the Chalcedonian Christians for reunion with the universal Church. All three challenge the Churches to finally lay aside their former rancour and reproaches. If our two Decrees of Vatican II could help us become aware of the urgency of Jesus' command, their principal goal (as well as mine) will have been attained.

