

## **The Study of the Christian East on the Church's Priority list.**

And what we Jesuits could do to revamp it.

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**Abstract:** Without its Eastern identity the Society loses its own sense of Church and universal mission, largely forged in the early East through the biblical, liturgical and practical canon. The Society has to promote them as integral to a balanced theological programme of Eastern ecclesiastical sciences. To renew studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, entrusted to the Society by Pius XI (1922), the Orientale has to re-think its programme in terms of the primordial Syrian East, and re-formulate its programme in the light of an organic liturgical, canonical and theological sectors as dimensions of the Spirit.

**Resume:** The East belongs to Ignatius' formative years and the Society's universal mission, an on-going engagement with its focus in the Pontifical Orient Institute (PIO). We ought to renew our commitment to what also constitutes the Church's primordial identity by renewing the study programme at the PIO. But while the PIO has made a norm-setting contribution to many fields its programme is still closely modelled on Latin scholastic models. It failed (a) to start where the original East was (topography), namely Mesopotamia and the Orient which largely withstood the Hellenistic globalisation of its time, or (b) to define what distinguishes the Christian Orient (typology), namely the priority of Spirit. On the basis of (a), even the Byzantine and the Slavic East are seen as derivative; on the basis of (b), system gives way to synthesis, whereby spirituality is seen as the soul of dogma. To retrieve the initial inspiration we have to coordinate typology and topography of the East not so much on the theoretical level as on the practical, in an organic plan of studies, which presents the East as Rites (liturgies), rights (canon law), right faith (theology) as dimensions of the Spirit.

Jesuits generally have a soft spot for the East, where Christianity grew up, the Bible was written and the Fathers figured out for all posterity what Christianity is about, if we only think of the fixing of the biblical canon as the written part of the *regula fidei*, the formation of the liturgical canon as the Church's *lex orandi*, and the various Church Orders such as the *Didache* as the canon of *praxis*. It is different if we turn to the detailed picture of what constitutes specifically Eastern Christian studies. We are rather curious to know more about the East, enough at least to be able to distinguish Maronites from Melkites, while straining to catch the difference between Malankara Syrian Orthodox<sup>1</sup> and Malankara Orthodox Syrians<sup>2</sup>.

Yet such inquisitiveness usually does not suffice to challenge our way of living but at most whets our curiosity, so that we wind up seeking a knowledge which is at best

fascinating but exotic. It is no secret that many consider Eastern theology closer to a catechism than a scientific treatment of real issues and so to lag behind its western counterpart; worse still, many dismiss involvement with the East as strengthening the Church's conservative flank, antidote to so many false isms and expectations, but also to much that spells progress in the contemporary Church.

To those conversant with recent ecumenical developments, it might even sound strange that the prime carriers of this patrimony of tradition, the Oriental Churches in general look antiquated and in need of a reform in soul and body, not to say anything about the fact that their very existence – I mean the survival of the Catholic Eastern Churches – seems at stake. Moreover, this threat apparently stems not only through what pessimistic accounts such as Jean-Pierre's Valognes' work with its significant title *Vie et mort des Chrétiens d'Orient*<sup>3</sup> reveal, but also through the very Catholic Church which mothered them. One need only take into account *Orientalium ecclesiarum* (1964), which ends with the ominous note that these Churches were born to die: in case of full communion with the Orthodox they would have to disappear and, along with them, the Oriental Congregation which has ruled them since 1917. So is, at least, a current interpretation of the text<sup>4</sup>.

In view of so much that seems to speak against a bright future for the Christian East itself, what remains of the rigour of Eastern Christian studies; how important are they for the Church anyhow and what could be done to revamp them?

In what follows we shall first (1) try to go to the heart of the matter by asking about the social – and the Societal – standing of these ecclesiastical eastern studies. This we shall do by positioning ourselves in that school of the East, which the Church entrusted to the Society of Jesus as a pastoral charge of intellectual calibre: the Pontifical Institute of Eastern studies (PIO), Rome. Then, (2) we have to probe into where this seemingly local commitment overlaps with the Church's own perception and involvement in the East. (3) Finally, but most

importantly, we have to see what can be done to give not just a face-lift to these studies, but actually to somehow contribute to the renewal of the face of East through these studies, which was precisely the intention of Benedict XV in founding the Orientale and of Pius XI in entrusting it to the Jesuits.

## 1. The ecclesial relevance of our involvement in the East

It is indispensable for a self-respecting discipline with a claim to be scientific to insist on its social relevance<sup>5</sup>. As K. Rahner puts it, the ecclesial character of theology, far from diminishing its credibility, indicates its social relevance, and, at the same time, its scientific status<sup>6</sup>. It is thus important to identify the interests that have led to the emergence of the Pontifical Institute of Eastern Studies (PIO), also known as the Orientale.

### 1.1 The PIO's social relevance in the Church and for the Society of Jesus

The PIO was founded to meet a special need increasingly felt with the presentiment of the imminent demise of the Ottoman empire, an awareness that became acute ever since Napoleon landed in Egypt in 1798, giving rise to the famous “question orientale”: what to do with the millions of Christians living in the Ottoman empire once the Sick Man of Europe died?<sup>7</sup> Things came to a head about a hundred years later when, in 1893, the Eucharistic Congress of Jerusalem was held in which the patriarchs could air their grievances<sup>8</sup>. Their conference in Rome with Leo XIII resulted in *Orientalium dignitas* (1894). Considered to be the magna carta of Eastern Catholics, it insists on the necessity not only to save Eastern rites from extinction, which had been the concern of Benedict XIV in *Allatae sunt* (July 26, 1755), but also to assure equality of rights in East and West. After Pius IX tried to clip the rights of Eastern Christians with his bull *Reversurus* (July 12, 1867), which forbade lay participation in the choice of bishops,<sup>9</sup> Leo XIII stressed equality of canon law in East and West. In a nutshell what characterizes the East most is Rite, right and right faith, i.e. liturgy, canon law and orthodoxy.

And indeed, the first programme of the PIO, founded on 15 October 1917 by Benedict XV with the *Motu proprio, Orientis catholici*<sup>10</sup>, bears the stamp of this triple formula. It was entrusted to an assorted group of religious and even lay people<sup>11</sup> and put under the direction first of the White Father Antoine Delpuch<sup>12</sup> and then of the Benedictine Abbot of St Paul Outside the Walls, Blessed Ildefonse Schuster, OSB. Roughly five years later, on 14 September 1922, Pius XI assigned the PIO to the Society of Jesus. The decision matured only with the conviction that more homogeneity was needed to run an Institute with such a wide gamut of interests, coterminous with half of the ecclesial chessboard, in order to ensure a smooth administration, co-opt recruits to continue the work and, most of all, ascertain a programme of quality. We have to keep in mind that what interests here is the *ratio studiorum* which the Society developed in its dealing with the East. This in turn may be articulated over two stages: (a) what the Society received as a charter and (b) what the Society made out of it, with what creativity it tried to implement it.

If the Society had been chosen, there were good reasons for it. One need only go back to Ignatius himself. By now it is well accepted that the Society was not founded to combat Protestantism, but was born with an Eastern orientation. His original plan was to go to Jerusalem and spend his life there, postponing saying mass for a year and a half – a sacrifice which must have cost him dearly, when we think what tears he shed during mass – until it became clear that there was no way of getting there<sup>13</sup>. Rome became for him another Jerusalem; and even the fact that he celebrated his first mass at Santa Maria Maggiore, next door to where the *Oriente* now stands, is indicative of his basic life orientation towards the East, his first love<sup>14</sup>. His options as first general amply confirm that his endorsement of a universal mission in which the East had pride of place, of which his engagement for the Ethiopian mission and his attempt to establish colleges in Constantinople, Jerusalem and Cyprus, as well as Malta<sup>15</sup> to prepare missionaries among Muslims are but two examples. We

may see the same hankering for the East in Pierre Favre (d. 1546), handpicked by St Ignatius to become Patriarch in Ethiopia<sup>16</sup>. In his prayer on the current state of the Church Favre mentions seven cities which he would love to pray for, five of which lie in the East<sup>17</sup>. Given the distance and that the rising star of Moscow<sup>18</sup> was not generally known then, one must only wonder what a superb place the East held in his mind and heart.

The same may be said of the first century of Jesuits. Ignatius himself had written to the Negus Galawdewos<sup>19</sup>, and Jesuits followed suite. By 1600 Jesuits were involved everywhere in Eastern missions, usually characterized by heavy academic involvement and accompanied by the establishment of schools. In practically all fields of Eastern ecclesial knowledge Jesuits excelled. Thus, the Bollandists, though addicted to the scientific study of saints in East and West, made a huge contribution to eastern hagiography generally. Gregory XIII founded the Greek College in 1576, entrusting it to the Jesuits<sup>20</sup>. Metrophanes Kritopoulos (d. 1639), Orthodox, went so far as to assert: “Sell everything if only to secure a copy of Bellarmine”<sup>21</sup>. And the Orthodox saint Pjotr Moghila, metropolitan of Kiev, followed the Jesuit educational system in founding his famous Kievian academy<sup>22</sup>.

Though it had been entrusted to no one group, four Jesuits had already been present from the first hour of the foundation. Once it became entrusted to the Jesuits, it was soon located, in Piazza della Pelotta, in the same building as the Biblicum. The rapprochement is understandable, given the fact that both the Biblicum and the Orientale belong to the same type of ecclesial sciences, which include theology, but are not exhausted by it<sup>23</sup>. It was left to the first Jesuit president of the PIO, the French Michel d’Herbigny (1880-1957), to reallocate the PIO, a stroke of genius in its own right, because the proximity to the Biblicum and the Gregoriana would have made hard to stand up for the independence of the Orientale in the first place and for the autonomy of Eastern studies in the second. The further choice of the place where Santa Maria Maggiore actually stands was another stroke of genius, because it is

the corner in Rome which perhaps merits to be called the corner of the Eastern Churches, what with nearby Santa Maria Maggiore, meant to celebrate the council of Ephesus (431), with its splendid mosaics which go back to the same period, and with the place where Sts Cyril and Methodius, friends with both Photius and Pope Nicolaus I and thus a moving bridge between East and West, deposited their liturgical books, and Santa Prassede, around the corner, close to where St Cyril died.

It is here that the Jesuits laid their hands on the plough and managed to do what other better equipped places have not managed to do. With the shortage of means as their witness the works they produced are astounding. In almost every field of endeavour in Eastern ecclesiastical knowledge something useful was produced. For this we have to throw a glance at the terminus a quo, the original charter of studies sketched in Benedict XV's motu proprio, *Oriens catholici*, and compare it with the terminus ad quem ninety-two years later, when both continuity and difference become clearly visible<sup>24</sup>.

As for the terminus a quo Benedict's idea, though vitiated by an undertone of polemics, was well ahead of his times, in that it proposed to study other Churches for their own sake; and to open its doors to Catholics and Orthodox alike, and this without any intended scope of proselytism<sup>25</sup>. Having in mind not theology but the whole field of Eastern ecclesial sciences, he built it on a tripod, theology, liturgy and canon law, raised on the platform of culture and the history of the carrier peoples of this knowledge.

But: did Jesuits rise to the rare occasion offered them?

## 2. Concentrating these various strands of studies in the PIO

Right from the start Jesuit activity at the PIO coincided with various other activities of other Jesuits in favour of the East. The Velehrad Conferences<sup>26</sup> had sought to give new impetus to the search for unity, according to the unionistic categories of the time. Another Jesuit creation, the Jesuit college of Saint Georges, in the Paris suburb of Meudon<sup>27</sup>, was a

boarding school for the children of Russian émigrés, with its famous Bibliothèque slave<sup>28</sup> next door, founded by Paul Mailleux (1905-1983). Practically coterminous with the creation of the PIO, it has encouraged a new proliferation of Jesuit publications and studies, especially in the two journals *Symvol*<sup>29</sup>, and *Plamia*<sup>30</sup>, directed by René Marichal and François Rouleau respectively. But the Church's first place for studying the East was and remains the PIO; a year after the foundation of Saint Georges it was to become the home of the Jesuits.

Even here, we have to distinguish four periods of activity of the Jesuits at the PIO. The period of foundations, part of the first period (1918-1939), is still one of disarray, without a clear road map, and yet enough of the terrain had been scoured for the clairvoyant to see. Michelangelo Guidi<sup>31</sup> (1886-1946), son of the foremost Italian Orientalist, Ignazio Guidi<sup>32</sup> (1844-1935), will be the first to work out the original meaning of the Christian East. Unfortunately, quite a different concept of the East prevailed, that of the greatest numbers, which inevitably favoured the Greek and Russian Byzantine East. Besides, development did not necessarily spell out progress. Thus, at the beginning canon law was united to the faculty of ecclesiastical sciences in a more genuine understanding of the integrative character of theological science in the East. As A. Nichols put it, "Since the foundations of canon law are not themselves juridical but dogmatic, ecclesiastical law differs from every other system of law"<sup>33</sup>. Whereas the separation of the canon law faculty was inevitable and indeed conducive to growth, the organic relation of canon law to theology in general and to ecclesiology in particular became somewhat blurred. When the Jesuits took over (1922), they continued collecting material towards the elaboration of a synthesis. It is the time of soul-searching and searching for one's own identity, which, however, did not degenerate into an identity crisis<sup>34</sup>. Alongside those who contributed by patient analysis of documents there were those with far-reaching insight. The second period may be said to have lasted until the commencement of Vatican II (1939-1962). With World War II, the first synthesis came to a boiling point and the

first fruits of maturity could be gathered. On the eve of World War II, by the time the Catholic world was tuned in to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Council of Florence (1439-1939) a second period may be said to have started, which was to lead to one of the more monumental results of the PIO, the publication, in eleven volumes, of the Acts of the Council of Florence (1941-1970)<sup>35</sup>. Yet these Acts, precisely because they anteceded the council, throw a characteristic light on the ecumenical character of the Institute even before ecumenism became the order of the day. Once these Acts showed scientifically that the Decree for the Armenians was of a disciplinary rather than of a dogmatic nature, Pius XII could thus revert to the Oriental position that the matter of the sacrament of orders, which is the imposition of hands and not the handing over of the instruments (chalice with wine and paten with bread in the case of the priest, the gospel in the case of the deacon) as Florence (DH 1326) had decreed<sup>36</sup>. The lesson cannot be overlooked: the best way to change deadlocked situations is by the serene objective studies of texts<sup>37</sup>.

With Vatican II, a new era – the third period – begins, but not at once. Those experts selected from the *Orientalium* to help draft what later will become *Orientalium ecclesiarum* had still, by and large, a unionistic ecclesiology<sup>38</sup>, and, whatever strains of an ecclesiology of communion may be perceived in it<sup>39</sup> came rather from conciliar movements associated with Cardinal Augustin Bea (1881-1968) and the newly-established Secretariat to promote union among Christians<sup>40</sup>. However, it cannot be overlooked that the very presence of these Eastern periti and prelates helped stress the universal character of the Catholic Church<sup>41</sup>. And yet, no sooner the council was over the winds of change in ecclesiology ushered in a third period, the post-Vatican era. An ecumenist, Georges Dejaifve, was chosen as Rector; and, though his failing health ultimately did not permit him to assume the office for long – he was rector in 1973-4 – his very choice is indicative of the new orientation the Institute was taking<sup>42</sup>. One of Dejaifve's books is entitled precisely *Un tournant décisif de l'ecclésiologie à Vatican II*<sup>43</sup>,



which galvanized the attention both of quite a number of professors as well as that of the Institute as a whole (1965-1989). And although the Institute did not – and should not – be overtly ecumenical, it certainly meant that an appreciable number of members of the institute took part in ecumenism, including Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, one-time Rector of the PIO, and John Long, its one-time vice-Rector<sup>44</sup>. With the collapse of the Iron Curtain, a fourth period (1989-...) unleashed many seemingly dormant forces, that led to the opening up of Eastern Europe, the freeing of its Churches, but also the explosion of long frozen animosities and national conflicts.

In brief, Jesuits working at the PIO over these periods may be said to have excelled by using the opportunities to study and research as they presented themselves to them, but not all were equally creative. Where Guillaume Jerphanion (1877-1948),<sup>45</sup> who in a monumental work managed to put the Cappadocian rock-hewn caves on the map<sup>46</sup>, and Irénée Hausherr (1891-1978), who laid the foundations of Eastern spirituality as a discipline<sup>47</sup>, started new fields of knowledge and research, others were more norm-using than norm-setting, and yet were at times no less creative, e.g., Emil Hermann (1891-1963)<sup>48</sup>, an outstanding canonist and former rector of the PIO. Indeed, one of the monumental achievements of the PIO is its having piloted the edition of the first corpus of Eastern canon law, mainly directed from the PIO and with Ivan Žužek<sup>49</sup> (1924-2004) as secretary of the Commission for the revision of the Code of canons of the Eastern Churches, promulgated in 1990<sup>50</sup>. On the debit side, however, the PIO Jesuits failed on a number of issues. They have failed to produce a viable synthesis of the East which would be free from an undue influence of Latinization – in this sense, even the Eastern code, for all the huge progress it has meant by creating for the first time an autonomous corpus of law for the East, is to a large extent the Latin code given an Eastern respectability. Nor have they been able to create an organic programme of studies, which again avoid undue Latin influences without retreating into the past, by developing a

balanced programme open to modern trends in a way which respects tradition and the typical Eastern Oriental genres and symbolism so as to avoid something to which the East is particularly sensitive: rationalism. It is this task which the current faculty has to face.

### 3. In search of a genuinely Oriental programme of Eastern studies

The difficulties of working out a viable synthesis, Catholic and ecumenically open, all inclusive of the plurality of Eastern Churches without succumbing to the temptation of favouring any one group, however large, at the expense of others, are several. First of all, the need to coordinate the all too particular regional-geographical element with the all too transcendent spiritual factor. However arduous the task, these two elements were envisaged from the start, both as regards the geographical aspect (the search of the primordial Christian Orient) and the spiritual element (the typography of the Spirit). The first was suggested by Michelangelo Guidi, the second by Irénée Hausherr, the unfortunate thing being that their suggestion was not taken up and elaborated in a coherent programme. In order to coordinate both – region (quantity) and Spirit (quality), we need (a) first of all, a differential typology, i.e characteristics which spell out the difference between East and West in a way as to identify what typifies the East, so as to know what we are seeking when we look for the primordial Christian East. Then, (b) we have to elaborate a differential topology, that is, the differences of place for Eastern ecclesiastical disciplines: where is the original Orient to be located and what difference does it make on the ecclesiastical disciplines?

In order to do so, we have first to ask how we can develop a genuinely unspoiled concept of the Christian East, one which goes back to the very origins, even before the New Testament was committed to writing. For that we have to develop a typology with two prongs. The first is geography as a means of securing identity by not allowing oneself to become absorbed in the koine of Greek culture and language (the globalization at the time Christianity was born), and thus a geography at once clearly delimited and human. The

second is a spirituality capable of resonating with the various challenges Christian life faces from time to time and from place to place so as to exemplify authentic Christian life not only according to the dictates of Christianity as such, but also according to its inculturation in a given people, thus a spirituality both universal and concrete<sup>51</sup>. The end result is a vector of conflicting forces that find their balance not on the theoretical level as such, but rather on the practical, namely in an organic plan of studies, which is at once flexible and all-inclusive. At the same time, the reason why precisely this plan is missing is because the two elements here mentioned, the correct idea of the original topology of the Christian East and the correct idea of a typology of the Christian East, have not served as guidelines in constructing the programme of studies.

### 3.1 Elaborating the original Christian Eastern type

Typology and characteriology have in common their tendency to have mystery under control and thus banish the riddles which mark everything under the sway of the Spirit. One comes to sense the all-pervading presence of mystery and our instinctive attempt to elude its grasp. Efforts to say what is specific to the East not infrequently are too schematic and oversimplified. Not even such a connoisseur of the East as Yves Congar (d. 1995) manages to avoid completely these straits. Taking as his point of departure that deification in the East, ultimately based on the Platonic concept of participation contrasts with the more Aristotelian concept of beatitude in the West, Congar earned L. Bouyer's rebuke of having overlooked the strong presence of Platonists in the West and of Aristotelians in the East<sup>52</sup>. Others contrast a theology of the cross in the West and a theology of glory in the East<sup>53</sup>, a typology considered too sweeping in its scope and leaves out a whole series of counter-examples. Among other things, the Catholic Church, present in East and West, exemplifies both tendencies, for it celebrates not only Good Friday, with its theology of the cross, but also Easter, with its theology of glory.

We draw closer to a true characterization if we keep in mind what Hausherr said on the matter. The Christian East is contradistinguished by the primacy of the Spirit, whence its treasures of spirituality, a primacy which is operative in theology as well, namely in the union of dogma with spirituality<sup>54</sup>. That this is by no means a flight into devotionalism<sup>55</sup>, is shown by the fact that spirituality is considered to be the view of dogma from inside. Spirituality, that is the priority of experience over any formulation of doctrine, means lived dogma. Its relevance even in Western theology is shown by the fact that both Rahner and v. Balthasar speak of it as a general strain of theological method in general.

### 3.2 Elaborating the Christian Eastern topography

In order to become more concrete we have to ask what regional principle could serve as a point of reference to the differentiated union of dogma and spirituality already mentioned. We must thus ask what the original East was. M. Guidi's words come to mind:

The term "Christian Orient", which in its broadest sense includes all the phenomena of the Christianities of the East, refers more specifically, in the concrete use of Orientalists, to the whole of Christian national cultures and literatures which in analogous ways assert themselves in the Near East right up to the first centuries of Christianity. The Byzantine and Slavic Orient, whose conditions of development and problems are quite different, do not fall under this definition; yet the relation between Greek and Byzantine Christianities on the one hand, and Oriental Christianity on the other, are essential and very close (the Eastern Christian literatures consists for a good part in versions in Greek), so that the constant reference to them is indispensable for the study of the Christian East<sup>56</sup>.

The East here described points to Syriac Christianity with its centre in Mesopotamia. On the one hand, it contains the earliest though still undifferentiated aspects of Christianity, therefore aspects which in later systematizations were simply overlooked or absorbed, with a corresponding loss of insight. On the other hand, if it managed to withstand for so long the lures of Hellenism<sup>57</sup>, it was because it saw in it a threat to what we see nowadays in globalization. Both elements are necessary for a viable Eastern synthesis which knows how to

integrate minorities without destroying their identity. At the same time, an advantage of such a synthesis is its undifferentiated nature. Contrary to our syntheses which, coming close on the heels of scholasticism's division of labour in terms of the formal object of a discipline, and of specialized sciences in the wake of the Enlightenment, are fragmentary, it represents integral knowledge, particularly apt to promote knowledge within an organic programme. The primordial Orient is to be found precisely in those Churches which managed to elude the meshes of Hellenization: the ancient Syrian empire, Armenia, Ethiopia, Georgia and India.

### 3.3 The organic programme of Christian Eastern studies as an ideal and in practice

A truly organic programme which integrates history of these Eastern Churches and their at times vastly different theologies in a coherent whole is quite ambitious and so we have to distinguish between the ideal and practice. Some measure of correlation can be achieved by retracing our steps within the framework of a theological programme to the beginnings. The primordial Christian Orient was an undifferentiated union of plural Churches which slowly emerged as a differentiated whole under the pressure of events, and so was its theology likewise plural, vibrant and undifferentiated<sup>58</sup>. Christian unity was still not found through a clearly and universally recognized centre but through spiritual links, such as celebrating the same memory of Christ present in the liturgy, the same faith in concordance with the eucharist celebrated. J. H. Newman has this to say: “[I]t is true, St Ignatius is silent in his Epistles on the subject of the Pope's authority; but if in fact that authority could not be in active operation then, such silence is not so difficult to account for as the silence of Seneca or Plutarch about Christianity itself, or of Lucian about the Roman people. St Ignatius directed his doctrine according to the need”<sup>59</sup>. The need may have been pastoral, but it was nonetheless the expression of the real situation of growth and development of the Church<sup>60</sup>. The subsequent process of differentiation led to the emergence of various orthodoxies – Assyrian or “Nestorian”, Coptic or “Monophysite”, Greek or Byzantine – accompanied by

the rise and fall of a Semitic, Greek and Latin cultures. As recent dialogue has shown, the deadly doctrinal differences which caused unhealable schism for a millennium and a half are now clearly seen from all sides to be convergent. This importance of the Semitic beginnings fits well, from a theological standpoint, what Karl Rahner says about the three periods of Church history: the short but fundamental period of Judaeo-Christianity; the relatively long period of Christianity in a Greek idiom; the longest period of Christianity in a Latin idiom. Rahner adds that a fourth period was ushered in through Vatican II: the period of the Church of the myriad cultures<sup>61</sup>. An organic programme of Christian Eastern studies tries to coordinate the topographical and the typological in their interlocking way as question and answer in their subsequent theological elaboration.

We may start with where we are – with the modern retrieval of patristic studies in their significance for systematic studies, for which, incidentally, we may use the example of Karl Rahner, surely not a strawman in order to conduct this proof. Karl Rahner claimed that most of what he had written was unscientific, except for a few studies on the Church Fathers on penance and a few studies on spirituality, again largely drawn from the Fathers, to which we would have to add his *Ascese und Mystik in der Väterzeit*.<sup>62</sup> That with Rahner all this knowledge bore fruit in theology is well known. Thus, in his famous article on the incarnation Rahner starts out by saying that, contrary to a tradition which existed before Augustine the western tradition considered that each of the divine persons could become a human being<sup>63</sup>. By an appeal to the pre-Nicene tradition he corrected this as follows: only the Son can become man. If we were to follow the subsequent history of theology we would see that many so called revolutions amounting simply to going back to the sources, and especially to the pre-Nicene tradition<sup>64</sup>.

If we then move on from the patristic area to theological synthesis, especially one that has is characterized by an irreducible pluralism of cultures, as was at the beginning of the

Church and as is now in the present of the Eastern Churches, we see how indispensable it is that this patristic synthesis remains inspired by the Fathers. Perhaps the currently best known example is the axiom that the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church, which has become practically a synonym of present-day Orthodox ecclesiology (N. Afanas'ev, Y. Zizioulas), and has exercised great influence on all ecclesiology, western or eastern<sup>65</sup>.

In the academic implementation of this programme there emerge at least two problems. (a) For reasons of division of labour in the area of specialization spirituality and dogma are studied separately at the PIO so that factually they are not treated, as befits a genuinely Eastern programme, in their unity. If one resorts to caricature, the programme thus remains in several important aspects one which copies to a large extent the dynamics and logic of Western courses, though filled with Eastern examples. Theologians familiar with Eastern patristics usually adopt an integrative approach to theology, which runs the whole gamut of the union of dogma and spirituality, which may be simply expressed as the priority of experience with regards to any conceptualization<sup>66</sup>. (b) As for the other ecclesiastical disciplines such as canon law and history they have to orientate themselves towards the more authentic meaning of the Orient, not in order to indulge in anachronistic thinking but in order to return to the sources in the Spirit of Vatican II<sup>67</sup>.

Conclusion: One may be surprised that we resorted so often to Western theologians in a paper on the East, but that only means that one may be factually a far better theologian if one returns to the sources than if one simply repeats blindly the contents of tradition. After all, the Apostolic Creed of Rome has retained such typically Eastern elements as “descendit ad inferos” and “communio sanctorum” not found in the Nicene-Cosntantinopolitan creed. Moreover very many Jesuits, and not only those at the PIO, have contributed to promote knowledge of the Christian East. What the Orientale offers over and above this is

that it exercises a wide influence far disproportionate for its size, one moreover that can be kept with relatively few Jesuits. If the academic programme will be renewed, as we are in train of doing, all this may be even enhanced.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> R. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, Rome 2008, 31.

<sup>2</sup> R. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, Rome 2008, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Paris 1994.

<sup>4</sup> The conclusion of *Orientalium ecclesiarum*, nr. 30, reads as follows: “The holy council finds great joy in the earnest and faithful collaboration of the Eastern and Western Catholic Churches, and at the same time makes the following declaration: All these legal arrangements are made in view of the present conditions, until such time as the Catholic Church and the separated Eastern Churches untie together in the fullness of community”; A. Flannery (ed.), *Vatican II, I: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, New York 1996, 451.

<sup>5</sup> R. Schaeffler, *Glaubensreflexion und Wissenschaftstheorie: Thesen zur Wissenschaftstheorie und Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Theologie*, Frankfurt a.M., 1980, 14: “Die soziale Bedeutung der Wissenschaft besteht nicht nur, wie vulgärmarxistische Wissenschaftstheoretiker betonen, auf den ‘Verwertungszusammenhängen’ von ‘Wissenschaftsergebnissen’, beispielsweise auf ihrer Verwendbarkeit zur ‘Profimaximierung’ der Unternehmer oder zur Kriegsproduktion. Die Wissenschaft ist vielmehr schon dadurch in der Gesellschaftsprozeß einbezogen, daß das ‘erkenntnisleitende Interesse’, aus dem sich die wissenschaftlichen Fragestellungen ergeben, mit gesellschaftlichen Interessen der Forscher und ihrer sozialen Gruppe zusammenhängt (vgl. dazu J. Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, Frankfurt 1969).

<sup>6</sup> K. Rahner, “Überlegungen zur Methode der Theologie”, *Schriften zur Theologie* IX, Einsiedeln 1970, 90-96. On p. 93 the social relevance of theology is described in terms of theologians’ critical service to the magisterium, who, by evaluating judiciously the various affirmations in question, help the Church to reflect on the unreflected consciousness of the faithful and thus distinguish between what is said and what is meant by a particular statement.

<sup>7</sup> V. Poggi, *L’Oriente cristiano: panorama storico delle Chiese cristiane in Asia e in Africa*, Bologna 2005, 39.

<sup>8</sup> C. Soetens, *Du Congrès eucaristique de Jérusalem aux Échos d’Orient*, Roma 2002.

<sup>9</sup> C. G. Patelos, *Vatican I et les évêques uniates*, Louvain 1981, 55-60.

<sup>10</sup> The Eastern Congregation had been created a few months before, on 1 May 1917, with the motu proprio, *Dei providentis*; the relationship between the two had been brought out by *Orientalis catholici* and the comment of *Civiltà Cattolica*; cf. V. Poggi, *Per la storia del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 2000, 15.

<sup>11</sup> In his “I primi professori del PIO”, *Per la storia del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, 147-174, V. Poggi, counts a White Father (Antoine Delpuch), two Benedictines (Ildefonso Schuster and Bonaventura Unach), three Assumptionists (Martin Jugie, Romuald Souarn and Siméon Vailhé), a Dominican (Thomas Garde), a Mechitarist (Ohannes Aucherian) and four Jesuits (Bogumil Spáčil, Guillaume de Jerphanion, Alberto Vaccari, Antoine Malvy; Felix Cappello joined them in 1922, bringing the number to five), two Russians, a Greek and an Ethiopian and three lay persons (Evaristo Caruso, Michelangelo Guidi and Silvio Giuseppe Mercati).

<sup>12</sup> V. Poggi, *Per la storia del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, 147-151.

<sup>13</sup> In decades only in 1537-8 as Ignatius waited to go to Jerusalem did war between Venice and Turkey make it impossible.

<sup>14</sup> E. G. Farrugia, “Im Banne des Ostens: Werdegang und Zukunftsorientierung des hl. Ignatius von Loyola”, *Ignatius von Loyola und die Gesellschaft Jesu, 1491-1556*, hrsg. v. A. Falkner u. P. Imhof, Würzburg 1990, 397-416.



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<sup>15</sup> A. Ravier, *Ignace de Loyola fonde la Compagnie de Jésus*, Paris 1973, 187; E. G. Farrugia, “Im Banne des Ostens: Werdegang und Zukunftsorientierung des hl. Ignatius von Loyola”, *Ignatius von Loyola und die Gesellschaft Jesu, 1491-1556*, hrsg. v. A. Falkner u. P. Imhof, Würzburg 1990, 400. Although nothing came out of his correspondence with Bishop Cubelles of Malta in 1553 nor did Nicolas Bobadilla, ordered to go there, ever reach Malta, the dream became true in 1592 when this college was founded, incorporated into the University of Malta in 1769.

<sup>16</sup> Drawing a perhaps too bleak a picture about Jesuit involvement in Ethiopia, Ph. Caraman, in his *The Lost Empire*, Notre Dame, Indiana 1985, 158, sums up by quoting Edward Ullendorf: “They helped a Christian nation to maintain its identity and independence against Muslim encroachment; they had notably contributed to the education of the people; and above all they had explored the country with remarkable diligence and truly astonishing courage and perseverance; and they left us worthy records of their learning, monuments of scholarship far in advance of their time”.

<sup>17</sup> In the entry for January 1942 of Bienheureux Pierre Favre’s *Mémorial*, traduit et commenté par M. de Certaux, Paris 1959, nr. 33, p. 136, we read: “Il me donna spécialement une dévotion que je devais adopter et continuer jusqu’à ma mort, en gardant foi, espérance et charité pour le salut des sept villes suivantes: Wittemberg, en Saxe; la capitale de la Sarmatie (bien que je n’en sache pas le nom); Genève, dans le duché de Savoie; Constantinople, en Grèce; Antioche, en Grec aussi; Jérusalem; et Alexandrie en Afrique”.

<sup>18</sup> Although Favre himself avows not to know the exact name of the capital city, the name Sarmatia reduces the choice to either Kiev, then decadent, or Moscow, new and on the rise.

<sup>19</sup> See Ignacio Iparraguirre Y C. de Dalmases (Directores), “Al negus Claudio de Etiopía”y “Instrucción al P. Juan Nuñez, Patriarca de Etiopía” (Roma, 23 febrero 1555), San Ignacio de Loyola, *Obras Completas*, Madrid 1982, 950-956 y 956-956-964. Both letters, probably ghost-written by Juan Polanco, are characterized by the ecclesiology of the Council of Florence (1439), but that is probably a better deal for the Orientals than what was offered at the Union of Brest (1596), characterized by the post-Tridentine insistence on authority.

<sup>20</sup> B. Schultze, “Oriente cristiano: Teología”, *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús* III, 2879.

<sup>21</sup> E. G. Farrugia, “Oriente cristiano: Controversias”, *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús* III, 2891.

<sup>22</sup> G. Piovesana, *Storia dell pensiero filosofico russo*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1992, 33, 44. The importance of the Moghilian Academy may be gauged by what the Rector of l’Institut Saint-Serge in Paris, A. Kniazeff, had to say. Instead of a blanket rejection of Western ideas, what the Academy proposed by way of a disciplined and clear way of proceeding which induced students to define their terms and demonstrate their affirmations became a model for other schools. One can understand why Catherine II did not want to suppress the Jesuit schools in 1773, one may add.

<sup>23</sup> See Ph. Caraman, *University of the Nations: The Story of the Gregorian University of Rome from 1551 to Vatican II*, New York 1981, 124.

<sup>24</sup> E. G. Farrugia (ed.), *Da Benedetto XV a Benedetto XVI: PIO 1917-2007*, Roma 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Ph. Caraman, *University of the Nations: The Story of the Gregorian University of Rome from 1551 to Vatican II*, New York 1981, 124, comments: “The pope’s breadth of vision is reflected in the provision of places for students from churches not in visible unity with Rome. Today perspectives have changed but in 1917 the horizon could scarcely have been broader”.

<sup>26</sup> A. Tamborra, *Chiesa cattolica e Ortodossia russa*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1992, 424-428. In the wake of the millennium of the mission of St Cyril (d. 865) and St Methodius (d. 885) among the Slavs, a movement arose which sought to promote Church union through congress held at Velehrad, where St Methodius lies buried. A number of Jesuits, such as Michel d’Hebrigny and the Polish Jesuit Jan Urban, *ibid.*, 367, who was perhaps the first (1907) to coin the phrase “sister Churches”, took an active part in these Congresses. In this context grew the idea of founding the Russicum, a college to train priests for the Russian mission, with the unionistic categories of his day; Pius XI entrusted it to the Jesuits.

<sup>27</sup> AA VV, *St Georges: Un collège Jésuite pour les russes (De Constantinople à Meudon, 1921-1992)*, Meudon, France 1993.

<sup>28</sup> It was founded by Ivan S. Gagarin, a Russian prince who became a Jesuit in 1842, and founded *Études*.

<sup>29</sup> R. Marichal, “Simvol”, DEOC, 696-7.

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- <sup>30</sup> F. Rouleau, “Plamia”, DEOC, 602.
- <sup>31</sup> V. Poggi, “I primi professori del PIO”, *Per la storia del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 2000, 169-171; “Michelangelo Guidi”, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Roma 2003, 285.
- <sup>32</sup> “Guidi, Ignazio”, H. Kaufhold, *Kleines Lexikon des Christlichen Orients*, Wiesbaden 2007, 196.
- <sup>33</sup> A. Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora. Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev (1893-1966)*, Cambridge 1898, 77.
- <sup>34</sup> E.G. Farrugia, “La Dogmatica al PIO”, R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 96-100.
- <sup>35</sup> E.G. Farrugia, “La Dogmatica al PIO”, R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 101-107.
- <sup>36</sup> Cf. Pius XII, “Sacramentum ordinis” (30 Nov. 1947), AAS 40 (1948), 5-7; DH 3857-3861.
- <sup>37</sup> H.-J. Schulz, “Ein Blick in die Zukunft: Was können die Kirchen vom Päpstlichen Orientalischen Institut erwarten für den ökumenischen Fortschritt und für die theologische Wissenschaft?”, R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 199-202.
- <sup>38</sup> E. G. Farrugia, “Re-Reading Orientalium Ecclesiarum”, *Gregorianum* 88 (2007) 354-8.
- <sup>39</sup> However, the very conclusion of *Orientalium ecclesiarum* – nr. 30 – should give us pause before pretending that the purpose of the Catholic Eastern Churches is make the Church conservative. It ultimately suggests to the Catholic Eastern Churches to be ready in case this should prove necessary to cease to exist for the sake of communion. Actually, the prescriptions of the decree are seen as temporary measure and nothing is laid down for the future time of communion precisely to leave all options open.
- <sup>40</sup> In the reform of the Curia known as *Pastor Bonus* (1988) the Secretariat became a Pontifical Council for promoting unity among Christians.
- <sup>41</sup> E. G. Farrugia, “To Rome and Back: The Pontifical Oriental Institute”, *Catholic Near East*, 22 (1996.4) 12-15.
- <sup>42</sup> E. G. Farrugia (ed.), *The Pontifical Oriental Institute: the First Seventy-five Years 1917-1992*, Roma 1993, 25.
- <sup>43</sup> Paris 1978.
- <sup>44</sup> John F. Long, “The Pontifical Oriental Institute and the Ecumenical Movement”, R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 83-94.
- <sup>45</sup> V. Ruggieri, “Guillaume de Jerphanion S.J.: esquisse biographique”, *Guillaume de Jerphanion et la Turquie de jadis*, Soveria Mannelli 1997, 12-22.
- <sup>46</sup> G. Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin: Les Églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, Paris 1925-1942.
- <sup>47</sup> It is some indication of his merits that, as a patristic scholar, he managed to show that the work previously ascribed to St Nil Sorky, *Les leçons d'un contemplatif*, Paris 1960, really belonged to Evagrius and so partially rehabilitated him. Besides he was one of those who promoted the idea of undertaking the monumental *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, whose first editor was a former professor at the PIO, Marcel Viller. See E. G. Farrugia, “Editionsbericht: Ascese und Mystik in der Väterzeit”, *Karl Rahner, Sämtliche Werke: Spiritualität der Kirchenväter*, 3, Freiburg i.Br. 1999, XLV-LII.
- <sup>48</sup> J. Prader, “Il PIO e il diritto canonico delle Chiese orientali”, in R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 185-187.
- <sup>49</sup> Ivan Žužek's claim to fame is threefold: (1) the erection of the Faculty of Canon Law; (2) the founding of the Society Oriental Canon Law; (3) and his decisive part in the revision of the Code of Oriental Canon Law; J. Prader, “Il PIO e il diritto canonico delle Chiese orientali”, in R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 189.
- <sup>50</sup> J. Prader, “Il PIO e il diritto canonico delle Chiese orientali”, in R. F. Taft & J. L. Dugan, *Il 75° Anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, Roma 1994, 189-193.

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<sup>51</sup> “‘All things are lawful for me’”, but not all things are beneficial” (1 Cor 6:12), says St Paul, who repeats a few chapters later: “‘All things are lawful’, but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are lawful’, but not all things build up”; 1 Cor 10:23; Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Oxford 1989.

<sup>52</sup> Y. Congar, *Chrétiens en dialogue: contributions catholiques à l’oecuménisme*, Paris 1964; L. Bouyer, “Occident et Orient”, *Dictionnaire théologique*, Tournau (Belgium) 1963, 466-472.

<sup>53</sup> H.U. v. Balthasar, “Sehen, Hören und Lesen im Rahmen der Kirche”, *Sponsa Verbi*, Einsiedeln 1971, 484-501.

<sup>54</sup> I. Hausherr, “Pour comprendre l’Orient chrétien: La primauté du spirituel”, *OCP* 33 (1967) 351-369.

<sup>55</sup> As N. Lohfink, in “Text und Thema. Anmerkungen zur Absolutheitsanspruch der Systematik bei der reform der theologischen Studien”, *Stimmen der Zeit* 181 (1968) 120-126, accused K. Rahner of doing.

<sup>56</sup> M. Guidi, “L’Oriente cristiano”, *Enciclopedia Italiana*, XXXV, Roma 1935, 550.

<sup>57</sup> This idea has been eloquently expressed by H. Schäfer, *Der Mensch in Orient und Occident*, München (1928)<sup>2</sup>1960, 107-160.

<sup>58</sup> See, on this point, R. Beulay, *La lumière sans forme: introduction à l’étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale*, Chevotogne (s.d.).

<sup>59</sup> J. H. Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Dogma*, Notre Dame, Indiana 1989, 148ff. The *Essay* was handed in to be printed a few days before Newman became Catholic on 9 October 1845 and appeared before the year was over; cf. I. Kerr, “Foreword”, *ibid.*, xx.

<sup>60</sup> Newman, *ibid.*, 149, in fact continues: “While Apostles were on earth, there was the display neither of Bishop nor Pope; their power had no prominence, as being exercised by Apostles. In course of time, first the power of the Bishop displayed itself, and then the power of the Pope. When the Apostles were taken away, Christianity did not at once break into portions; yet separate localities might begin to be the sense of internal dissensions, and a local arbitrator in consequence would be wanted. Christians at home did not yet quarrel with Christians abroad; they quarrelled at home among themselves. St Ignatius applied the fitting remedy. The *Sacramentum Unitatis* was acknowledged on all hands; the mode of fulfilling and the means of securing it would vary with the occasion; and the determination of its essence, its seat, and its laws would be a gradual supply for a gradual necessity”.

<sup>61</sup> K. Rahner, “Die bleibende Bedeutung des II. Vatikanischen Konzils”, *Schriften zur Theologie*, XIV, Einsiedeln 1980, 304-6; “Aspekte europäischer Theologie”, *Schriften zur Theologie*, XV, Einsiedeln 1983, 88-91.

<sup>62</sup> Freiburg i. Br. 1939.

<sup>63</sup> K. Rahner, “What does it mean to say: ‘God Became Man?’”, *Idem, Foundations of Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, tr. W.V. Dych, Freiburg i.Br. 1976, 214-215: If we go back to a tradition which is prior to Augustine and found especially in the Greek Fathers, one would understand that only the Word of God can become man.

<sup>64</sup> Another example is the renewal of the spirituality of the sacrament of penance through the maxim *pax cum ecclesia dimittit peccata*, which was retrieved by Vatican II. Though the words as such are found in Augustine, they go factually back to St Cyprian and the pre-Nicene tradition; see K. Rahner, *Frühe Bußgeschichte*, Einsiedeln 1973, 84-85.

<sup>65</sup> Though it was H. de Lubac who first formulated it as such, ultimately, however, it harks back to Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrnaeos*, 8.2, i.e to the primordial meaning of Christian East at the end of the first century / beginning of the second.

<sup>66</sup> See K. Rahner, *Foundations of Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, tr. W.V. Dych, Freiburg i.Br. 1976, 14-17. In his “Die Einheit von Theologie und Spiritualität”, *Einfaltungen: Auf Wegen christlicher Einigung*, München 1969, 42 H.U. v. Balthasar speaks of “integrierte Theologie”.

<sup>67</sup> A schema of possible changes in the programme is appended.

