

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

Toward Ecumenism: The Eastern Churches and Catholic Unity

Review Author: Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 14, no. 4 (1968): 709–711

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

the delinquent and the despairing, this still continues to be regarded as the outstanding means whereby the humanism of the new age can be given an authentic art of the priesthood. So too the capacity of giving expression to the sense of the meaning of life, of noble ideals and of hope: It is the unfathomable truths which surround us, to draw near and yet not profane the mystery in which the world is wrapped, to give meaning to things, an inner voice to the mind and a vibrant tongue to toil and sorrow and the love of men, in a word, prayer, which is true as light and like light, poetry and life, this too can be priestly; and it also still lives in the hearts of men of the twentieth century.

These reflections, reproduced at the beginning of this book, from a thoughtful introduction—by the future Pope—to the words of one of his predecessors. At this time when the age of the laity has been decisively ushered in by the great documents of Vatican II, the question, What is the priesthood?, is more than ever what the then Msgr. Montini called “a burning topic.”

E. E. Y. Hales has said somewhere that the words of Pius XII often made a limited impression because his language was “too philosophical”; one might say, perhaps, often *too formal*, *too “roman.”* There is truth to this remark, I think, and it applies even to the texts in this book. But it remains a most useful work, nonetheless, for one who would reflect on the priesthood and its meaning in the world of today, and its pages should provide both priest and layman with food for thought and prayer.

C. G. ARÉVALO, S.J.

TOWARD ECUMENISM

THE EASTERN CHURCHES AND CATHOLIC UNITY. Edited by Maximos IV Sayegh, Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963. 237 pp.

This collection of essays and documents written by distinguished members of the Melkite hierarchy (Catholics of the Byzantine rite in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt) aims ultimately at the union of all Christians and proximately at the removal of impediments to it. Underlying all obstacles is the desire manifested by certain non-Eastern prelates, contrary to the wishes of the popes, to “latinize” the Eastern churches, i.e., to dominate them and deprive them of rights which in some cases were guaranteed when they entered into com-

munion with Rome. Fear of being latinized in their turn averts Orthodox Christians from the desired union.

Some of the things Byzantine Catholics object to are the existence of a Latin patriarchate of Jerusalem (p. 168), the permission (given in canon 11 of the new Code of Eastern Canon Law) for non-Catholics of the Eastern churches to enter a Catholic rite not corresponding to the rite they come from (p. 152), the limitations put on the use of the vernacular in the Byzantine liturgy (p. 197), but especially the ranking of patriarchs of the East behind cardinals and apostolic legates (pp. 112, 127, 133, 148, etc.). The Eighth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 869 and the Council of Florence in 1439 gave precedence to the titular of the see of Rome, then to the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*), promulgated on November 21, 1964, after the publication of this book, has in section 9 restored this precedence of the Eastern patriarchs and in section 4 has abrogated the general permission formerly given to non-Catholic Easterners to adopt another rite on entering the Catholic communion. The recent changes in the Latin liturgy moreover, have removed certain local inconveniences once said to have resulted from the use of the vernacular in the Byzantine rite.

Although the updating of Church discipline and the liturgy has made some of the discussions chiefly historical in value, a number of the problems the book takes up are still outstanding, e.g. the date of Easter, obligatory attendance at Mass, and the internationalization of the Roman curia. In addition, it pleads several causes of wider interest. We are told, for example, that indigenous Christianity vanished from North Africa because "it never put down deep roots among the local people. Christianity never became africanized" but only romanized. "African Christianity remained an importation" (p. 31).

Non-conformists too are defended as purposeful creatures.

There is a general desire to fit everything into its own place, to have everybody marching in line and step. . . . The practical but superficial mind finds itself constantly tempted to eliminate the troublesome exception. . . . But oversimplified solutions of this kind. . . . reflect a fundamental ignorance of God's plan (p. 25).

Charity in naming institutions is also urged.

Surely it is normal in human relations. . . . to call someone by the name he gives himself, without asking whether his. . . . characteristics strictly justify it. . . . When the Catholic Church speaks of various Protestant bodies, it designates them by the names they have themselves taken: Evangelical Church, Apostolic Church, Church of

God. . . . Placing the word Orthodox between inverted commas [arouses resentment] To appreciate the resentment. . . we have simply to ask ourselves how we should feel. . . if they never gave the title of our church without putting "Catholic" between inverted commas (pp. 106-107 and note).

One subject, admittedly a difficult one, on which the reader might desire more unity of opinion among the several authors is the number of Eastern Christians. The figures given in the publisher's note (pp. 14-15) would seem to total a little less than 100 million. This mounts to 117 million on page 43, and to 250 million on page 148.

The proof-reader has overlooked a number of misprints; e.g., p. 13, line 15 should read *outstanding*, 15, 13 *their*, 37, 2 *Greek*, and 154, 19 *snobbery*.

THOMAS J. O'SHAUGHNESSY, S.J.

THE SACRAMENTS AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

SACRAMENTS AND ORTHODOXY. By Alexander Schmemmann. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. 142 pp.

Father Schmemmann, Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York, and an Orthodox priest, has written an ecumenical book that views the problems of the present time in relation to the sacramental experience had in the Christian liturgy. The book is not meant for theologians, having been written as a study guide for a conference of the World Christian Student Federation, but because of its new emphases and unusual viewpoints it will provoke many theologians to reflection.

Fr. Schmemmann speaks forcefully about the Church as a social institution. The tendency to see in it a "being in itself" instead of the relation between God, man, and the world puts one in danger of ecclesiolatry. In reality the Church is a sacrament enabling man to see the "world to come" in and through this world. To present it as a comfort or as a reasonable investment of time and money and to put "Welcome" and "Keep smiling" signs in its buildings is alien to Christ's spirit. Life in the Church means humility, obedience, and discipline.

But it does not mean clericalism. Christ was killed by the clergy and His sacrifice abolished their enthroned place as it abolished "religion," because it destroyed the wall of separation between the profane and the sacred. If the secular world of today respects the