



The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II: An Orthodox Examination of Rome's Ecumenical Theology Regarding Baptism and the Church

Fr. Peter Alban Heers D.Th.

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More than fifty years have passed since the Second Vatican Council—arguably the most consequential religious gathering of the 20th century—produced a new vision of what the Church is and ought to be. Remarkably, in spite of the subsequent “ecumenical spring,” until now no thorough examination of the council’s new ecclesiology from an Orthodox standpoint has been undertaken. The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II fills this gap. In this well-annotated work, Fr. Peter Heers sheds the light of the Orthodox patristic vision of the Body of Christ on the new ecclesiology and on the paths that led to it. He further unearths and examines the Western sources for the council’s decisions—both recent (Congar, Bea, Newman) and distant (Calvin, Aquinas, Augustine)—and thereby reveals the continuity (or discontinuity) of the council’s vision with its own tradition. First published in Greek in 2014, The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II has been hailed by leading Greek Orthodox scholars as a watershed in ecumenical studies, a paradigm shift for ecumenical relations and ecclesiology, and required reading for expert and seeker alike. It is a book that opens new horizons for researchers, believers, participants in, and observers of the Orthodox–Roman Catholic theological dialogue. Remarkable in every way. A profoundly patristic ecclesiological examination, moving within the Orthodox perspective and offering new material. There is no doubt that it will be a revelation for many. It is very important and must be read both by theologians and the wider public. — METROPOLITAN HIEROTHEOS (VLACHOS) OF NAFAKTOU, GREECE We are indebted to Fr. Peter for navigating us through these documents and for his clarion call to vigilance as we evaluate what the council considered to be a return to the sources. — BISHOP BASIL OF WICHITA AND MID-AMERICA, ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA We are very grateful to Fr. Peter Heers for this invaluable contribution! In his book he clearly defines the boundaries of the Church, which is so necessary today for our seminarians who will need to teach and defend this Dogma of the Church. We anxiously await the appearance of his book in our bookstore! — THE VERY REV. ARCHIMANDRITE LUKE (MURIANKA), ABBOT OF HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY AND RECTOR OF HOLY TRINITY SEMINARY The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II is a book of great importance for our contemporary ecclesiastical life. In it we learn not only of the origins and development of “baptismal theology,” unknown to all but a small circle of experts, but also of the consequences this new theory has for the Church today. Highly recommended! — HIEROMONK LUKE OF THE HOLY MONASTERY OF GRIGORIOU, MT ATHOS, GREECE In this study, the only one of its kind, many issues are clarified, older positions are overturned and new research perspectives are opened up for an objective and dispassionate evaluation of the Dialogue. An essential contribution to ecumenical relations which will be considered carefully. — PROTOPRESBYTER GEORGE METALLINOS, DEAN EMERITUS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF ATHENS A masterful examination of the changes within Roman Catholic self-understanding over the centuries and their consequences for our time. Herein one will find essential material for careful Orthodox reflection on one of the primary challenges for the Church today. — ARCHPRIEST STEPHEN FREEMAN, RECTOR OF ST. ANNE ORTHODOX CHURCH, OAK RIDGE, TN Fr. Heers’ study is the first detailed examination of the historical process of the separation of Baptism from the other Mysteries, with the conclusion being reached that this led to the “extension” of the Church and the establishment of a new ecclesiology. This study...offers a great deal to the Church today, for it opens up new perspectives for every good-willed reader, whether Orthodox or Roman

Catholic. — Demetrios Tselingides, Professor of Dogmatic Theology, Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki

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