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The Decree of the Second Vatican Council Unitatis Redintegratio (1964) in the Historiography

This article is a review of the some historiography on the document of the Roman Catholic Church Unitatis Redintegratio that came from the Second Vatican Council in 1964 in the context of the ecumenical movement. In 1961 the first pan-Orthodox conference was held in Rhodes during the preparation of the Second Vatican Council. Since there was a disagreement whether to accept or not the invitation of Rome to send observers to the Council, the first Orthodox delegates went there only in 1964. The Second Vatican Council opened the way to dialogue for Roman Catholics with Christians of different confessions. Also due to it the new level of relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church became possible. The Churches began asking themselves how a common witness of faith could be possible in different areas of practical life: in ethics, in social work etc. Therefore, the article shows what aspects the foreign and the Russian scholars brought to the table of discussion and what directions were essential in the investigation.

Key words: Unitatis Redintegartio, Second Vatican Council, historiography, the Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church.

The events that led to the Great Schism in the middle of the XI century were generally influenced not only by political issues, but also by other historical topics concerning the different points of church practice in the West and the East. Concerned about this continuous existing division, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) produced one of the most important documents of the Roman Catholic Church. This document, the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), changed the attitude to other Christians and tried to address the issue of division, intending the possibility of overcoming it.

The question of the essential points of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church was considered in several researches, amongst which some significant monographs investigate this problem. Will T. Cohen argue in his book *The Concept of 'Sister Churches' in Catholic-Orthodox Relations since Vatican II* why the Orthodox Church may be called the sister of the Catholic Church.¹ The relationship between the Churches was also the subject of Maximos Vgenopoulos' work, "Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II",² to which the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew himself wrote the foreword.

This idea of "Sister Churches" may be better understood if we think about what one generally says about the theology of the Orthodox Church, namely that its roots are found in the Holy Scripture, in the apostolic tradition and in the writings of the Holy Fathers. The same can be said of the Roman Catholic Church. The unity in the Orthodox Church is shown in the celebration of the Eucharist. At the same time, in the Roman Catholic Church the idea of Papacy unites Roman Catholics under one head.

The book of Adam DeVille can help understand furthermore one of the important documents of the Roman-Catholic Church on ecumenism.³ It is the declaration *Ut unum sint*. Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Etna wrote the book *Orthodox and Roman Catholic Relations from the Fourth Crusade to the Hesychastic Controversy* where in one of the chapters he explains the status of the problems of relationship between the Roman-Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.⁴ In his book, *Walking Together: Roman-Catholics and Ecumenism Twenty-five Years after Vatican II*, Thaddeus D. Horgan describes the history of attitude of Roman-Catholic Church to the ecumenical movement during this period.⁵

Cardinal Walter Casper summoned some of his articles and writings in one

¹ Will T. Cohen, *The Concept of 'Sister Churches' in Catholic-Orthodox Relation since Vatican II* (Munster: Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 2016), 252. See also: Edward Sieciensky, review of *The Concept of "Sister Churches" in Catholic-Orthodox Relations since Vatican II*, by Will T. Cohen, *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 61/2 (2017): 231–246.

² Maximos Vgenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective*. Foreword by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013).

³ Adam A. J. DeVille, *Ut Unum Sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity: Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy* (Paris: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

⁴ Archbishop Chrysostomos, "An Overview of the Hesychastic Controversy," in *Orthodox and Roman Catholic Relations from the Fourth Crusade to the Hesychastic Controversy* by Archbishop Chrysostomos (Etna, California: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2001), 199–232.

⁵ Thaddeus D. Horgan, *Walking Together: Roman-Catholics and Ecumenism Twenty-Five Years after Vatican II* (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990).

book called *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity*.⁶ Other works authored by different persons and dedicated to a similar topic showed through their interest the importance of the theme: *New Short History of the Catholic Church* by Norman Tanner,⁷ *The Unity of the Churches of God* translated and with the introduction by Polycarp Sherwood,⁸ *Unity in Freedom: Reflections on the Human Family* by Augustine Cardinal Bea,⁹ *Rome and Reunion* by Frederick C. Grant,¹⁰ *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* edited by Paul D. Murray with the assistance of Luca Badini-Confalonieri,¹¹ *Essays in Christian Unity (1928–1954)*¹² etc.

Nikos Nissiotis, a famous Orthodox theologian and an observer at Vatican II, wrote some articles reflecting upon the work of the Council, ecumenism itself and the perspectives of Christian unity.¹³ There is also a Ph.D. work written by a Russian researcher V. I. Filonov that considers the problematic points of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church.¹⁴ Abbé J. Calvet wrote a book called *Rome and Reunion* where he briefly describes the history of the relationship between the Churches, while also dealing with the history of Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁵ G. K. A. Bell, bishop of Chichester, gave lectures at Uppsala University in 1946 that were published as a book *Christian*

⁶ Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity* (London, New York: Burns and Oates, A Continuum imprint, 2004).

⁷ Norman Tanner, *New Short History of the Catholic Church* (London, New York: Burns and Oats, 2011).

⁸ Polycarp Sherwood, *The Unity of the Churches of God* (Dublin: Helicon, 1963).

⁹ Augustin Cardinal Bea, *Unity in Freedom: Reflections on the Human Family* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

¹⁰ Frederick C. Grant, *Rome and Reunion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

¹¹ Paul D. Murray, Luca Badini-Confalonieri, eds., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹² Henry St. John, *Essays in Christian Unity: 1928–1954* (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1955).

¹³ Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Is The Vatican Council Really Ecumenical," in *The Ecumenical Review* 16/4 (1964), 357–377; Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Ecclesiology and Ecumenism of the Second Session of the Vatican Council II," in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10/1 (1964), 15–36; Nikos A. Nissiotis, "The Main Ecclesiological Problem of the Second Vatican Council and the position of the non-Roman Churches facing it," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 2/1 (1965), 31–62; Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Report on the Second Vatican Council" (with special reference to the Decrees on "Divine Revelation," "Church in Modern World" and to the ecumenicity of the Council as a whole), in *The Ecumenical Review* (April 1966), 190–206; Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Orthodox Reflections on the Decree on Ecumenism," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 3/2 (1966), 329–342.

¹⁴ Филонов В. И. "Проблема экуменизма в контексте взаимоотношений Русской Православной и Римско-Католической Церквей в конце 1950-х – начале 2000-х гг." (диссертация на соискание ученой степени кандидата исторических наук по специальности 07.00.02 – Отечественная история. Орел, 2006). V. I. Filonov, "The Problem of Ecumenism in the Context of Relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church at the end of 1950s – in the beginning of 2000s" (Ph.D. unpublished dissertation, The State University of the city of Orel, Russia, 2006). (My translation).

¹⁵ Abbé J. Calvet, *Rome and Reunion*, trans. Rev. W. C. Turney, (London: Philip Allan & Co. Ltd., at Quality Court, and by The Society of Ss. Peter & Paul, Ltd. at Westminster House, 1921).

Unity: The Anglican Position.¹⁶ He reflects also on relations the Orthodox Church with the Old Catholic Church.

In 2009 in Moscow a collective monograph was published in Russian for the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of *Unitatis Redintegratio*.¹⁷ Some articles were written in Italian on the topic of the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards ecumenism and concerning the analysis of Roman Catholic documents with particular attention to *Unitatis Redintegratio*.¹⁸ It is very important that, according to this conciliar decree, only the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church can be called “Sister Churches”.¹⁹ Lubomir Zak made reference to Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, Hilarion’s reflections on the approach of Vatican II.²⁰ The Head of the Department for External Church Relations emphasized that the Roman Catholic Church recognized that the Orthodox Church provides salvation, real sacraments and Apostolic Succession.²¹

James Puglisi wrote his reflections to the 50th anniversary of promulgation *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Generally speaking, he focused on the perception of the document for the ecumenical movement, not for the relationship between Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. He emphasizes that Pope John XXIII rose up the question of the perspective of unity among the Churches, asking cardinal Augustine Bea before the Council to prepare *Unitatis Redintegratio* for guiding the discussion and not for summarizing the ecclesiological and theological ideas.²²

Ricardo Burigana describes the history of the editing of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, its redaction.²³ Arguing with the help of the structure of the document, he tried to show the redefinition of ecumenical theology from the Roman Catholic point of view. For him, participating in the ecumenical movement became the way to bring particular perspective for the ecumenism.

Tecle Vetlari analyzes the structure of *Unitatis Redintegratio* also. He chose the Biblical approach for the analysis of the document, referring to the 44 existing

¹⁶ G. K. A. Bell, *Christian Unity: The Anglican Position* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1948).

¹⁷ Jean-Paul II et alii. *Searching for Christian Unity*. New York New City Press, 2007. See also: *Православие и Католичество: от конфронтации к диалогу/* Сост. А. Юдин. М.: Библиейско-богословский институт св. апостола Андрея, 2005. Aleksey Udin, ed. *The Orthodoxy and Catholicism: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Moscow: Biblical Theological Institute of St Apostle Andrew, 2005). (My translation).

¹⁸ I'm grateful to my friend hieromonk Maxim (Iuliu-Mariu Morariu) from the Romanian Orthodox Church for helping with the translation of the Italian and French articles on this topic.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 445.

²⁰ Lubomir Žak, “Il Cammino Ecumenico Aperto da Unitatis Redintegratio Tra Difficoltà e Speranze,” in *Dialogo con L'Ortodossia*,” in *Lateranum* 81/2 (2015), 444.

²¹ Митрополит Иларион: Сейчас мы вписываем новые страницы в историю взаимоотношений между православными и католиками, <https://mospat.ru/ru/2014/04/01/news100344/> (posted online 01.04.2014) (access date : 12.12.2017). Metropolitan Hilarion: Now We Are Writing New Pages of the History of relationship between the Orthodox and the Catholics, <https://mospat.ru/ru/2014/04/01/news100344/> (posted online 01.04.2014) (access date : 12.12.2017). (My translation).

²² James Puglisi, “Unitatis Redintegratio e una Chiesa in Dialogo.” In: *Studi Ecumenici* 33/¾ (2015), 400.

²³ Riccardo Burigana, “Solocinquantanni... Note sul decreto Unitatis Redintegratio del Vaticano II e sulla recezione (1964-2014),” in: *Studi Ecumenici*, 33/¾, (2015), 417.

quotations from the New Testament, to the single quotation from the Old Testament and to some integrated quotations as references, allusions etc.²⁴ He considered the fact that in the second chapter there are more Biblical references than in the others. T. Vetlari talked about the Apostles' Paul, Matthew, Luke and John's influence on the document. Avoiding speaking about the Orthodox Churches, the author deals only with the ecumenical approach and Papal Primacy as the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church.

As for Gheorghios Vlantis, he mentions that part of *Unitatis Redintegratio* dedicated to the Orthodox Churches,²⁵ emphasizing as well the openness of the Roman Catholic Church to Greek Catholics and to the Orthodox together. This author is describing how the document evolved throughout the history. There is a very interesting approach in his article that is worth looking in. G. Vlantis pointed three positive dimensions of *Unitatis Redintegratio* related to the Orthodox and to the Greek Catholics. These are the "continuation of the permanent abolition of anathemacy", "the dialogue of love" and "the dialogue of truth".²⁶

Protestants also were interested in *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Timothy George, Dean and Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham presented his article before the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in 2014 according to the 50th anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*.²⁷ Paola Ricca also wrote his reflections on this document.²⁸

Therefore, most of the monographs and articles look into *Unitatis Redintegratio* from the perspective of how this decree can be relevant to ecumenism. Only some of the authors, such as Marcelo Barros, Lubomir Zak, Gheorgios Vladis, Will T. Cohen et alii mention the points of this document regarding to the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, but not in a systematic way. It is important to point out that *Unitatis Redintegratio* created not only the new perspective of the ecumenical dialogue between the West and the East in general but also the beginning of the new time of relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.

²⁴ Vetrali Tekle, "Unitatis Redintegratio Uno Spazio Aperto a una Visione Biblica Dell'unità," in *Studi Ecumenici*, 33/¾, (2015), 433.

²⁵ Gheorghios Vlantis, "L'Unitatis Redintegratio e le Prospettive Ecumeniche di Oggi," in *Studi Ecumenici*, 33/¾, (2015), 475.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 479.

²⁷ George Timothy, "Unitatis Redintegratio after Fifty Years: A Protestant Reading," in *Pro Ecclesia*, XXV/1 (2014), 53–70.

²⁸ Ricca Paolo, "Cinque Luci e due Ombre: una Valutazione Protestante di Unitatis Redintegratio," in *Studi ecumenici*, 33/¾ (July–December 2015), 459–473.

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Декрет Второго Ватиканского собора Unitatis Redintegratio (1964) в историографии

В данной статье рассматривается некоторая часть историографии, связанной с изучением декрета Unitatis Redintegratio, который был провозглашён на Втором Ватиканском соборе в 1964 г. в контексте экуменического движения, и взаимоотношений Римско-католической и Православной церквей. В 1961 г. открылась первая Всеправославная конференция на острове Родос во время подготовки Второго Ватиканского собора. В связи с разногласиями по поводу возможности присутствия православных наблюдателей на его работе первые делегаты были направлены туда только в 1964 г. Второй Ватиканский собор открыл путь диалога для католиков с другими христианскими конфессиями. Благодаря ему началась новая эра отношений Римско-католической и Православной церквей. Они начали задаваться вопросом, как общее свидетельство веры возможно в различных сферах жизни: в этике, в социальной сфере и проч. Таким образом, статья демонстрирует различные аспекты, а также направления изучения данной темы, которые наиболее активно обсуждались иностранными и отечественными исследователями.

Ключевые слова: Unitatis Redintegratio, Второй Ватиканский собор, историография, Православная церковь, Римско-католическая церковь.