

Reform of the Catholic Liturgical Reform, Eastern Orthodoxy and the Normative Power of Europe

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Abstract

The Catholic Church was recently shaken by media debates about the rehabilitation of the Lefebvre-bishop Williamson, the failed reconciliation with the ultraconservative priestly society of St. Pius X he was a member of and earlier about the question whether a reform of the liturgical reform of Vatican II was necessary or rather a conservative backlash to please a growing number of catholic hardliners. As much turmoil their might have been in the media, the subject seems of no political importance. But the liturgical debate Pope Benedict has started with his liberalization of pre-Vatican II liturgy has provoked fierce reactions from various sides: liberal catholic reformers clash with cautious conservative re-interpreters of the last Council, liberal intellectuals with hardline traditionalists, and even the Eastern Orthodoxy sided with the new liturgical and dogmatic line of the last Pope which is astounding given the distance between the two confessions. Liturgy is the public presentation of a religious community's beliefs. As the attempt of modernizing this liturgy in order to adapt to a changing society is relativized and challenged in order to emphasize traditional beliefs modern European society must and actually does feel challenged. Whether the reform of the reform was actually a paradigmatic change in the relationship between Church and society will be reflected and analyzed in this paper.

When Pope Benedict XVI in a move unprecedented for centuries declared himself unfit for continuing his pontificate and stepped down the reactions were very mixed. There were those who regretted the end of a pontificate full of hope for a fundamental reform of the Church while others contested just that. They felt relieved that a pontificate came to an end that was a conservative roll back in their eyes. There was not even the will to start the dearly needed reforms, they claimed. Conservative Cardinals were appointed, outdated forms of Catholicism revived and, above all, traditionalist communities preferred to more modern groups within the Church. A German Church critic stated that under Benedict one could observe an indulgence towards conservative and traditionalist groups which tend to undermine the progressive decisions taken at the Second Vatican Council. That tendency would never be condoned with progressive groups who would never think of founding a Church. He hinted at the 1988 ordination of four Bishops by

the French renegade bishop Marcel Lefebvre, against Rome's clear interdiction. Extended talks, even the promise that Lefebvre's priestly society of St. Pius X might be granted a special status had preceded the ordination. The result was the excommunication of the four bishops proclaimed by Pope John Paul II. In 2009 his successor, Benedict XVI. decided to lift the excommunication after Bishop Bernard Fellay, Superior General of the Society of St. Pius X, on behalf of his three other bishops had officially asked the Pope to do so. The decision alone would have provoked critique, but when journalists discovered an interview given by the English bishop Richard Williamson, one of the bishops ordained in 1988, in which he minimized, if not negated the holocaust an uproar started. Pope Benedict was accused of having knowingly rehabilitated a holocaust denier. Jewish groups heavily criticized the sheer fact that excommunications of four bishops were lifted whose whole mindset was ultratraditionalist, anti-Semitic and contrary to the ecumenical opening of the Church to other religions and to the modern world.

Though others stressed the Pope's visits in synagogues, the good terms the Vatican and the Jewish communities not only in Italy were living on, the "Williamson case" had done its final and decisive bit to let Benedict's pontificate appear a total failure. Only his untimely, surprising resignation would finally shed some friendly light on a pontificate that already seems to be overshadowed by that of his successor. The German journalist and publicist Alan Posener, long before Benedict's resignation, tried to construct a conspiracy theory around the German Pope's time in office. Benedict who at the outset of his pontificate was busy trying to leave the dark reputation of "great inquisitor" behind – under John Paul II he was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith – but would have remained at heart and in mind, Posener claimed, the old ultraconservative Church dignitary whose primary aim was to wage war against modern society. What Posener was primarily aiming at was the former prefect's theory of a dictatorship of relativism. Modernity would decline the mere notion of something like truth. Principles, guiding lines valid for centuries would be skipped because modern man would like to be the master of his own happiness, the creator of a new world order. Ratzinger claimed this would end in destruction and disorder, an opinion discarded as reactionary by the proponents of the new liberty. The Catholic Church once again would present herself as the main obstacle to progress. Daniel Deckers, a journalist working for a leading German daily newspaper, stated that Pope Benedict would be a "terribly bad philosopher of history". History in Benedict's eyes and in those of an outdated catholic philosophy of history i.e. modernity, would see the entire modern history as a constant decline because modernity is the emancipation from God. Ratzinger stated that this emancipation tendency did even survive the disastrous collapse of the new orders without God, the ideologies of the 20th century.

Ratzinger's "Dictatorship of Relativism"

There is good reason to believe that at the origin of Ratzinger's theory of the "Dictatorship of Relativism" stands a disappointment which is usually directed at the Catholic Church only, the disappointment with slow or non-existent reform. In his last homily as dean of the College of Cardinals at the votive mass of April 18th, 2005, preceding the election of the new Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger gave a diagnosis of the state of minds today: "How many winds of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking... The small boat of thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves – thrown from one extreme to the other: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism, and so forth. Every day new sects are created and what Saint Paul says about human trickery comes true, with cunning which tries to draw those into error (cf Eph 4, 14). Having a clear faith, based on the Creed of the Church, is often labeled today as a fundamentalism. Whereas, relativism, which is letting oneself be tossed and "swept along by every wind of teaching", looks like the only attitude (acceptable) to today's standards. We are moving towards a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires."¹ The future Pope's words were considered to be an appeal to self-criticism, his supporters said. His critics denounced it as spoken from the catholic anti-modern fortress of bygone days. The fierce reactions which did not allow for any discussion, Pope Benedict later said, seemed to justify his suspicions that relativism has become a dictatorship. Modernity should be in deep trouble after all the so-called securities are gone. None of the self-redemption ideologies did work out but leave Europe in ruins. So, the Pope argued, purely secular models of political and societal organization should be treated with caution. The disappointment mentioned above came about when the European Union in the 1990s not only rejected a reference to God in the preamble of a possible European constitution but seemed to develop into that purely secular project with absolutely relative values Cardinal Ratzinger had so eloquently criticized in his homily in 2005 which finally got him elected against all odds. In the media this election was widely taken as a signal that not adaptation of the Church to the modern world as declared by the Vatican Council but confrontation was on the agenda again. Some even spoke of a new culture war. Huntington's thesis of a clash of civilizations could also be applied to the equation modern relativism vs. catholic moral intransigence.

¹ Cardinal Ratzinger's „Dictatorship of Relativism Homily”
[http://romancatholicblog.typepad.com/roman_catholic_blog/2005/04/thanks_to_willi.html].

Those who support this equation point to the clashes between the French secular socialist government and anti-civil marriage protesters in spring this year, or the protests of European Union political parties and lobby groups against the new constitution of Hungary which appears to be a counter-program to the secular European project. They criticized that while the preamble referred to the country's Christian roots² it makes no mention of rights for homosexuals, stresses the role of the family being the union of one man and one woman. This conservative backlash is the reason why in the European Union's political arena left wing and liberal politicians deny that religion should play a determining part. They assert that a free society is impossible with churches wielding strong influence. Their critique is not so much aimed at Protestant denominations but mainly at the Catholic Church whose basic moral and social concepts are considered to be outdated and therefore in stark contradiction to the founding principles of the liberal, open and egalitarian societies of the 21st century. Consequently, even reform averse political groups like the conservative Christian people's parties started liberalizing the laws on marriage. The Catholic Church's reactions to these moves which would have been unthinkable until quite recently are not consistent. In France or Spain where left wing governments took the lead in liberalizing and modernizing their respective societies resistance of Catholic prelates was and remains strong. Bishops even led pro-life demonstrations and protests against same-sex marriage. In Germany, the country of the reformation, open critique of the apparently paradigmatic change in politics is rarely expressed by Church officials. When in spring 2013 the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) published a paper on new forms of family life because Christianity would have to adapt to the new realities this was repudiated by Catholic theologians and clergy as not in accordance with the Holy Scripture and as a break-up of the Christian unity in moral values. The EKD's paper would fit perfectly into Ratzinger's model of modern relativism, some claimed. But one has to concede, as much as the Protestant communities in Germany were blamed for their radical "aggiornamento", Ratzinger did not exclude the Catholic Church from his relativism theory. It is widely believed and still divulged that Ratzinger started out as moderately liberal and would have developed a mistrust of the left because of the student revolt of the 1960s. He once said that "the 1968 revolution" turned into "a radical attack on human freedom and dignity, a deep

² The "Fundamental Law of Hungary" from 25th April 2011 which begins with the words "God bless the Hungarians" states: "[National Avowal] We, the members of the Hungarian Nation, at the beginning of the new millennium, with a sense so responsibility for every Hungarian, hereby proclaim the following: We are proud that our king Saint Stephan built the Hungarian State on solid ground and made our country a part of Christian Europe one thousand years ago. [...] We are proud that our people has over the centuries defended Europe in a series of struggles and enriched Europe's common values with its talent and diligence. We recognise the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood. We value the various religious traditions of our country. [...] We hold that the family and the nation constitute the principal framework of our coexistence, and that our fundamental cohesive values are fidelity, faith and love." [<http://www.kormany.hu/download/4/c3/30000/THE%20FUNDAMENTAL%20LAW%20OF%20HUNGARY.pdf>].

threat to all that is human”. It is true that the attacks on fellow professors at Tübingen University came as shock. But what frightened him even more was the assimilation of what the Church had held true ever since to modern standards, the constant reevaluation and manipulation of the dogmatic core of Catholicism in the immediate years after the Second Vatican Council. The Ratzinger-biographer John L. Allen thinks that while writing the “Introduction to Christianity”, Ratzinger’s most popular and most widely read theological publication, his doubts got stronger that it might be absurd to adapt the Church to a world in disintegration³, a world that does no longer take anything for granted, even rejects the quest for truth as futile. But this relativistic attitude would also have deeply influenced the Church after Vatican II., as the Church is part of society and dramatic changes outside provoke equally groundbreaking changes inside.

The Opposing Hermeneutics

The debate within the Church about how to adapt to modern society amounted to claims that the Church would quit with the past, would create a new Church, a so-called “Conciliar Church”, as Bishop Marcel Lefebvre argued. Cardinal Ratzinger and later Pope Benedict denied that such a Church would exist. But he admitted that the term highlights a problem, the serious problem of how to interpret the documents of the Second Vatican Council, whether they justified a radical break with the past or were an ongoing reform in accordance with tradition, just like any other Council before. In his allocution to the College of Cardinals and the members of the Roman Curia at the official Christmas reception on 22nd December 2005 Benedict XVI explained that the problems with the Council’s interpretation would stem from the fact that two opposing hermeneutics were confronted with each other. The one would have caused confusion, the other yielded fruit, “which happened in silence but became more and more visible, and it keeps yielding fruit“⁴. These hermeneutics of reform in continuity which, in the words of John XXIII, faithfully respects the „axiomatic and immutable doctrine“ but endeavours to deepen it and „to formulate it in a way that it corresponds with present demands“, Benedict opposed to the “hermeneutics of discontinuity and disruption” which could „quite often profit from the benevolence of the mass media and of a part of modern theology”⁵. The hermeneutics of discontinuity „bear the risk of a disruption between a pre-conciliar and a post-conciliar Church”⁶. The root of this erroneous hermeneutics was the talk about a „true Conciliar spirit“ whose novelty the texts would only insufficiently express. One would have to „courageously transcend the texts and

³ Cf. Allen, J. L.: Kardinal Ratzinger. Düsseldorf 2002, p. 69.

⁴ Benedict XVI.: Allocution to the College of Cardinals and the Members of the Roman Curia at the Christmas Reception, 22nd December 2005.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

open space for the new [...] which would express the deeper, still not clear cut intention of the Council. In a word, one should not follow the Conciliar texts but their spirit.⁷ In numerous articles, speeches and homilies Benedict would describe the visible and spiritual consequence of these radically new hermeneutics. A superficial idea of religion only designed to intensify men's joy of life, the joy of being together replaces the serious, traditional approach of worship, adoration, a profound reading and interpretation of the scriptures, not according to the present wishes of society but as a correction, an admonition. The fear that the inopportune that was always a marker of Christianity could make way for the convenient and adjusted was the reason why Benedict rejected the hermeneutics of discontinuity and tried to re-integrate the Vatican Council into the uninterrupted doctrinal tradition of the Catholic Church.

His fiercest critics were and are the progressive and the traditionalist groups – some observers labeled them the extreme left and right of the Church. The first group suspected the Pope of turning back the time because he questioned the thesis that with the Second Vatican a new era in the history of the Catholic Church would have begun, that the last Council was a kind of “Super-Council”⁸. The Traditionalists also tend to isolate the Council. They argue that an important part of the Council's teachings, especially those on religious freedom and ecumenism, represent a rupture with tradition. Both groups are united insofar as they place the Council outside the continuity of the development of Catholic teaching. Rudolf Uertz advanced the thesis that there was indeed a break in that development if one considers for example the Church's opinion on modern forms of government⁹. But this question never affected the core of Catholic teaching in contrast to liturgical reforms. The general line is today that these reforms were the declared intention of the Council. But Ratzinger himself who was a consultant to Josef Cardinal Frings, archbishop of Cologne, during the Council, indicated that a cautious reform, a deepening of understanding of liturgical rites was intended by the Council fathers but no general reform.

The Reform of Reform

But in the years following the Council just that happened, a groundbreaking reform, some even say a total change of the liturgy set in. For Pope Benedict this reform contrary to the decision of the Council was the front-ranking example where the post-conciliar development had to be reconciled with tradition. When he issued the motu proprio “Summorum Pontificum” in July 2007 – the classical Latin mass was no longer

⁷ Benedict XVI.: Allocution to the College of Cardinals and the Members of the Roman Curia at the Christmas Reception, 22nd December 2005.

⁸ Cf. Kolthaus, F.: Von wegen ein „Superdogma“. In: Vatican magazin, 2/2013, pp. 48-56.

⁹ Cf. Uertz, R.: Vom Gottesrecht zum Menschenrecht. Das katholische Staatsdenken in Deutschland von der Französischen Revolution bis zum II. Vatikanischen Konzil (1789-1965). Paderborn 2005.

forbidden and every Catholic priest could celebrate it without prior permission of the local bishop – he did not do the traditionalists a special favour, as some critics argued, but acted in line with his anti-relativistic theory. The liturgical rites that evolved in the course of centuries could not be easily changed without doing harm to the content – form and content complement one another. Soon after the Council ended and later when he was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith Ratzinger repeatedly approached this question and criticized the post-conciliar liturgical development which would have created a stale, designed liturgy, he said. One must not design the liturgy at the drawing board what would have happened after the Council: “The liturgy which steadily evolved was replaced by a liturgy which was made. One has given up the animate process of growth and evolution in favour of making¹⁰. One did no longer want to continue the organic evolution and maturation of what had been animate through centuries but replaced it – after the model of technical production – by making, the dull product of the moment.”¹¹ The Cardinal was even more outspoken in 1975: “But the shiver you get at the sight of the lacklustre post-conciliar liturgy or simply the ennui it provokes with its delight in the banal as well as its artistic unpretentiousness.”¹² In a conversation with Vittorio Messori in 1998 he emphasized this opinion: “Since I wrote these lines more aspects worthwhile conserving have been neglected, many treasures still persisting have been squandered.”¹³ Cardinal Ratzinger criticized rationalistic deflation, loquaciousness in view of the mystery, pastoral childishness, liturgy as coffee party and yellow press comprehensibility¹⁴. The Pope’s wording may have become less poignant but the message remained the same. In his memoirs „From my life“ he wrote:

¹⁰ His critique of the „production obsession“ can be found in a series of commentaries and articles of Cardinal Ratzinger. In „Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen“ („Called to community“, p. 131) he wrote: „The maker is the opposite of the amazed admirer („Ammiratore“). He limits reason and thereby loses the mysterious out of sight. The more there is of self-decided and self-made in the Church, the tighter she gets for us all. The great and liberating in her is not the self-made but what is given to us all and what does not come from our will and our devising, but what is going ahead, what is the gift of the unthinkable which is “greater than our heart” (cf. 1 Joh 3, 20). The “reformation”, the always necessary one, does not consist in constantly remodeling, re-inventing “our” Church, but in constantly clearing away our auxiliary constructions in favour of the pure light coming from above and which ist he dawn of pure freedom. Let me express what I mean express with a picture which I found with Michelangelo who himself absorbs old insights of Christian mysticism and philosophy. With the vision of the artist Michelangelo already saw in the stone lying before him the pure, hidden picture which waited to be uncovered. The artist – it seemed to him – only had to remove what was still concealing the picture. Michelangelo considered the artistic to be a disclosure – not a production.“ [Cited in: Informationsblatt der Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, 5th Vol., Nr. 30, April 1993, p. 5].

¹¹ Preface of Cardinal Joseph Ratzingers to the honorary publication for the deceased Liturgical scholar Klaus Gamber (Simandron – der Wachklopfer, Köln 1989, 14f.), cited in: Barth, H.-L.: Wer hat recht: Kardinal Lehmann oder der Papst? In: Kirchliche Umschau, 14th Vol., Nr. 2, February 2011, p. 11. Cardinal Ratzinger further wrote in the preface: „This falsification Gamber opposed with the alertness of a real seer and the intrepidity of a true witness and instead untiringly taught us the vital plenitude of true liturgy, from an incredibly rich knowledge of the sources.“

¹² Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger: Zur Lage des Glaubens. München 1985, p. 125.

¹³ Rückriegel, Helmut: „Dem Rückfall in den Irrweg wehren“ – Zu den derzeitigen Querelen um die Petrusbruderschaft. In: Una Voce Korrespondenz, 30th Vol., issue 2, March/April 2000, p. 112.

¹⁴ Cf. Ibidem.

“I am convinced that the church crisis we encounter today is largely due the disintegration of the liturgy...”¹⁵ That Pope Paul VI. forbade the old missal almost completely Pope Benedict considered „tragic“ in his memoirs: „The interdiction of the missal which had been evolving continuously through the centuries since the sacramentaries of the old Church, has added a break to the liturgical history whose consequences could only be tragic“¹⁶. Ratzinger considered the ban of the old latin tridentine liturgy a disruption of continuity which the Council had not intended and which had to be healed. Thus, the liberalization of the old rite was consequent. It was an explicit critique of the modern aversion to tradition which obviously had also infiltrated the Catholic Church. In the 2007 motu proprio Benedict urged that the reformed liturgy should learn from the old one, that both forms, the so-called ordinary form and the extraordinary, the traditional form should develop alongside. Cut off from her tradition the liturgy was subjected to an endless row of creative changes. Not traditional principles like adoration, reverence for the mystic, the transcendent were guiding but creativity, group dynamics, the demands of the day. The mutual learning process, what Benedict called the reform of the reform, could canalize a process which appeared to have got out of hand.

The Orthodox Church and “Summorum Pontificum”

At first sight critics of the reform of reform feared that this might scare off other Christian denominations. Protestant groups declared that the Latin Mass reminded them of counterreformation times, that the new reformed mass of the Second Vatican Council would have tried to overcome the ditches separating the Catholic Church from the communities of the Reformation. On the other hand Eastern Orthodoxy which was quite critical of the liturgical reforms within the Catholic Church – for them liturgy as a God given gift is untouchable – greeted the reform of reform initiative. Orthodoxy had dismissed the Catholic Church’s dogma on infallibility of the Pope as anthropocentrism, man would arrogate a Godlike position, which would have been repeated when the Council arrogated the right of reform of the divine liturgy. Ecumenism in this respect was not put at risk through “Summorum Pontificum”, quite the opposite. Cardinal Raymond Burke said: “It seems to me for the Eastern rites, and for those of the Orthodox Churches, the reform of the liturgy after the council and the concrete expression is so stripped of the transcendent, of the sacral elements, it is difficult for them to recognize its relationship with their Eucharistic Liturgies. It would be easier for them to see the unity, the oneness in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, by a rite of the Mass, just limiting ourselves now to talking about the Holy Mass, that it was richer in those

¹⁵ Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger: Aus meinem Leben. Stuttgart 1998, p. 174.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 173.

dimensions [...] the symbols of the transcendent element of Christ [...] the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary.”¹⁷ Bishop Fernando Rifan who heads the Apostolic Administration of St. John Mary Vianney in Campos, Brazil, said that he believed a further liberalization of the liturgical rite of Pope St. Pius V would aid ecumenical relations with the East. “I really think that the Traditional Latin Mass widely and freely available would be, among many other good reasons, a great benefit in the field of the true ecumenism with the Orthodox. [...] This would be primarily because the traditional Liturgy is much more similar to the Oriental [Eastern] rites in the aspect of the sacred, veneration, and beauty.”¹⁸ A few months before the promulgation of “Summorum Pontificum”, on the occasion of Benedict XVI’s visit to Istanbul in 2006, Eastern Orthodoxy’s Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople quoted the phrase “lex orandi, lex credendi” – “the law of praying is the law of believing”. Bartholomew I argued that “in liturgy we are reminded of the need to reach unity in faith as well as in prayer”. On the other hand, the French episcopate, in an open letter to Benedict XVI, urged the Pope not to issue “Summorum Pontificum”. When Bartholomew I learned that he openly supported the Pope, denounced the decay of Catholic liturgy and stressed that the “Novus Ordo Missae”, the reformed mass had in fact hampered relations between the Western and the Eastern branches of Christianity. The Orthodox in fact were disturbed not only by abuses in the post-Vatican II liturgy, but also by approved practices such as female altar servers, Mass ‘facing the people’ and Communion in the hand. The Tridentine liturgy therefore bodes well ecumenically, because these problematic practices are simply not standard features of the Classical Roman rite. Bartholomew I later on declared that with “Summorum Pontificum” a huge step forward in reconciliation had been made¹⁹. It appears therefore that the Pope’s intention to make it easier for the laity to have Mass in the Extraordinary Form was also intended to help prepare the reunion of the two great divided branches of Christianity, of Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The Orthodox interpreted “Summorum Pontificum” as evidence of a renewed seriousness in the Roman Catholic Church of the “lex orandi, lex credenda”. During the final days of his pontificate Pope Benedict XVI tried ceaselessly to teach that the Catholic tradition has not been lost, that it remains to be discovered and lived. The newly elected Pope Francis informed the public that nothing about the *motu proprio*

¹⁷ Mershon, B.: Archbishop Burke, Bishop Rifan comment: Will classical liturgy aid reunion with Eastern Orthodox? (June 29, 2006) [<http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/mershon/060629>].

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Alcuin Reid, author of a number of books on the Sacred Liturgy and its history, published “Organic Development of the Liturgy” with a preface written by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. He affirmed that it was his opinion as a liturgical scholar that the Novus Ordo liturgy, as practiced in the vast majority of Catholic churches, is not a hopeful indicator of eventual reunion with the East: “I suspect that our current liturgical state does not exactly inspire confidence in them. [...] The Holy Father is, no doubt, aware of this, and most probably hopes to give a sign that Rome wishes to set her liturgy in order once again, and that indeed Rome respects legitimate traditional liturgical rites.”

of his predecessor would be changed after some bishops had asked the Pope to restrict access to the celebration of the extraordinary form of the Roman rite.

A Dangerous New Form of Ecumenism

Until well before his retirement there were rumours that a reconciliation between Rome and the Priestly society of St. Pius X could be achieved. Since Pope Francis was elected the new Pope the reconciliation talks were said to be either over for good or on hold. The new prefect of the congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Gerhard Ludwig Müller, was said to prepare a paper containing an ultimate stop of the reconciliation process. On the one side, supporters of tradition feared that this would mean an end to the whole reform of reform process started by Pope Benedict. Liturgical reforms would go on unhindered as one could have seen during the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro. On the other side, critics of this process reacted with relief because they suspect that the reform of reform was only a disguise for a conservative setback, “behind the Second Vatican Council”. The Pope would have rather wished to avoid a lasting schism with the Traditionalists than a profounder application of the Vatican II decisions. The traditionalists of the society St. Pius X were of course flattered by the sudden interest of the media, that they got a chance to expound their point of view, that the Church was in a deep crisis and that only a return to the undiminished tradition would save her. Nevertheless, even in the moments of the biggest triumph, the lifting of the excommunications and before the liberalization of the Latin Mass no one in the Society St. Pius X would have overrated its importance. Kept in perspective, Pope Benedict would have never risked the heated debates about a new wave of Catholic anti-Semitism, about an end to the reforms Vatican II had initiated only for the sake of a traditionalist group which may count several thousand followers, a tiny fraction in comparison to the world wide Catholic Church.

What he had in mind was far more important and would have meant an iconic turn if he still had had the time to finish it. This would explain why resistance was sometimes so hard that Benedict spoke of an aggressive anti-Catholic climate. Benedict had witnessed the implementation of Vatican II, a rather one-sided one, as he argued more than once. The vagueness of many documents would have opened the gates to an interpretation hard to reconcile with tradition. Tradition is apart from Scripture the basis of a continuity the Church cannot do without. The dialogue with the modern world which an open and inclusive interpretation of tradition should start, as one had hoped after the Council, did not ensue. The fact that the Church did relativize her own tradition was often not seen as the first step that should entail a second step of the secularized society but the confession that the secular society would have the better arguments. The Catholic Church thus did not gain in status or position in the face of the modern world

which was, according to Benedict XVI, fatal when this world is progressively losing the will to put its secular position into perspective. Nevertheless, the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo considered the modern relativity of values Benedict so sharply criticized less dangerous than a pretended certainty. Vattimo rejects any transcendental justification of values, the truth of history would be nihilism, the dissolution as the “destiny of Being”. Vattimo asked whether relativism, as Ratzinger’s homily depicted it, was “really so great a risk for civilization, for religion, for social cohesion”: “I mean, is it as great a risk as other risks with which (qua risk) it is in competition? In particular, I wonder if the laid-back, somewhat noncommittal, to-each-his-own, I’ll-try-anything-once attitude of the pope’s relativists is anything like so dangerous as the enthusiasm that certainty inspires. Take the fervor of the Crusaders (“God wills it”), the zeal of the American “theo-cons” exporting democracy to Iraq, the scientific certainty with which Hitler organized the extermination of “inferior” races (“for the betterment of humanity”) – none of these was a consequence of any loss of faith in truth or timeless values.”²⁰ Benedict would have at least disputed the last allegation. Particularly the Fascist/National Socialist ideology like any other ideology of the 20th century was an ersatz religion, “opium for intellectuals”, as Raymond Aron put it. At the start of the papal visit to Great Britain Benedict had said: “Even in our own lifetime, we can recall how Britain and her leaders stood against a Nazi tyranny that wished to eradicate God from society and denied our common humanity to many...”²¹ And relativism, according to Benedict, tends to become the ersatz religion of the 21st century denying the “common humanity” to the weakest in human society, the unborn, Benedict commented more than once. On the other hand, Benedict argued, Catholic faith, taken seriously, would never pretend to give a worldly certainty modern relativism or any other modern ideology certainly aspires to.

This new ideology of relativism is also what worries the Eastern Orthodoxy and drew it immediately to the Pope’s new approach to modernity, and this exactly was worrisome to the secular side. A possible reintegration of Catholic fundamentalists, but also a possible union between the Vatican and the Russian Orthodoxy on this basis of a new and more cautious, if not doubtful, negative approach to secularism and modernism was dawning, a renewal of the old anti-modernism debate even. This appeared even more dramatic as the Russian Orthodoxy in particular has entered into a strong political union with the Kremlin, with the all too well-known political consequences. This was the one side of the iconic turn mentioned above. The other side would have been the reversal of a political and social development that also deeply affected the way things

²⁰ Vattimo, G.: A „Dictatorship of Relativism“? Symposium in Response to Cardinal Ratzinger’s Last Homily. In: *Common Knowledge*, Vol. 13, Issue 2-3, Spring-Fall 2007, pp. 214-218.

²¹ Hopper, John/Butt, Riazat/Jones, Sam: Pope Benedict XVI flies in amid row over aide’s race remarks. Cardinal dropped from entourage after saying UK is like ‘third world country’. In: *The Guardian*, 15 September 2010 [<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/15/pope-benedict-xvi-aide-remarks?guni=Article:in%20body%20link>].

were seen and done in the Catholic Church. The classical Latin Liturgy just like the Orthodox is hierarchical, similar to the structure of the Church, while the reformed Liturgy is primarily seen and celebrated as the gathering of the faithful. The presence of the laity tends to outweigh the importance of the celebrating priest, a decisive change which was hailed as a first step towards democratization of the hierarchical Church. Ratzinger had also contributed to this new interpretation of the role of the laity, but became sceptical the more this threatened to undermine the traditional structure of the Church. Ratzinger stressed that the “sensus fidelium”, the spiritual sense of the faithful is not only that of the living but the sensus of the whole Church through the centuries. Truth is given, it is a gift either by revelation or by deeper insight gained through the inner light given to each human being man, a thesis profoundly opposed to the modern attitude to life, which Benedict termed relativistic. During and immediately after the Vatican Council the enthusiasm that a new era of cooperation between world and church was dawning – best example the Conciliar document “Gaudium et spes” –, that the old opposition could be dissolved in a new dialectic, was strong, but soon to be disappointed. Benedict feared that the Church was steadily losing ground in trying to adapt to a secular world and a more and more secular Europe that would rather show disregard for the Church’s standards, that would only accept the Church as a social player and not as a real cultural and political factor in a future Europe.

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Eastern Orthodoxy, official name Orthodox Catholic Church, one of the three major doctrinal and jurisdictional groups of Christianity. It is characterized by its continuity with the apostolic church, its liturgy, and its territorial churches. The official designation of the church in Eastern Orthodox liturgical or canonical texts is "the Orthodox Catholic Church." Because of the historical links of Eastern Orthodoxy with the Eastern Roman Empire and Byzantium (Constantinople), however, in English usage it is referred to as the "Eastern" or "Greek Orthodox" Church. These terms are sometimes misleading, especially when applied to Russian or Slavic churches and to the Orthodox communities in western Europe and America. The Reformation ended the unity imposed by medieval Christianity and, in the eyes of many historians, signaled the beginning of the modern era. A weakening of the old order was already under way in Northern Europe, as evidenced by the emergence of thriving new cities and a determined middle class. Over the centuries there had been many reform efforts within the Catholic Church, most notably a series of largely unsuccessful church councils. Popular support existed in some quarters for simplifying worship services and requiring a more dedicated clergy. In 1517, in one of the signal events of the Peasant reform has become the main business of the reign of Alexander II, received an honorary nickname Liberator. It cleared the way for further reforms - zemstvo, judicial, military and other reforms. In domestic historiography of 1860-1870s have been called the era of great reforms. The section includes materials on the implementation of the peasant reform. There are legislation acts and government orders, reference and statistical data, information on the redemption payments, researches on the realization of the reform in the Russian Empire as a whole and in certain regions, as well as changes in the position and the everyday life of the peasants.