

“Church and World Dogmatics”: The Ecumenical Need for a Paradigm Shift in Modern Orthodox Theology and Education

A reflection

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Although it seems that modern Orthodox theology has finally overcome (or not?) the so-called “Babylonian or scholastic captivity”, it seems to have fallen prey to a new form of captivity. This means that the glorious patristic and Byzantine past continues to be its basic point of reference, determining the method but also the content of modern theology. If this is the case, the distinction between Church dogmatics and Church and World dogmatics (P. Valliere) could be used here to describe the current situation in modern Orthodox theology, at least in the Greek milieu. Although more or less a schematic one, this distinction provides us with a good hermeneutical tool for exploring the methodology, content, and perspective of contemporary theological education and curricula, and possibly the means of articulating a new perspective.

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Introduction

After the promising and fruitful renewal of Orthodox theology in the early decades of the 20th century, modern Orthodox theologians began to encounter a variety of new (and not only secular) challenges and problems that urgently required – and still require – their attention. The inevitable paradigm shift from the *Byzantine* worldview to the modern or *post-modern* one provides Orthodox theology and the Church with its new context, within which it must witness to its apostolic faith and articulate its theological programme.

Although it seems that modern Orthodox theology has finally overcome (or not?) the so-called “Babylonian or scholastic captivity,” it seems to have fallen prey to a new form of captivity, which I would call a “pre-modern captivity.” This means that the glorious patristic and Byzantine past continues to be its basic point of reference, in a more or less triumphalistic

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