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A Paradigm of Liturgical History Fifty Years Later

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Abstract

This article reflects on Robert F. Taft's *The Great Entrance* (1975) on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. It examines the intellectual context of the work, its methodological foundations, and its enduring impact on the study of Eastern liturgies. Particular attention is given to the influence of Juan Mateos, whose approach combined historical analysis with a vision of liturgical reform, and to the ways in which Taft inherited and transformed this legacy. The article revisits the main theses of *The Great Entrance* concerning the Great Entrance itself, the Cheroubikon, and the pre-anaphoral rites, while also considering the 2014 revised edition and subsequent developments in manuscript and textual studies. Through the analysis of the *Proskomide* prayer and the *Cheroubikon*, it argues for the need to complement structural approaches with deeper attention to euchological language, biblical reception, and theological interpretation. The article concludes by suggesting that future research on Byzantine liturgy should integrate the structural insights of the "first Mateos" with the exegetical and critical perspective of the later Mateos.

Keywords

Great Entrance | Cheroubikon | Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom | Pre-Anaphoral Rites | Byzantine Liturgy | Liturgical History

The Great Entrance

A Paradigm of Liturgical History Fifty Years Later

STEFANO PARENTI

A book is a version of the world.
If you do not like it, ignore it;
or offer your own version in return.

Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

Last year, in 2025, *The Great Entrance* by the late Robert F. Taft († 2018) reached its fiftieth anniversary.¹ The work represents a landmark in the study of Byzantine liturgy and, more broadly, of the Eastern liturgical traditions. For generations it has shaped the education of students across both hemispheres. It is no exaggeration to describe *The Great Entrance* as an “icon” of the scholarly and theological interests of its time, as well as of the ecclesial and cultural climate in which it was conceived.

Personally, I owe my active involvement in liturgical studies to reading *The Great Entrance*,² although at the time I could never have imagined that I would eventually be entrusted with preparing its expanded and up-

¹ Cf. Robert F. TAFT, *The Great Entrance. A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Pre-Anaphoral Rites in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (OCA 200), Rome 1975.

² Cf. Stefano PARENTI, Robert F. Taft SJ (1932–2018) in memoriam, in: EO 36 (2019) 11–27, here: 11 f.

dated Italian edition, published in 2014.³ The following pages are therefore, at once, an expression of gratitude to the memory of its author; an opportunity to reflect upon the book's contents, its underlying methodology, and the historical context in which it was written; and an assessment of the inevitable limitations that have accumulated over the course of half a century. This article also seeks to offer a modest contribution to the history of the discipline and of the institutions involved, to the biography of its *dramatis personae*, and, not least, an occasion for some necessary self-criticism on the part of the present author.

1 *Juan Mateos: Biographical Notes*

To understand the *raison d'être* of *The Great Entrance*, one must go back to 1957, when Robert Taft first met Juan Mateos († 2003), the original and brilliant scholar of the Eastern liturgical traditions.⁴ Their encounter took place in Iraq, where Taft had been serving since 1956 as an English teacher at Baghdad College. Mateos, for his part, was travelling from village to village collecting manuscripts for his dissertation on the Morning Office in the East Syriac tradition.⁵ This meeting led Taft to decide to devote himself to the study of the Eastern liturgies, a decision that received the full support of his Jesuit superiors.

That same year, 1957, the future Melkite Catholic Archbishop Neophytos Edelby (1920–1995) published an article in *Proche-Orient Chrétien*,

³ Cf. Robert F. TAFT – Stefano PARENTI, *Storia della Liturgia di S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, vol. 2: Il Grande Ingresso. Edizione italiana rivista, ampliata e aggiornata (AK 10), Grottaferrata 2014, 793.

⁴ The prosopographical documentation on Mateos remains fragmentary and incomplete: the obituary by Robert F. TAFT, *Recovering the Message of Jesus*. In Memory of Juan José Mateos Álvarez, S.J., 15 January 1917–1923 September 2003, in: OCP 71 (2005) 265–297, should be supplemented at least by Valerio POLIDORI, *Juan Mateos traduttore del Nuovo Testamento*, in: SOC 21/1 (2017) 213–222, as well as by several testimonies available online, especially that of POPE GODOY, *Ricordo di Juan Mateos* (Madrid [sic], 15 gennaio 1917 – Málaga, 23 settembre 2003) [↗](#) and Juan Mateos: un innovatore dell'esegesi biblica. [↗](#)

⁵ Cf. Juan MATEOS, Lelya – Şapra. Essai d'interprétation des matines chaldéennes (OCA 156), Rome 1959.

largely inspired by Juan Mateos, proposing a possible reform of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy,⁶ followed shortly thereafter by a second article co-authored with Mateos.⁷ The proposal greatly displeased Patriarch Maximos IV, who on 24 September of the same year addressed a letter of protest to the editor. He requested that the editor publish this letter in the journal – a request that was ultimately declined:

En vérité, ces pages n'auraient jamais dû paraître. Rien, sans doute, n'est parfait en ce monde ; pas même la liturgie byzantine. Le père Salaville des Augustins de l'Assomption a écrit un beau livre sur notre messe. Cela ne l'empêche pas de signaler "les ombres et les lumières", comme il dit. Personne ne s'en formalise. [...] Mais comment tolérer de la part d'un prêtre grec-catholique dans une revue paraissant dans un séminaire destiné à nos enfants des affirmations insultantes pour notre liturgie ? [...] Nous sommes sûr, révérend père, que si la gravité des affirmations, la désinvolture avec laquelle l'article a été écrit, les conséquences désastreuses qu'il peut avoir dans l'esprit de certaines catégories de lecteurs (jeunes prêtres, lecteurs étrangers ...), et la mauvaise impression qu'il peut produire chez les Orthodoxes ont pu échapper en temps voulu à votre vigilante attention, c'est parce que vous êtes surchargé par la multiplicité de vos labeurs au service de notre Église.⁸

Rather than promoting an immediate reform, these articles were intended to cast a stone into still waters and open a debate, especially with Orthodox scholars. Indeed, Panagiotis Trempeles responded in the same year, followed later by Ioannis Foundoulis.⁹ The reactions, however, remained

⁶ Cf. Neophytos EDELBY, Pour une restauration de la Liturgie byzantine, in: POC 7 (1957) 97–118. On the role of Mateos, see *ibid.*, 98, n. 1.

⁷ Cf. Neophytos EDELBY – Juan MATEOS, Autour d'un projet de restauration de la Liturgie byzantine. Présentation d'une audition enregistrée, in: POC 7 (1957) 250–260; cf. also Neophytos EDELBY, Autour d'un projet de restauration de la Liturgie byzantine. Point de vue d'un hiérarque grec-catholique, in: POC 8 (1958) 144–148.

⁸ Frans BOUWEN, Proche-Orient Chrétien (1951–2021). Soixante-dix ans de vie dans les Églises du Moyen-Orient, in: POC 71 (2021) 15–42.

⁹ Panagiotis TREMPÉLAS, Autour d'un projet de restauration de la Liturgie byzantine. II. Point de vue orthodoxe, in: POC 7 (1957) 305–309. Ioannēs PHOUNTOLĒS, Περὶ μίαν μεταρρύθμισιν τῆς θείας Λειτουργίας, in: Γρηγόριος

rather restrained, reflecting an awareness that, in the modern Orthodox world, liturgical reforms had more often been a cause of division than of renewal.

It is important to emphasize that the reform proposals advanced by Mateos did not, as far as the available evidence suggests, derive from the Roman Catholic Liturgical Movement, and they preceded the reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council by several years. Through his structural analysis of the rites, Mateos had discerned pastoral possibilities within the Eastern liturgies that had hitherto gone largely unnoticed and which, in his view, a liturgical reform could bring to light. Thus, in the early 1960s, Mateos became the principal intellectual reference for the programme of liturgical reform undertaken by the New Skete community in Upstate New York, a process in which he was personally involved.¹⁰

Yet something was beginning to change. According to Gerard Rouwhorst († 2026),¹¹ who had studied in Rome in the mid-1970s, Mateos's visit to Mount Athos in 1963 for the celebrations marking the mil-

ὁ Παλαμᾶς 43 (1960) 401–409. 444–456; French translation: Ioannis FOUNTOLIS, Autour d'un projet de restauration de la Liturgie byzantine. Point de vue d'un liturgiste orthodoxe de Grèce, in: POC 11(1961) 49–56. The article by Alexander SCHMEMANN, Autour d'un projet de restauration de la Liturgie byzantine. IV. Point de vue d'un Russe orthodoxe, in: POC 9 (1959) 118–122 is a translation of an article originally published in Russian several years earlier. It is therefore not a response to the proposal put forward by Edelby and Mateos: ID., Богослужение и богослужебная практика, in: Церковный вестник Православного Русского Экзархата 35/2 (1952) 5–9.

¹⁰ Cf. Teva REGULE, The Liturgical Movement of the Twentieth Century and the Liturgical Reform Efforts of New Skete Monastery. The Liturgy of the Hours of the Early Years and the Influence of Juan Mateos, in: Eastern Churches Journal 26 (2019) 27–70; Robert F. TAFT, The Byzantine Office in the Prayerbook of New Skete. Evaluation of a Proposed Reform, in: OCP 48/2 (1982) 336–370; Vasil POVINUSHKO, La riforma liturgica della Settimana Santa nel rito bizantino. Il caso del monastero di New Skete, in: Eastern Theological Journal 11/2 (2025) 333–367.

¹¹ Cf. the obituary in Bert GROEN, Gerard A. M. Rouwhorst (1951–2026), in: Exploring the Fabric of Word, Rite, and Image. Selected Papers of the Ninth Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy (SECL 8), ed. by Aleksandr ANDREEV – Elias HASLWANTER, Münster 2026, 13 f.

lennium of the foundation of the Great Lavra prompted a profound reconsideration of the aims and practical consequences of historical liturgical scholarship.¹² Rouwhorst suggests that Mateos came to realise the extent to which Orthodoxy, at least at that time, showed little interest in a critical reappraisal of its own liturgical tradition. This would not be his only disappointment.

On 11 May 1964, Mateos was appointed Consultor to the *Consilium* charged with implementing the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy¹³ and was assigned to *Coetus* 9, responsible for the reform of the Roman Breviary.¹⁴ There he proposed restoring a concise daily cursus of the Hours intended for celebration in parish communities and cathedral churches. The prevailing opinion within the group, however, favored producing a prayer book primarily for clergy and religious, thereby perpetuating the paradox of a "liturgy without the people", only secondarily open to celebrations "with the people". The scholar who had penetrated more deeply than anyone else into the history, symbolism, and theology of the Liturgy of the Hours found himself seated at a table where most of his colleagues struggled to grasp the significance of his proposal.¹⁵

¹² Private conversation with the author in Regensburg on 8 June 2022, during the *Interdisciplinary Symposium The Liturgy of St James: Origin, Contexts, and Reception in East and West* (Regensburg, 6–10 June 2022).

¹³ Cf. Annibale BUGNINI, *La riforma liturgica (1948–1975)*. Nuova edizione riveduta e arricchita di note e di supplementi per una lettura analitica (BEL.S 30), Rome 1997, 912: "Matéos P. Giovanni" [sic].

¹⁴ Cf. Stanislaus CAMPBELL, *From Breviary to Liturgy of the Hours. The Structural Reform of the Roman Office, 1964–1971*, Collegeville 1995, 78–84. 78 f. and note 4, 89 f., 249–251.

¹⁵ A telling indication of how little confidence Mateos had in the ability of Western liturgists even to imagine a truly "cathedral", that is, popular, Liturgy of the Hours is provided by an anecdote that Enrico Mazza recounted on several occasions. While attending courses in 1966 at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome, Mazza took Juan Mateos's class on the Divine Office in the Christian East. One day, Mateos entered the classroom, took his seat at the lectern, lit a cigarette, and opened the course with these words: "Let us begin our course, although none of you will ever understand any of this." My Colleague and former assistant, Łukasz Celiński, sought further confir-

As his friend and confidant, the former Jesuit José Godoy López, better known as Pope Godoy († 2023), later recalled, Mateos had little tolerance for human mediocrity and eventually resigned from the *Coetus*.¹⁶ This disappointing experience further convinced him of the social and pastoral marginality of historical liturgical scholarship, a field that he would eventually abandon altogether.

In his biographical essay on Mateos, Robert Taft attributed this abandonment to the increasing demands of Mateos's work on the Spanish translation of the biblical texts,¹⁷ and he explicitly distanced himself from Jesús Peláez del Rosal – friend and collaborator of Juan Mateos – who maintained that Mateos had left the field “al comprobar su escasa utilidad” (“after realising its limited usefulness”).¹⁸ Yet this latter interpretation is corroborated by other sources, especially Pope Godoy, who lived with Mateos in the Pontifical Oriental Institute community from September 1966 through much of 1969:

mation from Enrico Mazza, who provided some additional details. I am very grateful to both of them for their kindness.

¹⁶ Cf. POPE GODOY, *Ricordo di Juan Mateos*, 5: “A Juan piaceva trarre argomenti di interesse e profondità nelle conversazioni di fine pranzo [i. e. at the Pontificio Istituto Orientale]. Ma altre persone preferivano parlare di bazzecole e novità curiali del Vaticano. Anche quello era motivo di tensione. Ero molto in confidenza con Juan per dirgli: Juan non ti intromettere. Lascia che la gente viva la sua vita. E mi sorprendevo che lui mi desse retta. Ammorbidiva man mano le sue posizioni, fino a istinto di conservazione, per evitare tensioni.”

¹⁷ Cf. TAFT, *Recovering the Message of Jesus*, 275.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 278. Taft cites an article entitled “Muere Juan Mateos – Semblanza de un maestro y de un creyente.” I was able to locate the same text, albeit without its title, on the blog *Comunidades Cristianas de Base de la Región Murcia*.  The exact context of the statement is as follows: “Su larga e intensa vida de docencia e investigación giró en torno a dos ejes: las liturgias orientales, campo que abandonó al comprobar su escasa utilidad, y la labor de traducción y estudio del Nuevo Testamento, – especialmente de los evangelios – aplicando a estos los métodos que la filología moderna pone al alcance del estudioso de los textos de la antigüedad clásica o cristiana.”

La specialità di Juan Mateos era la liturgia orientale. Gli studi che continuava a compiere continuamente gli davano una conoscenza molto privilegiata del greco e del siriano. Tuttavia, per quanto riguarda i contenuti teologici o pastorali della liturgia, mi diceva più di una volta: Non dicono nulla che ne valga la pena. Vale a dire, quel lavoro di ricerca, si convertiva in un lavoro di erudizione e persino di prestigio scientifico in un settore molto specializzato, ma senza alcuna incidenza vitale e senza alcuna incidenza sulla realtà. La curiosità umana è illimitata e anche il campo in cui può essere realizzata è indeterminato. Un'altra cosa è che tali conoscenze o queste "scoperte" abbiano un dinamismo trasformatore della realtà.¹⁹

To put it plainly, Taft never fully came to terms with so radical a transformation in the life of the man who had entrusted him with continuing the study of the historical development of the Chrysostom Liturgy. This change also entailed Mateos's gradual distancing from the Byzantine rite in which he had himself been ordained a priest.²⁰ Taft identified that the cause was a new understanding of liturgy that Mateos developed after the Second Vatican Council, arguing that he had become so thoroughly iden-

¹⁹ POPE GODOY, Ricordo di Juan Mateos, 5. Abraham A. Thiermeyer, who attended a seminar led by Mateos at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in the early 1990s, independently confirmed to me the substance of Godoy's account. In a note sent to me at my request on 25 June 2026, Thiermeyer writes: "Più volte mi disse, quasi con le stesse parole: Abraham, perché perdi il tuo tempo con gli studi di storia della liturgia? Guarda la mia vita. Quante ricerche ho fatto, quanti libri ho scritto! E che cosa è stato davvero recepito? A chi interessa tutto questo? ... Abraham, perché ti occupi della storia delle liturgie? Il vero futuro è nella Bibbia". Later, Pope Godoy states that Mateos went through a "situazione di asfissia mentale, perché il suo campo liturgico non dava più il massimo" (ibid., 6).

²⁰ Cf. TAFT, *Recovering the Message of Jesus*, 275: "All this represented a radical change that the present author, whom Mateos considered one of his successors in oriental liturgiology at the Orientale, and to whom he had confided the continuation of his work on the historical evolution of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy could only view both then and now with dismay".

tified with the post-conciliar sensibility of the 1960s that he failed to recognize the historical relativity of that perspective as well.²¹

One gets the impression that Taft's judgement was shaped by a deeply personal and emotional involvement in Mateos's intellectual journey. The decisive turn that Mateos gave to his scholarly work and to his life of faith seems rather to have arisen not from the influence of Vatican II, but from his increasingly profound exploration of the New Testament roots of Christian worship. What Juan Mateos himself confesses in the preface to the book *Cristianos en fiesta* (1972) explains the reasons for such a radical change:

Tras bastantes años dedicados al estudio de las diferentes tradiciones litúrgicas de la Iglesia, nació el deseo de encontrar sus raíces evangélicas. Una sorpresa nos aguardaba: en los Evangelios no aparecen nunca los términos "liturgia", "culto", "sacrificio" o "sacerdocio" referidos a los cristianos.²²

2 *From the Doctoral Dissertation to the Book: Text and Context*

Like many specialized monographs, *The Great Entrance* originated as a doctoral dissertation. Supervised by Juan Mateos, the dissertation bore the title *The Historical Evolution of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom: The Pre-Anaphoral Rites*.²³ Taft defended it publicly on 21 December

²¹ Ibid.: "It has always bemused me that Mateos, with his grasp of history and of the relativity of things, never seems to have intuited that his new post-Vatican II vision of liturgy might also share in the relativity of that phase in liturgical history, as is true of every epoch and its ideas ... But it almost seems as if Juan navigated these shoals only to remain fixated in the sixties".

²² Juan MATEOS, *Cristianos en fiesta*. Más allá del cristianismo convencional, Madrid 1972, 13.

²³ Cf. Robert F. TAFT, *The Historical Evolution of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom: The Pre-Anaphoral Rites* (Tesi PIO 225), vol. 1: I–XLV+232; vol. 2: 234–368; vol. 3: Appendix and References, 1–132 [Dissertatio ad Lauream, directed by Juan MATEOS], Rome 1970. The co-supervisors of the thesis were Alfons Raes SJ († 1983) and Frans van de Pavard [OSA].

1970²⁴, and one month later he delivered his first course at the Pontifical Oriental Institute: *Ordo Missae: Secunda Pars seu Synaxis Eucharistica*.²⁵ His teaching was interrupted from the first semester of 1971 until the first semester of 1972, when he pursued advanced studies in Oriental philology at the University of Louvain. Upon his return to Rome, the Oriental languages he had mastered in Belgium enabled him to undertake a thorough revision of the dissertation, incorporating Eastern sources that he was now able to study directly rather than through translations. Meanwhile, between 1972 and 1975, he had already published several chapters of the dissertation in *Proche-Orient Chrétien* under the collective title *Évolution historique de la Liturgie de Saint Jean Chrysostome*.²⁶ In 1975 he also published the obligatory *excerptum* required for the conferral of the doctoral degree²⁷ and, finally, *The Great Entrance*, a work that would eventually appear in four English editions, several translations, and, as already noted, a substantially expanded Italian edition.²⁸

²⁴ The articles prepared as part of the doctoral dissertation also date from that same year: Robert F. TAFT, *Toward the Origins of the Offertory Procession in the Syro-Byzantine East*, in: OCP 36 (1970) 7–107; ID., *A Proper Offertory Chant for Easter in some Slavonic Manuscripts*, in: OCP 36 (1970) 437–448, and ID., *Psalm 24 at the Transfer of Gifts in the Byzantine Liturgy. A Study in the Origins of a Liturgical Practice*, in: *The Word in the World. Essays in Honor of Frederick L. MORIARTY*, ed. by Richard J. CLIFFORD – George W. MACRAE, Cambridge/MA 1973, 159–177.

²⁵ Cf. *Acta Pontificii Instituti Orientalium studiorum*, Septembris 1970, 35.

²⁶ Cf. Robert F. TAFT, *Évolution historique de la Liturgie de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, ch. 1: *Le rite actuel et ses antécédents historiques*, in: POC 22 (1972) 241–287; ch. 2: *Le Chérubicon*, in: POC 24 (1974) 3–33. 105–138; ch. 3: *La prière du chérubicon*, in: POC 25 (1975) 16–45; ch. 4: *L'encensement et le lavabo*, in: POC 25 (1975) 274–299.

²⁷ Cf. Robert F. TAFT, *The Historical Evolution of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. The Pre-Anaphoral Rites*, Rome 1975.

²⁸ Cf. Robert F. TAFT S.J. (1932–2018). *Chronological List of Publications*, in: *Worship. Studies in Memory of Robert F. TAFT*, ed. by Massimo PAMPALONI – Stefano PARENTI (OCA 310), Rome 2021, 9–48, nos. 28. 40. 293. 645 (re-editions), 779. 815 (translations).

Robert Taft arrived in Rome in 1965, at a moment of intense intellectual ferment and high ecclesial expectations characteristic of the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council. During this period, the rediscovery – or, in many cases, the first genuine discovery – of the Christian East occupied a central place in Catholic theological reflection. Western liturgical reform, then in its infancy, looked to the East in search either of elements it had never possessed or of traditions it believed to have lost.²⁹ Some conciliar documents interpreted the Christian East through the categories of “ancient traditions” or “ancestral traditions”, without suspecting that a number of these were in fact medieval codifications.³⁰ Catholic ecumenism, likewise in its formative phase, required the revision of long-established assumptions and, in certain circles, fostered the illusion that the Orthodox Churches would almost inevitably respond with a comparable openness. The collapse of the Berlin Wall would later prove a salutary corrective to such expectations.³¹ This, in broad outline, was the ecclesial and intellectual environment in which Robert Taft was formed and which his writings of the period faithfully reflect.³²

²⁹ Robert F. TAFT, “Eastern Presuppositions” and Western Liturgical Renewal, in: *Antiphon* 5/1 (2000) 10–22.

³⁰ Cf. Stefano PARENTI, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 6 and the Recovery of “Ancestral Traditions”, in: *Eastern Catholic Theology in Action. Essays in Liturgy, Ecclesiology, and Ecumenism*, ed. by Andrew J. SUMMERSON – Cyril KENNEDY (Eastern Catholic Studies and Texts), Washington/DC 2024, 46–65.

³¹ The shock Taft experienced as a result of the failure of his ecumenical expectations is reflected in his articles Robert F. TAFT, Reflections on “Uniatism” in the Light of Some Recent Books, in: *OCP* 65 (1999) 153–184, here: 466; ID., Reflections on “Uniatism”, in: *Eastern Churches Journal* 7/1 (2000) 33–71 (revision of the previous article); ID., The Problem of “Uniatism” and the “Healing of Memories”. Anamnesis, not Amnesia. Annual Kelly Lecture at The University of St. Michael’s College of the University of Toronto, December 1, 2000, in: *Logos* 41–42 (2000–2001)[2003] 155–196.

³² Cf. Robert F. TAFT, The Neo-Orthodox View on Ecumenical Councils, in: *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 13 (1961) 437–444; ID., Eastern-Rite Catholicism. Its Heritage and Vocation, Glen Rock/NJ 1963; ID., Russian Liturgy, a Mirror of the Russian Soul, in: *Studi albanologici, balcanici, bizantini e orientali in onore di Giuseppe VALENTINI* (Studi albanesi, Studi e testi 6), Florence 1986, 413–435.

From the strictly scholarly perspective, three publications deserve particular attention. In 1964 Hans-Joachim Schulz published his seminal study on the emergence of the *Symbolgestalt* of the Byzantine liturgy.³³ In 1968 André Jacob defended at Louvain his doctoral dissertation in Classical Philology, devoted to the history of the Greek text of the Chrysostom Liturgy.³⁴ Finally, in 1971 Thomas Mathews published his influential monograph on the interaction between liturgy and architecture in the churches of early Constantinople³⁵.

Taft admired Schulz's synthesis to such an extent that he later confessed it was one of the very few books that had provoked in him a feeling of genuine scholarly envy.³⁶ Jacob's dissertation considerably expanded the corpus of manuscripts transmitting the text of the Chrysostom Liturgy beyond what had been available, for example, in the work of Mateos.³⁷ It should also be remembered that, at that time, undertaking a comprehensive study of manuscript sources required substantial financial resources, since obtaining microfilms was an expensive undertaking. Taft, however, found himself in a particularly fortunate position, as he was able to consult the microfilms of the Sinai manuscripts preserved in the collections of the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.³⁸ Mathews' work, for its

³³ Cf. Hans-Joachim SCHULZ, *Die Byzantinische Liturgie. Vom Werden ihrer Symbolgestalt* (Sophia 5), Freiburg i. Br. 1964.

³⁴ Cf. André JACOB, *Histoire du formulaire grec de la liturgie de saint Jean Chrysostome. Thèse présentée pour l'obtention du grade de docteur en philosophie et lettres, groupe C: Philologie*, Louvain 1968.

³⁵ Cf. Thomas F. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches of Constantinople. Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park/PA – London 1971.

³⁶ Cf. Robert F. TAFT, Foreword, in: Hans-Joachim SCHULZ, *The Byzantine Liturgy. Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression* [trans. by Matthew J. O'CONNELL], New York 1986, IX: "Few books in Byzantine liturgy have aroused in me pangs of jealousy. This is one of them."

³⁷ Cf. The Chronological List of Manuscripts (TAFT, *The Great Entrance*, 435–444) depends, for the Greek manuscripts, on JACOB, *Formulaire*.

³⁸ Cf. Checklist of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai microfilmed for the Library of Congress, 1950, prepared under the direction of Kenneth W. CLARK, General Editor of the Mount Sinai Expedition 1949–50, Washington/DC 1952.

part, restored the reciprocal relationship between architecture and liturgy, a connection that had previously been neglected or seriously underestimated. Together, these three studies exercised a decisive influence upon Taft's scholarly development, fostering his enduring preference for broad, coherent historical narratives, ideally free from significant gaps.

When Taft arrived in Rome, Juan Mateos was publishing in *Proche-Orient Chrétien* a series of studies entitled *Évolution historique de la liturgie de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, which he completed in 1970.³⁹ The concluding article ended with a significant announcement:

Voici terminée notre étude sur l'évolution historique de la Liturgie de la Parole dans l'Église byzantine. Un de nos élèves, Robert Taft, s.j., est en train d'élaborer une étude semblable pour la liturgie eucharistique. Nous sommes sûrs que les mérites de la deuxième partie ne seront pas inférieurs à ceux de la première "si quae sunt".⁴⁰

Between 1972 and 1975, after successfully defending his dissertation, Taft continued in the same journal – and under the same title – the series originally inaugurated by Mateos, who subsequently collected his own articles into a volume published in 1971.⁴¹ At precisely the same time, however, Mateos was gradually withdrawing from the field. His 1970 article on

³⁹ Cf. Juan MATEOS, *Évolution historique de la Liturgie de saint Jean Chrysostome. Première partie. De la bénédiction initiale au trisagion*, in: POC 15 (1965) 333–351; ID., *Évolution historique de la Liturgie de saint Jean Chrysostome. Première partie. De la bénédiction initiale au trisagion, §3: Les trois antiphones (suite) (1)*, in: POC 16 (1966) 3–18; ID., *Évolution historique de la liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome. Première partie. De la bénédiction initiale au trisagion, §3 (suite): Les antiphones variables. L'Entrée*, in: POC 16 (1966) 133–161; ID., *Évolution historique de la liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome. Deuxième partie. Le chant du trisagion et la session à l'abside*, in: POC 17 (1967) 141–176; ID., *Évolution historique de la Liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome. Deuxième partie, §2: Les lectures*, in: POC 18 (1968) 305–325; ID., *Évolution historique de la liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome. Deuxième partie, §3: Les prières litaniques après l'évangile*, in: POC 20 (1970) 97–122.

⁴⁰ Cf. MATEOS, *Évolution historique* [...] Les prières litaniques, 122.

⁴¹ Cf. Juan MATEOS, *La célébration de la Parole dans la Liturgie byzantine. Étude historique* (OCA 191), Rome 1971.

Byzantine Vespers proved to be his final contribution to Byzantine liturgical studies and remained unfinished.⁴²

3 *The Book's Principal Theses*

As Taft himself repeatedly acknowledged, he initially approached the study of the pre-anaphoral rites convinced that the present-day Great Entrance was simply the result of the clericalization of an earlier procession in which the faithful carried the eucharistic gifts to the altar.⁴³ This hermeneutical assumption probably stemmed from the interpretation of the present-day Little Entrance, which in its earliest form was indeed nothing more than the informal entrance of the ministers into the church together with the assembled faithful.⁴⁴ His investigation of the sources, however, led him to the opposite conclusion. The Great Entrance proved always to have been performed by the clergy: first by the deacons alone, and later by deacons together with the presbyters. The only ordained minister who, both in antiquity and today, does not take part in the procession is the bishop, who awaits the arrival of the gifts at the threshold of the sanctuary.⁴⁵

A second major thesis concerns the *Cheroubikon*, which Taft interpreted as the surviving remnant of an antiphonally sung psalmody follow-

⁴² Cf. ID., La synaxe monastique des vêpres byzantines, in: OCP 36 (1970) 248–272. The continuation of the article was subsequently published posthumously: ID., La synaxe monastique des vepres byzantines, in: BBGG III s. 7 (2010) 117–138.

⁴³ Cf. TAFT, The Great Entrance, 11: “The original aim of that study was to provide a more solid basis for the commonly held theory that the faithful once took part in the procession of the gifts. But an objective examination of the sources forced us to the opposite conclusion: the Great Entrance is simply a development of the original transfer of gifts by the deacons; there is no convincing evidence that there was ever an offertory procession of the faithful in the East”.

⁴⁴ Cf. MATEOS, La célébration de la Parole, 26 f. 42. 71. As Gabriel Radle suggests – whom I thank here – it is not to be ruled out that there is a somewhat romantic influence of an offertory procession of the faithful as envisioned by the Roman Catholic liturgical movement.

⁴⁵ Cf. TAFT, The Great Entrance, 203–206.

ing the suppression of Psalm 23,⁴⁶ the Psalm celebrating the ascent of the King of Glory to the holy place. Correcting interpretations that had become widely accepted despite their lack of historical foundation, Taft also clarified the original function of the dialogue now exchanged between the deacon and the principal celebrant, demonstrating that it had originally been a dialogue among concelebrants.⁴⁷

Another point on which Taft laid particular emphasis concerns the function of the prayer recited after the entrance of the gifts. In his interpretation, this prayer serves as an *accessus ad altare* and should not be understood as an offertory prayer.⁴⁸ After discussing the secondary character of the litany of the Angel of Peace, the introduction of the Creed, and several other questions of lesser importance,⁴⁹ Taft arrives at conclusions that reaffirm the non-offertorial character of these rites and prayers, which should instead be regarded simply as pre-anaphoral elements.⁵⁰ His concluding chapter also includes several proposals for reforming the ceremonial structure of the liturgy, while deliberately refraining from altering the received liturgical texts themselves.⁵¹

It is here, in my view, that the influence of Juan Mateos and his distinctive approach to liturgical reform becomes most clearly apparent, with the New Skete service books providing a particularly illuminating example. In this case, the underlying method consists, to a large extent, in constructing a new liturgical system through the partial reuse and reconfiguration of materials already present within the tradition. With the necessary qualifications, one might compare this procedure to the *bricoleur* described by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *La pensée sauvage* (1962), whose creative activity consists in reorganizing pre-existing elements into a new and meaningful configuration. Nor does Cipriano Vagaggini appear to have been entirely foreign to this intellectual climate, as he was engaged

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 83–118.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 285–310; Alfons RAES, *Le dialogue après la grande entrée*, in: OCP 18 (1952) 38–51.

⁴⁸ Cf. TAFT, *The Great Entrance*, 350–373.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 311–349. 374–425.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 426 f.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 427 f.

during the same years in comparable attempts within the Roman rite, albeit on the basis of different theological and methodological premises.⁵² *The Great Entrance* was received with considerable acclaim. The book appeared both innovative and original, grounded in an impressive range of manuscript sources and guided by a rigorous historical method. It marked the definitive transition from an approach oscillating between rubrical commentary and theological reflection to a study of liturgy understood as a complex cultural phenomenon. Nevertheless, the work also provoked criticism and controversy that continued for many years.⁵³

4 *The 2014 Revised Edition*

The Italian translation of *The Great Entrance* responded to practical pastoral needs arising from the growing presence of Orthodox and Eastern Catholic faithful from Central and Eastern Europe in Italy. There was an increasingly widespread awareness of the need for reliable scholarly resources in Italian. At the same time, nearly forty years after the book's original publication, it had become evident that a straightforward translation would no longer suffice without a substantial revision of the text, undertaken in agreement with Robert Taft. We decided together not to distinguish typographically between the original text and the new material, so that the resulting volume would appear as a genuinely collaborative work, written, as it were, by four hands.⁵⁴

⁵² Cf. Claudio U. CORTONI, Il contributo di Cipriano Vagaggini alla redazione delle preghiere eucaristiche postconciliari maggiori, in: RL 107/2 (2020) 233–285.

⁵³ Cf. Neil K. MORAN, The Musical “Gestaltung” of the Great Entrance Ceremony in the 12th Century in Accordance with the Rite of the Hagia Sophia, in: JÖB 28 (1979) 167–193; ID., The Enarxis of the Mass of St. Basil, in: OKS 29 (1980) 157–164; ID., The Skeuophylakion of Hagia Sophia, in: Cahiers Archeologiques 34 (1986) 29–32; ID., Nochmals zum Großen Einzug in die Hagia Sophia. Eine Erwiderung an Robert Taft, in: OCh 98 (2015) 174–183; ID., Ceiling rings in the aisles of the Hagia Sophia, in: OKS 66 (2017) 172–185.

⁵⁴ Cf. TAFT – PARENTI, Il Grande Ingresso, 50.

By 2014, digital technologies had become an integral part of liturgical scholarship, and Taft himself, together with Maxwell Johnson, was among the first to exploit their potential in a systematic way.⁵⁵ At the same time, the increasing availability of digital reproductions of manuscripts significantly reduced the material obstacles that had previously hampered research.

The first task was to harmonize *The Great Entrance* with *Breve storia del rito bizantino* and, above all, with volumes IV, V, and VI of Taft's *History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, all published after 1975.⁵⁶ The aim was to ensure the internal coherence of the corpus while avoiding unnecessary repetition.

Particular attention during the revision was devoted to philological and textual issues, an area in which Taft himself readily acknowledged a certain methodological reserve. On this basis, the textual history of the *Cheroubikon* was partially rewritten, taking into account the manuscript Psalters, which had previously received little attention but proved to be among the principal witnesses to the transmission of the hymn.⁵⁷ The analysis of the numerous textual variants preserved in the Greek manuscript tradition also made it possible to reassess the value of the Slavonic and Armenian versions, which should no longer be regarded as the result of inaccurate translations but rather as witnesses to alternative forms of the underlying Greek text.⁵⁸

More generally, the manuscript corpus examined was expanded by several dozen witnesses; numerous datings were revised; and each manuscript was provided with a concise bibliography and, whenever possible,

⁵⁵ Cf. Stefano PARENTI, *L'anafora di Crisostomo. Testo e contesti* (JThF 36), Münster 2020, 63.

⁵⁶ Cf. Robert F. TAIT, *Il rito bizantino. Una breve storia* [trans. by Maria CAMPATELLI] (Pubblicazioni del Centro Aletti), Rome 2012; ID., *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. 4: *The Diptychs* (OCA 238), Rome 1991; ID., *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. 5: *The Precommunion Rites* (OCA 261), Rome 2000; ID., *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. 6: *The Communion, Thanksgiving, and Concluding Rites* (OCA 281), Rome 2008.

⁵⁷ Cf. TAIT – PARENTI, *Il Grande Ingresso*, 158 f.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 163–168.

a proposed provenance.⁵⁹ Access to a number of important manuscript witnesses also made it possible to reconsider, on firmer textual grounds, the transmission history of the prayer *Nemo dignus*,⁶⁰ the pre-anaphoral dialogue, and the litany of the “Angel of Peace”.⁶¹ In all other respects, however, the overall structure of the volume remained unchanged, including the author’s proposals for liturgical reform.

The history of *The Great Entrance* cannot be separated from the methodological questions raised by its own conclusions.

5 *Beyond The Great Entrance*

As Taft was fond of saying, “nothing is definitive apart from God”, and the same applies to *The Great Entrance*.⁶² Since the publication of the revised Italian edition in 2014, the study of the Eastern liturgies has advanced considerably, although not always with a corresponding increase in scholarly rigor. At the same time, new methodological approaches have fostered a growing awareness of the need to interrogate euchological and hymnographic texts more critically. This entails asking questions about their literary quality, compositional techniques, sources, and the ways in which their authors appropriated and reinterpreted the New Testament. Within the sphere of the pre-anaphoral rites, two particularly instructive case studies are the Prayer of the *Proskomide* (τῆς προσκομιδῆς), that is, the *accessus ad altare* of the Chrysostom Liturgy, and the *Cheroubikon*.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 700–730.

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 257–302.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 475–480. 487–513. 518–567.

⁶² Cf. Robert F. TAFT, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. 5, XXXIII: “My previous volume of this history, *The Great Entrance*, was favorably reviewed. Some were so generous as to call it ‘definitive.’ But the older one gets, the more such an epithet appears, well, too ‘definitive.’ Nothing is definitive apart from God, and all the rest is in his hands. So I will not pretend that this study is definitive”.

5.1 *The Prayer of the Προσκομιδή*

In his 1959 article on the action of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Juan Mateos, like several scholars before him, interpreted the εὐχή τῆς προσκομιδῆς as a *prière sur les dons*.⁶³ A few years later, however, he returned to the question and, in a brief but penetrating study, demonstrated that the prayer should instead be understood as an introduction to the anaphora and, more precisely, as an *accessus ad altare* proper to the clergy.⁶⁴

In *The Great Entrance*, Robert Taft adopted the conclusions reached by Mateos and reinforced them with additional documentary evidence.⁶⁵ For my part, I have expanded the dossier concerning the term προσκομιδή and its semantic range.⁶⁶ Taft further insisted that the εὐχή τῆς προσκομιδῆς cannot be regarded as an offertory prayer comparable to the *oratio super oblata* (formerly the *secreta*) of the Roman Missal.⁶⁷ Yet this understandable emphasis tended to obscure one essential feature of the text, namely its character as an *apologia*. This becomes particularly evident from its extensive dependence upon the Epistle to the Hebrews, which provides both its principal literary framework and its theological vocabulary. The prayer, however, does not adopt Hebrews according to the theological perspective of its author but reinterprets it in accordance with the liturgical setting and the developing self-understanding of the celebrating clergy.

The earliest known text of the prayer is preserved in *Barberini gr.* 336 (post 787). The numbering has been added solely for the convenience of the discussion that follows.

⁶³ Cf. Juan MATEOS, L'action du Saint-Esprit dans la liturgie dite de s. Jean Chrysostome, in: POC 9 (1959) 193–208, here: 193.

⁶⁴ Cf. ID., Deux problèmes de traduction dans la Liturgie Byzantine de S. Jean Chrysostome, in: OCP 30 (1964) 248–255, here: 248–253.

⁶⁵ TAFT, *The Great Entrance*, 360 f.

⁶⁶ Cf. TAFT – PARENTI, *Il Grande Ingresso*, 579–581.

⁶⁷ Cf. TAFT, *The Great Entrance*, 256. 352.

- 1 Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ μόνος ἅγιος,
- 2 ὁ δεχόμενος θυσίαν αἰνέσεως^a
- 3 παρὰ τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων σε^b ἐν ὅλῃ καρδίᾳ^c,
- 4 πρόσδεξαι καὶ ἡμῶν τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν τὴν δέησιν,
- 5 καὶ προσάγαγε τῷ ἁγίῳ σου θυσιαστηρίῳ·
- 6 καὶ ἱκάνωσον ἡμᾶς προσενεγκεῖν σοι
- 7 δῶρα καὶ θυσίας πνευματικὰς^d
- 8 ὑπὲρ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἁμαρτημάτων καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων^e.
- 9 καὶ καταξίωσον ἡμᾶς εὐρεῖν χάριν^f ἐνώπιόν σου
- 10 τοῦ γενέσθαι εὐπρόσδεκτον τὴν θυσίαν^g ἡμῶν
- 11 καὶ ἐπισκηῶσαι τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτός σου^h τὸ ἀγαθὸν
- 12 ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ
- 13 ἐπὶ τὰ προκείμενα δῶρα ταῦτα
- 14 καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα τὸν λαόν σου.⁶⁸

^aHeb 13:15 ^bPs 144:18 ^cPs 9:2 ^dHeb 5:1; 1 Pt 2:5

^eHeb 9:7 ^fHeb 4:16 ^gRom 15:16; 1 Pt 2:5 ^hHeb 10:29

God is described as receiving the “sacrifice of praise” [2] offered by those who invoke him [3], while the minister asks that his own supplication (δέησις) may likewise be accepted [4]. The first interpretative question raised by the text therefore concerns the precise referent of this δέησις. Although the term ordinarily denotes a prayer that has just been uttered, the context seems to suggest a broader reference. The expression “sacrifice of praise” reappears in the people’s response to the introductory exhortation preceding the pre-anaphoral dialogue: “Mercy, peace, a sacrifice of praise” (ἔλεος/ἔλεον, εἰρήνη/εἰρήνην, θυσία/αν αἰνέσεως).⁶⁹ While this formula clearly derives from the Old Testament (Ps 49:14.23 and 106:22 [LXX]), within the present context its most likely background is Heb 13:15: “Through him, then, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name” (δι’ αὐτοῦ οὖν ἀναφέρωμεν

⁶⁸ Barb. gr. 336, 31.2 (BEL.S 80, 75; PARENTI – VELKOVSKA).

⁶⁹ Cf. Stefano PARENTI, *Misericordia, pace, sacrificio di lode. Le disavventure vecchie e nuove di una locuzione liturgica*, in: EO 37 (2020) 237–271.

θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διὰ παντὸς τῷ θεῷ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ).⁷⁰

It is noteworthy that the author of the prayer deliberately omits precisely the phrase defining the content of this “sacrifice of praise”. Such specification was unnecessary in the congregational response cited above, whose theological horizon appears to be determined primarily by Matt 12:7 and, secondarily, Matt 9:13, where Hos 6:6 [LXX] is cited to contrast mercy with, and to give it precedence over, temple sacrifice. The *δέησις*, therefore, may refer not merely to the prayer just pronounced, but, more broadly, to the anaphora that is about to begin.

Following the petition for the clergy's *accessus ad altare* [5], the literary dependence upon Heb 9:7 becomes unmistakable [6–8]: “make us worthy to offer you gifts and spiritual sacrifices for our own sins and for the sins of ignorance of the people.” Yet the difference is no less significant than the similarity. The author applies to the Christian minister a formula that the Epistle reserves for the Levitical high priest: “once a year only the high priest enters, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people” (ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ὁ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεύς, οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος, ὃ προσφέρει ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων). What serves in Hebrews as part of the argument demonstrating the obsolescence of the Levitical priesthood is here incorporated into the language of Christian liturgical ministry. The prayer appropriates Hebrews not to emphasize the uniqueness and unrepeatability of Christ's priesthood – the theological centre of the epistle – but to articulate a theology and spirituality of the celebrating minister. Put differently, the language of Hebrews has been recontextualized and assigned a specifically liturgical and ministerial function.

Two lexical observations deserve mention. As already noted, the term *θύσια* originally designates the anaphora as a whole, whereas in the prayer it is applied more specifically to the offering of the eucharistic gifts (δῶρα καὶ θυσίας πνευματικᾶς) [7]. The anaphora itself, by contrast, characterizes this offering by the broader term *λατρεία* (“worship”), further qualified as *πνευματικὴ* and *ἀναίμακτος* (“spiritual” and “bloodless”). The anaphora thus preserves the same terminological distinction found in He-

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 268.

brews, where the expression δῶρα καὶ θυσίας (Heb 5:1) belongs to the sacrificial sphere of the Levitical priesthood, whereas λατρεύειν τῷ θεῷ (Heb 9:14) denotes the worship rendered to God.

Finally, particular attention should be paid to the minister's petition that he may "find grace" (εὐρεῖν χάριν; cf. Heb 4:16), so that the sacrifice may be accepted. The same expression appears in the Basilian anaphora, but with reference to the fruits of the Eucharist.⁷¹ Taken together, these features reveal a deliberate process of semantic reconfiguration within euchological language in the service of a new liturgical theology. What has been observed here concerning the *accessus prayer* of the Chrysostom Liturgy applies equally – and indeed with even greater force – to its counterpart in the Liturgy of St. Basil.⁷²

5.2 The Cheroubikon

To introduce the subject, allow me to quote an anecdote concerning the celebrated classical philologist Friedrich Leo († 1914), reported by his no less renowned student Eduard Fraenkel († 1970) and later cited by Martin West:

I had by then read the greater part of Aristophanes, and I began to rave about it to Leo, and to wax eloquent on the magic of this poetry, the beauty of the choral odes, and so on and so forth. Leo let me have my say, perhaps ten minutes in all, without showing any sign of disapproval or impatience. When I was finished, he asked: "In which edition do you read Aristophanes?" I thought: has he not been listening? What has his question got to do with what I have been telling him? After a moment's ruffled hesitation, I answered: "The Teubner". Leo: "Oh, you read Aristophanes without a critical apparatus." He said it quite calmly, without any sharpness, without a whiff of sarcasm, just sincerely taken aback that it was possible for a tolerably intelligent young man to do such a thing. I looked at the lawn nearby and had a single, overwhelming sensation: νῦν μοι χάνοι εὐρεῖα χθών [Homer, *Iliad* IV, 183: "Now

⁷¹ Cf. PARENTI, L'anafora di Crisostomo, 415 f.

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, 242–244.

may the broad earth open for me”]. Later it seemed to me that in that moment I had understood the meaning of real scholarship.⁷³

When Robert Taft published *The Great Entrance* (and later prepared, together with the present author, the Italian edition of the work), a critical edition of George Cedrenus’s *Historiarum Compendium* was not yet available, although this source is of considerable importance for reconstructing the history of the *Cheroubikon*. In the edition then considered standard, prepared by Immanuel Bekker, one reads that, in the ninth year of his reign (573/574), the emperor Justin II (565–578) introduced two troparia into the liturgy of the Great Church: *Coenae tuae* and the *Cheroubikon*.⁷⁴ Cedrenus’s testimony, however, required careful evaluation, especially because of the chronological distance separating the eleventh-twelfth-century Byzantine historian from the events he narrates.⁷⁵ The critical edition of the *Historiarum Compendium* published in 2016 by Luigi Tartaglia has indeed placed this passage in the critical apparatus, interpreting it as a marginal addition preserved in some manuscripts and subsequently incorporated into the main text at different points in the manuscript tradition.⁷⁶ The doubts, therefore, remain.

Let us now turn to the content of the hymn. In his commentary on the *Sursum corda* / *Habemus ad Dominum* dialogue, Joseph A. Jungmann observes that, in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, Cyril of Jerusalem inter-

⁷³ Martin L. WEST, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique applicable to Greek and Latin Texts*, Stuttgart 1973, 7; cf. Friedrich LEO, *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften*, 2 vols., ed. and introd. by Eduard FRAENKEL, Rome 1960.

⁷⁴ Cf. GEORGIUS CEDRENUS, *Compendium historiarum*, ed. by Immanuel BEKKER, Ioannis Scylitzae ope, vol. 1 (CSHB), Bonn 1838, 684 f. = PG 121, 748: ἐτυπώθη ψάλλεσθαι τῇ μεγάλῃ ἐ’ τοῦ δείπνου σοῦ τοῦ μυστικοῦ [...] ἐτυπώθη δὲ ψάλλεσθαι καὶ ὁ Χερουβικὸς ὕμνος.

⁷⁵ Cf. Philippe BERNARD, *La dialectique entre l’hymnographie et la psalmodie des origines à la fin du VI^e siècle. Bilan des connaissances et essai d’interprétation*, in: *Rivista Internazionale di Musica Sacra* n.s. 26/1 (2005) 11–163, here: 131 f.

⁷⁶ Cf. Georgii Cedreni *Historiarum Compendium*. Edizione critica a cura di Luigi TARTAGLIA (*Bollettino dei Classici. Supplemento* 30), Rome 2016, vol. 2, 658 (§ 421.14, apparatus); cf. vol. 1, 60.

prets the exhortation to “Lift up the heart” as an invitation to abandon the concerns of daily life (βιωτικά φροντίδες).⁷⁷ According to Jungmann, this same theme later found expression in the *Cheroubikon*.⁷⁸ Robert Taft adopted an observation that remained largely peripheral in Jungmann’s treatment and assigned to the relationship between the abandonment of earthly cares and the reception of the King of the universe a central structural role in the theological interpretation of the *Cheroubikon*. In Taft’s view, this pair of concepts constituted the fundamental theme of the hymn.

To complete this interpretative framework, Taft needed only a convincing contextualization of ὑποδεξόμενοι, the future middle participle of ὑποδέχομαι, a verb that frequently appears in euchological texts as a technical term for “receiving in communion”. He found the necessary evidence in the *Protheoria*, the liturgical commentary composed by Nicholas of Andida and revised by Theodore of Andida in Pamphylia Secunda during his stay in Constantinople between 1085 and 1095:

Ὁ δὲ ἀδόμενος χερουβικὸς ὕμνος προτρέπεται πάντας ἐντεῦθεν καὶ μέχρι τοῦ τέλους τῆς ἱερουργίας προσεκτικώτερον ἔχειν τὸν νοῦν πᾶσαν βιωτικὴν μέριμναν κάτωθεν ἀφιεμένους, ὡς βασιλέα μέγαν μέλλοντα δέχεσθαι διὰ τῆς κοινωνίας.⁷⁹

The Cherubic Hymn that is sung exhorts everyone, from this moment until the end of the sacred celebration, to keep their mind more attentive and recollected, having left behind every earthly concern, since they are about to receive the great King through communion.

The passage was later incorporated into the commentary attributed to Pseudo-Sophronius of Jerusalem and into the Salentine recension of the *Historia mystica* attributed to Germanus of Constantinople.⁸⁰ A search of the TLG, however, revealed that the expression ὡς βασιλέα μέγαν μέλλοντα

⁷⁷ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, cat. 5,4 (SChr 126, 152; PIÉDAGNEL – PARIS).

⁷⁸ Cf. Joseph A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum Sollemnia. The Mass of the Roman Rite. Its Origin and Development*, vol. 2, New York 1955, 110, n. 5.

⁷⁹ PROTHEORIA, comm. lit. (PG 140, 441).

⁸⁰ Cf. PS.-SOPHRONIUS OF JERUSALEM, *Commentarius liturgicus* (PG 87/2, 4001); PS.-GERMANOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Hist.* (PG 98, 420–421).

δέχεσθαι derives from a Pseudo-Chrysostomian homily⁸¹ that itself reuses passages from Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catecheses*.⁸² This discovery further strengthens the hypothesis of a certain lexical dependence of the hymn upon the *Catecheses*, but nothing beyond that.

As is well known, in liturgical sources the term *τρισάγιον* may refer either to the *Sanctus* of Isaiah 6 or to the *Sanctus* of the anaphora.⁸³ In the case of the *Cheroubikon*, therefore, it is impossible to determine with certainty which of the two references is intended. It is nevertheless significant that, in the Hagiopolite tradition (both Greek and Georgian), as well as in the Armenian, East Syriac, Maronite, and even Ambrosian traditions, the *Sanctus* of Isaiah concludes the chant accompanying the transfer of the gifts, the *accessus ad altare*, or other related chants.⁸⁴

In Hagiopolite sources, such compositions are introduced by the rubric τὰ ἅγια or εἰς τὰ ἅγια, expressions generally understood as referring to the “holy [gifts]” carried in procession to the altar. In the Italian edition of *The Great Entrance*, however, I had already noted that the same expression may also designate the sanctuary itself, as an abbreviated form of τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων.⁸⁵ I acknowledge, however, that I did not then

⁸¹ Cf. Ecloga 47: Quod non indigne accedendum sit ad diuina mysteria [CPG 4684.47]: Προσιὼν δὲ, μὴ τεταμέναις χερσὶν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀριστερὰν θρόνον ποίησον τῆς δεξιᾶς, καὶ κοιλάνας τὴν παλάμην, ὡς μέλλων βασιλέα ὑποδέχεσθαι, μετὰ πολλοῦ φόβου τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑπόδεξαι, ἵνα μὴ τις μαργαρίτης ἐκπέσῃ ἐκ τῆς χειρός σου, καὶ ζημιωθῇς ἐν τῶν μελῶν σου. (PG 63, 895–900, here: 898, 6–17). Cf. José A. DE ALDAMA, *Repertorium pseudochrysostomicum* (Documents, études et répertoires publiés par l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes 10), Paris 1965, 122.

⁸² Cf. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, Cat. 5, 21: Προσιὼν οὖν μὴ τεταμένοις τοῖς τῶν χειρῶν καρποῖς προσέρχου, μηδὲ διηρημένοις τοῖς δακτύλοις· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀριστερὰν θρόνον ποιήσας τῇ δεξιᾷ, ὡς μελλούσῃ Βασιλέα ὑποδέχεσθαι, καὶ κοιλάνας τὴν παλάμην δέχου τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐπιλέγων Ἀμὴν. (SChr 126, 170; PIÉDAGNEL – PARIS).

⁸³ Cf. Geoffrey W. H. LAMPE, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, 1370–1372.

⁸⁴ Cf. Taft – PARENTI, *Il Grande Ingresso*, 215–224.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 188.

draw all the interpretative consequences that this observation might have suggested.

The *Sanctus* is, in fact, the quintessential hymn of the heavenly sanctuary, to which the presbyteral space and its altar are progressively assimilated in theological reflection.⁸⁶ It represents the symbolic place in which the minister, reciting the introductory prayer of the *Proskomide*, asks to enter as a new high priest interceding for his own sins and for the faults of the people. In light of this liturgical and symbolic context, I therefore consider it more plausible to interpret the *τρισάγιον* mentioned almost incidentally in the *Cheroubikon* as an allusion to Isaiah's *Sanctus* rather than to the *Sanctus* of the anaphora.

6 Conclusion: Once Again, Mateos

The reflections developed thus far on *The Great Entrance*, fifty years after its publication, have provided an opportunity both for retrospective clarification and for identifying possible directions for future research. It is appropriate to begin with the former. The published and unpublished evidence concerning the life and work of Juan Mateos, when interpreted correctly, allows us to better understand the ultimate aims of his scholarly method. For Mateos, the historical study of Christian liturgies was not an end in itself but was intended to have a concrete impact on the life of the Churches. Faced with the resistance he encountered and with the institutional barriers placed before him in the name of other priorities, he gradually abandoned this project, although he continued teaching the subject at PIO, until the early 1990s.⁸⁷

From this perspective, Robert Taft's academic profile appears more cautious. He inherited from Mateos the methodological link between "research and reform", yet he consistently avoided personally translating the results of his investigations into proposals for liturgical reform. His well-

⁸⁶ Cf. Robert OUSTERHOUT, *New Temples and New Solomons. The Rhetoric of Byzantine Architecture*, in: Paul MAGDALINO – Robert NELSON (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, Washington/DC 2010, 223–253.

⁸⁷ Cf. Pontificium Institutum Orientale, *Acta 1990–1991. Anno Accademico 1991–1992*, Rome 1991, 79 f.: "Ufficio divino di tradizione siriana" (course) and "Metodologia dell'analisi dei testi liturgici" (seminar).

known maxim – “I myself am not a liturgical reformer, I’m a liturgical informer”⁸⁸. One may therefore ask to what extent it is still legitimate to speak of a “school of Mateos”, given that its supposed founder had already distanced himself from the original project and that his disciples did not fully grasp the existential motivations that had nourished his research and ultimately determined his withdrawal.

The Great Entrance is undoubtedly part of a structural history of the Divine Liturgy. Through the method of analysing liturgical units, Mateos identified both the macro- and microstructures of the celebration; moreover, thanks to the work of André Jacob, it became possible to reconstruct with remarkable precision the configuration – that is, the structure – assumed by the euchological formularies of the Chrysostom Liturgy in different chronological and geographical contexts. From these premises, Taft’s proposals for reform could only take a structural form. Both *The Great Entrance* and its 2014 revision – and here a necessary *mea culpa* is due on the part of the present author – remain marked by the absence of a qualitative analysis of the euchology.

What perspectives, then, emerge for future research? The presence of an *accessus* prayer that reinterprets, and effectively neutralizes, the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews cannot leave scholars indifferent. It raises again, for students of the Eastern liturgies, the questions that Mateos himself posed as early as 1972 in the introduction to *Cristianos en fiesta*. The structural study of the Divine Liturgy has successfully highlighted the courtly and imperial dimension of the celebration, as well as its strong concern for *τάξις*; it has, however, paid comparatively little attention to the process through which the Christian Eucharist was progressively reinterpreted as a sanctuary service entrusted to an ordained minister assimilated to the Levitical high priest.

In light of this observation, it seems necessary to reconsider more profoundly the very way in which the history of the Byzantine Divine Litur-

⁸⁸ Robert F. TAFT, *Through Their Own Eyes. Liturgy as the Byzantines Saw It*. Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute – The Paul G. Manolis Distinguished Lectures 2005, Berkeley 2006, 161. The saying by Taft depends, directly or indirectly, on the aphorism “I am not a reformer, I am an informer” by the Methodist pastor Elmer Williams, as reported by The Press: Informer, in: *Time Magazine* (July 16, 1941). [↗](#)

gy is written. If the studies produced thus far ultimately depend upon the “first Mateos”, their future development will require the recovery and integration of the *etwas anderen* Mateos, namely the critical scholar of the New Testament.

Abbreviations

AK	Ἀνάλεκτα Κρυπτοφέρνης
BGG	Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata
BEL.S	Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae, Subsidia
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
EO	Ecclesia Orans
JThF	Jerusalemmer Theologisches Forum
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
PG	Patrologia Graeca
JÖB	Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik
OCh	Oriens Christianus
OKS	Ostkirchliche Studien
POC	Proche-Orient Chrétien
RL	Rivista Liturgica
SChr	Sources Chrésiennes
SECL	Studies in Eastern Christian Liturgies
SOC	Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano

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PS.-CHRYSOSTOMOS, Ecloga 47: Quod non indigne accedendum sit ad diuina mysteria [CPG 4684.47] (PG 63, 895–900).

PS.-GERMANOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, hist.

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PS.-SOPHRONIOS OF JERUSALEM, Commentarius liturgicus (PG 87C, 3981–4002).

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