



**Fœderatio Internationalis *Una Voce***

***Positio N. 32***

THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM  
AND ISLAM

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### From the General Introduction

These papers, commissioned by the International Federation *Una Voce*, are offered to stimulate and inform debate about the 1962 Missal among Catholics ‘attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition’, and others interested in the liturgical renewal of the Church. They are not to be taken to imply personal or moral criticism of those today or in the past who have adopted practices or advocated reforms which are subjected to criticism. In composing these papers we adopt the working assumption that our fellow Catholics act in good will, but that nevertheless a vigorous and well-informed debate is absolutely necessary if those who act in good will are to do so in light of a proper understanding of the issues.

The authors of the papers are not named, as the papers are not the product of any one person, and also because we prefer them to be judged on the basis of their content, not their authorship.

The International Federation *Una Voce* humbly submits the opinions contained in these papers to the judgement of the Church.

### The Extraordinary Form and Islam: Abstract

In the West as well as in countries of Islamic heritage, engagement with Islam is a practical reality for many Catholics. Secular liberalism and Evangelical Protestantism criticise Islam in part for what it has in common with Catholicism. As Pope Benedict observed, ‘A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures.’ In terms of religious culture, the use of a sacred language, ritual, and chant, and the appeal of aestheticism specifically to men, gives the ancient Latin liturgical tradition, and its associated spirituality, a similar area of common ground with Islam to that enjoyed by the ancient churches of the East.

*Comments can be sent to*

**positio@fiuv.org**

## POSITIO 32: ISLAM AND THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM

1. The question of this paper is the question of Catholics' engagement with Islam: intellectual, cultural, and personal. Such engagement is today, for many Catholics in the West, as well as in Africa and the Islamic world, an unavoidable practical reality. It can be positive, insofar as it fosters mutual understanding, and, going beyond this, an exchange of ideas up to and including evangelisation: the proclamation of the Gospel which is the mission of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Above all, as noted by the Second Vatican Council Declaration *Nostra aetate*, this process must be founded on a proper 'esteem' (aestimatio) for Muslims, and an acknowledgement of those elements of truth found in Islam.<sup>2</sup>
2. The paper will put forward certain ways in which the Church's traditional liturgy, with its associated spirituality and discipline, can assist Catholics in undertaking this engagement.
3. Islam, which in a number of ways is experiencing a period of revival and expansion, is also subject to interrogation and critique from two notable sources: from liberal secularism, and from evangelical Protestantism. The latter is in energetic competition for the same demographic groups in some parts of the world, notably young black men in the United States and in Europe; evangelical Protestants have also launched missionary activity in majority-Muslim countries.<sup>3</sup> Catholics' engagement with Islam must take account of these existing conflicts.

### Islam and Secular Liberalism

4. The most persistent and aggressive challenges to Islam in the West and in the Islamic world alike have in recent decades come dressed in the garb of secular liberal ideology. The debates about Muslim schools and Muslim dress, which have recently been prominent in Europe, take place in the context of a campaign against traditional gender roles, against legal and cultural restrictions on sexuality, and against religion having a role in public life, which is waged in the name of liberal secularism across the globe, including through the medium of the United Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> Code of Canon Law (1983), Canon 211: 'All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land' ('Omnes christifideles officium habent et ius allaborandi ut divinum salutis nuntium ad universos homines omnium temporum ac totius orbis magis magisque perveniat.') Cf. Canon 225 §1: 'Since, like all the Christian faithful, lay persons are designated by God for the apostolate through baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and possess the right as individuals, or joined in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world. This obligation is even more compelling in those circumstances in which only through them can people hear the gospel and know Christ.' ('Laici, quippe qui uti omnes christifideles ad apostolatam a Deo per baptismum et confirmationem deputentur, generali obligatione tenentur et iure gaudent, sive singuli sive in consociationibus coniuncti, allaborandi ut divinum salutis nuntium ab universis hominibus ubique terrarum cognoscatur et accipiatur; quae obligatio eo vel magis urget iis in adiunctis, in quibus nonnisi per ipsos Evangelium audire et Christum cognoscere homines possunt.')

<sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Council Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions *Nostra aetate* 3; cf. Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* 16; Second Vatican Council Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes* 9

<sup>3</sup> For a survey, see David Garrison *A Wind in the House of Islam: How God is drawing Muslims around the world to faith in Jesus Christ* (Monument CO: Wigtake, 2014)

5. The common cause which has frequently been made by the Holy See with Muslim countries in United Nations debates illustrates the common ground which exists between Islam and the Church in these areas. The exact nature of this common ground is complex: the Islamic view of the roles of the sexes, for example, or of religion in public life, is clearly distinct from a Catholic view. Nevertheless, the importance in Catholic thinking of the complementarity of the sexes,<sup>4</sup> of the Church's mission 'to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel',<sup>5</sup> and of the Church's defence of that Natural moral law which is the common heritage of mankind, give Catholics a basis for discussion with Muslims which does not exist for secular liberals. It is naturally only through discussion that any necessary reform or correction can take place.
  
6. As Pope Benedict XVI noted, with reference to Islam:
 

A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures.<sup>6</sup>

In a similar way, a Christianity too much identified with secular liberal attitudes is not helpful in this dialogue. As the scholar Samir Khalil Samir SJ has noted:

Muslims know that modernity is coming from the West; this is a fact. Now they see the West as having lost its ethics, especially on sexual questions. They're very shocked by what they see or hear.

...Then the Muslims say, "Okay, the West is Christian, Christianity allows this, and so Christianity is not the true religion; it's a false religion. And we want to be true, to stick to the Qur'an and to the tradition."<sup>7</sup>
  
7. Those aspects of Catholic teaching which contrast with secular liberalism are in certain ways to be found more prominently manifested in the Church's ancient liturgy. This is most evident with respect to the complementarity of the sexes, which is connected fundamentally both with questions of sexual morality and with the transformation of the public sphere by religious values. The doctrine of complementarity is very beautifully illustrated by the focus of the Nuptial Blessing, in the Extraordinary Form, on the bride, as the heart or body of the family, of which the bridegroom is the head,<sup>8</sup> and, in a different way, by the exclusive use of men and boys in the service of the Altar.<sup>9</sup> Again, the wearing of head coverings in church by women, which is widespread in the context of the Extraordinary Form, has a very obvious echo in the adoption by many Muslim women of head coverings as a sign of reserve, which has been defended in terms of the sacredness of what is veiled.<sup>10</sup>
  
8. In a somewhat different way, themes of sin and judgement, references to penance and the false principles of the 'world', and explicit treatments of moral issues, tend to be more prominent in the orations and the Lectionary of the Extraordinary Form.<sup>11</sup> Equally, the

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<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2357; cf. 2333

<sup>5</sup> Second Vatican Council Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam actuositatem* 5

<sup>6</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Representatives of Science, Regensburg, 12 September 2006

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Edward Pentin 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015, *National Catholic Register*  
<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/middle-east-scholar-islam-needs-a-renewal-of-reason#ixzz3s23ama2A>

<sup>8</sup> Annibale Bugnini notes that the reformed Nuptial Blessing 'has been suitably revised and adapted so as to apply to both spouses', although he does not explain why. See his *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990) p704

<sup>9</sup> See Positio 1: *The Service of the Altar by Men and Boys* 4ff

<sup>10</sup> Fatma El Guindi *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999) p95; see Positio 22: *Headcoverings in Church in the Extraordinary Form* 9

<sup>11</sup> See Positio 15 *The Lectionary of the Extraordinary Form*, Appendix A. The lections given for the Nuptial Mass in the Extraordinary Form exemplify the spirit of the ancient lectionary: it is difficult to imagine an Epistle teaching the submission of wives to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-33), and a Gospel passage

value set on family life as traditionally conceived, and openness to life displayed in large families, is particularly evident among the Faithful attached to the Extraordinary Form.

9. In this respect it is useful to note the comments of the British Muslim Nadiya Hussain, who sprang to fame as the winner of a television cooking competition, noted in interviews the ‘stigma’ attached to the role of housewife in secular British society, a role she saw herself as representing in the competition.<sup>12</sup>

### Islam and Evangelical Protestantism

10. Islam has certain obvious affinities with ‘Low Church’ Protestantism. It is not an incarnational or sacramental religion; it rejects the use of images; and it stresses the importance of its Holy Book. Black communities in the United States and elsewhere, most often historically linked to Protestantism, have proved a fruitful source of conversions to Islam, which seems, particularly to the young men of these communities, a militant and masculine religion. In response, Protestant apologists have drawn attention to those aspects of Islam which do not accord with classical Low Church principles. These include the practice of pilgrimage (the Hajj, to Mecca),<sup>13</sup> and the kissing of the ‘black stone’; the practice of fasting; the importance of ritual;<sup>14</sup> the practice of stylised chanting of sacred texts; formal prayer; and the use of a sacred language.<sup>15</sup>
11. In this context, there is clearly value in being able to stress a more positive, Catholic, attitude to these things, which are, indeed, very prominent in the ancient Christian churches of majority-Muslim countries. Unfortunately, social and legal restrictions on converting from Islam to Christianity in many Muslim countries are such that it is generally not possible for these ancient churches to accept Muslim converts.<sup>16</sup>
12. In the West, the Extraordinary Form, and the traditional spirituality and discipline associated with it, serves to expand the common ground which is necessary for fruitful dialogue to take place, because, like the Oriental churches, it affirms the use of a sacred language in worship, the use of ritual and chant, the importance of fasting and of pilgrimage, and, as already noted, the complementarity of the sexes, and the wearing of head coverings by women.<sup>17</sup>

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teaching that that remarriage after divorce constitutes adultery (Matthew 19:3-6), being used at a wedding celebrated in the Ordinary Form.

<sup>12</sup> *Daily Mail* 27 July 2016: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/food/article-3709047/Bake-champion-Nadiya-Hussain-reveals-misses-stay-home-mum.html>

<sup>13</sup> Shia Muslims, and those influenced by Sufi practice, recognise many pilgrimage shrines, the tombs of holy men; for ‘orthodox’ Sunnis the Hajj is unique as a pilgrimage destination.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the ritual washing required of Muslims before prayer, and ritual in prayer itself.

<sup>15</sup> For examples of polemics on these and related topics, see David Wood’s ‘Acts 17 Apologetics’, <http://www.answermuslims.com>

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Fabelle, when living in Bagdad under the government of Saddam Hussain, who as a Muslim sought baptism with the established churches in the city, was repeatedly rejected. The contact with Christians he eventually established put both him and them in mortal danger. (He was eventually baptised in Jordan, before finding refuge in France.) See his *The Price to Pay: A Muslim Risks All to Follow Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015) pp49-52, p97. Cf. Garrison *op. cit.* p220. The ancient churches’ evangelising potential is suggested by the work of Abouna Zakaria Botros, a Coptic priest who, having been exiled from Egypt in 1999 for preaching to Muslims, now broadcasts to Egypt from abroad: see Garrison pp212-3; cf. note 25, below.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Position Paper 21 *The Extraordinary Form and the Eastern Churches*

13. The spirituality of the Extraordinary Form emphasises a popular form of mysticism, the longing for which finds expression in the Sufi tradition in Islam.<sup>18</sup>
14. The appeal to men specifically is also an area in which the Extraordinary Form and the Oriental churches have something in common with Islam. As noted in another Position Paper,<sup>19</sup> this is connected with the stress on the transcendent, and reverence, dignity, and ritual in worship, as opposed to a stress on spontaneity and the emotions, and related factors.

### Conclusion

15. It would clearly be unfortunate for Catholics to represent the Church to Muslims as lacking both the affinities which Protestantism has with Islam, and the affinities which the Oriental Churches have with it: the net result would be that we have very little common ground with Muslims in terms of religious culture and practice.
16. Christianity's attractiveness to Muslims is, in fact, very real. The positive references to Jesus ('Isa al-Masih') and the Gospel ('Injil') in the Qu'ran,<sup>20</sup> though mysterious and in part erroneous, serve to excite the curiosity of Muslims who today, to a greater extent than in the past, are able to read translations of their own important texts and of the Gospels, and can follow literally the Muhammad's advice concerning a disputed question: 'Ask the followers of the Reminder [the Scriptures] if ye know not?'<sup>21</sup>
17. Not only have a notable number of Muslims sought reception into the Church in Africa,<sup>22</sup> in Germany,<sup>23</sup> and elsewhere, in recent years, but Protestant efforts to evangelise in Muslim counties have not been without their successes, creating a phenomenon of hidden Christians, who do not openly profess their Faith.<sup>24</sup> The actions of Islamic extremists can also prompt Muslims to reassess their commitments, especially for those whose attachment is to a merely formal, or a 'folk', Islam.<sup>25</sup> The 'Great Turning' in Indonesia, following the anti-Communist purge of 1965, provides a vivid precedent for this.<sup>26</sup>
18. The conversion stories of Muslims often include great sacrifice and suffering on their part, and the active role of Providence. After torture, imprisonment, and exile, the Iraqi Muslim convert Joseph Fadelle wrote of his first experience of Latin Chant:

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<sup>18</sup> Sufi tradition records that the ascetic path to mysticism was revealed to the early Sufi, Ibrahim ben Adnam, by a Christian hermit, Father Simeon, in Syria. See A.J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950) p37.

<sup>19</sup> See Positio 26: *The Extraordinary Form and Men*

<sup>20</sup> For example, Qur'an, sura 5:46. Curiously, 'Isa' is not used by Arab Christians, who call Jesus 'Yasu'.

<sup>21</sup> Qur'an sura 21:7 (Pickthall translation) cf. Giorgio Paolucci and Camille Eid: *111 Questions on Islam: Samir Khalil Samir SJ on Islam and the West* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008) p192; Garrison *op. cit.* pp247-8

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/armstrong/muslims-are-converting-to-christianity-in-record-numbers>

<sup>23</sup> *The Independent* 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/muslim-refugees-converting-to-christianity-in-germany-crisis-asylum-seekers-migrants-iran-a7466611.html>

<sup>24</sup> David Garrison *op. cit.* p36 and *passim*.

<sup>25</sup> 'Folk' Islam being one mixed with local pre-Islamic beliefs and practices, as was widespread in Indonesia at the time of the 'Great Turning', see note 24 below.

<sup>26</sup> The killing of Communist sympathisers (together with others caught up in the process, notably ethnic Chinese citizens), and the insistence by the Indonesian state that every citizen register as having one of the officially recognised religions, led to the reception of 1.9m Indonesians into Protestant churches, and over 900,000 into the Catholic Church, between 1965 and 1971. By no means were all former Muslims, but a proportion were. See Garrison *op. cit.* pp56-7.

I was gripped by the sonorities, which were much subtler and more musical than Arabic. Although I did not understand it, I immediately felt an attraction for that language.

As I listened to that slow, profound music, I also found again the prayerful atmosphere that I had experienced in churches in the Near East. This chant touched me deeply; it immersed me in a peace that I could not have imagined a few days before.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Faddelle *op.cit.* p219. His first experience of Mass was at its celebration in Aramaic (p63): 'Despite that, I felt in that assembly an indescribable spiritual atmosphere that warmed my heart and consoled me in my misery.'