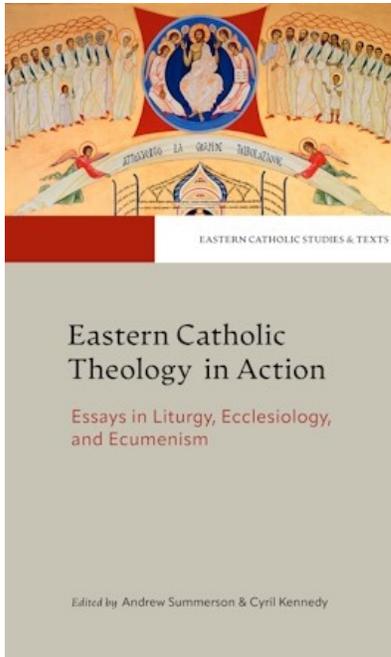


**Andrew J. Summerson & Cyril Kennedy, editors, Yury P. Avvakumov, foreword, *Eastern Catholic Theology in Action: Essays in Liturgy, Ecclesiology and Ecumenism*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press 2024. ISBN 978-0-8132-3900-2. Pages xxxvi, 419.**



*Reviewed by  
the Rev Dr Stephen Sharman*

This excellent collection of essays explores the thesis that there is an ‘Eastern Catholic Theology’ and organises its analysis under the headings of liturgy, ecclesiology and ecumenism. The volume contains nineteen items: a Series Editor’s Foreword and an Introduction which are followed by the essays which comprise the bulk of the book. The essays are divided into five groups, Liturgy, Patristics and Spirituality, Ecclesiology and Ecumenism, History and Ecclesiology and Responses.

The first two items are important for the arguments which the authors of the remaining items develop. They are Yury P. Avvakumov, “Series Editor’s Foreword” (pages xiii – xxi), and Andrew J. Summerson and Cyril Kennedy “Introduction” (pages xxiii – xxxvi). Here we find the editors’ definition of Eastern Catholic Theology which is the foundation of the rest of the book. The editors quote Fr Robert Taft: “the theology of Catholic practitioners with a knowledge and a love for the traditions of the Christian East, a Catholic theology that seeks to breath with both lungs, nourishing a sometimes anemic Catholic thought with oxygen from both sides of the East – West Christian divide” (page xxviii). In other places, we are assured that this approach to theology combines a deep study of the Fathers of the Church with a love for the Liturgy. We are also told that Eastern Catholic theology stands in an uneasy relationship between the Latin West and the Greek and Slavic East. This

reviewer, as a result of his background, is reminded of a very similar debate in the Anglican world. The question was then posed: was there a distinctive Anglican theology or was there a distinctive Anglican method of theology? An Anglican method of theology involves a study of Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church using the divine gift of human wisdom. Liturgy was also an important part of this and they revered the Book of Common Prayer (1549, 1552 and 1662). Anglicanism was seen as a *via media* hovering uneasily between the Latin Roman Catholics and the Continental Protestants. Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) is an example of this part of the discussion. This reviewer includes this comment to remind us that other Christian bodies have similar problems with identity. The similarity of the Eastern Catholic and Anglican theological projects is telling. Later in the volume Fr Andrew Louth adds his voice to this discussion, 'Eastern Catholic Theology: An Eastern Orthodox View' (pages 332 – 347). He concludes that in his opinion having read several Eastern Catholic theologians "I simply think that I am reading an (Eastern) Orthodox theologian and a very good one, too" (page 332). This reviewer is inclined to agree with Fr Andrew's assessment.

It is difficult, as this reviewer knows far too well, to review a collection of essays fairly. There are so many essays to review and only a limited space for a review. In this review, he will follow his usual practice and select some of the essays for comment and encourage the reader to read the whole book. The book is worth a careful reading.

For church historians, two essays are particularly interesting. They are Paul Robert Magocsi, "Eastern Catholics in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1526 – 1918" (pages 231 – 254), and Andriy Mykhaleyko, "The "Invention" of Eastern Catholic Tradition: Andrey Sheptytsky, Josyf Slipyj, and the Formation of Contemporary Ukrainian Greco – Catholic Identity" (pages 255 – 281). The first essay is a competent survey of the history of Eastern Catholics in a predominantly Roman Catholic Latin Rite Empire. The author devotes much of his attention to the Greco – Catholics Christians in the province of Galicia. His references to Armenians in the same Empire is welcome since it adds to our knowledge of the complexity of the ethnic and religious mix of that Empire. The second essay continues that narrative. With Sheptytsky, we are led from the Habsburg Empire through Poland to the early days of the Soviet regime in the Western Ukraine. With Slipyj, we are led into the repression and suffering of Ukrainian Catholics under the Bolshevik yoke. The last essay in the book, Metropolitan Borys Gudziak, "Conclusion: Quo Vadis" – The Direction of Eastern

Catholic Theology: A Contemporary Pastoral Perspective' (pages 349 – 359), introduces us to the miraculous revival of the Ukrainian Greco–Catholic Church in post–communist times.

The ministry of the Church is an important focus for theology in general and for the editors and authors of this volume in particular. Two good essays examine the ministry of deacons and priests in Eastern Catholic Churches. They are B. David Kennedy, 'The Diaconate in the Eastern Catholic Churches in the Light of the Second Vatican Council' (pages 66 – 84) and Basilio Petrà, 'Two Forms of the Catholic Priesthood, Married and Celibate: Toward a Catholic Theology of the Priestly Vocation' (pages 168 – 185). A married priesthood was a characteristic of the Ukrainian Church in Galicia (Catholics) and Bukovina (Orthodox). The Eastern Catholics in Canada faced a serious difficulty. They were accustomed to married priests but the local Latin rite bishops, supported by the Vatican, banned married priests and celibate priests were in short supply. Eventually, the Vatican relented and the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada does have married priests. In his essay, Petrà urges the place of both married and celibate priests in the Catholic Church.

Inevitably, questions of Canon Law become part of the story. Eastern Catholics are governed by two documents, *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* and *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. Both documents are the result of the Second Vatican Council. By contrast, the Canon Law of the Orthodox Church are founded on the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils as they have been interpreted and defined over the centuries. Scholars such as Theodore Balsamon come to mind. (This reviewer is aware that this may be a very simplistic comparison). These essays will be of interest to scholars who study canon law and to those who need to learn more about the administration of Eastern Catholic Churches and the relationship of diocesan bishops with the Bishop of Rome. Among these good essays, we find Stefano Parenti, "*Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 6 and the Recovery of "Ancestral Traditions:" Historical Problems and Ways Forward;" (pages 46 – 65) and George Dimitry Gallaro, "Putting Canons into Practice: The *Liturgical Instruction* of 1996" (pages 186 – 205).

In the section of the volume titled "Patristics and Spirituality" we find three excellent essays. They are Khaled Anatolios, "The Witness of Athanasius and the Call to Christian Unity" (pages 87 – 106), Mark Therrien, "Martyric Particularity and Catholic Universality: Christian Martyrdom in Acts and Origen" (pages 107 – 125),

and Andrew J. Hayes, “The Wellspring of Wonder: St Ephrem’s Contribution to the Practice of Eastern Catholic Theology” (pages 126 – 148). These essays are a tribute to the authors interest in patristics and its place in the writing of theology.

This volume repays a careful study. There is much therein to engage scholars in many fields, patristics, church history, canon law, liturgy and spirituality. The volume is highly commended.

This reviewer concludes with a criticism. We are told that there are twenty – two Eastern Catholic Churches. This volume, however, spends much of its time on the Ukrainian Catholic Church and, except for passing references to Armenians, Maronites and two or three other Eastern Catholic Churches spends little time on the other twenty one Churches. We need to know more about them. A list of these Churches would be helpful. This reviewer suggests that this omission be addressed in a subsequent volume.

*About the reviewer:* Father Stephen Sharman is a priest at St. Nicholas parish in Narol, Manitoba. He received his PhD from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in 2013. The title of his dissertation was *Visions of Light in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*.