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**ON THE USAGE OF THE DIPTYCH IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH. THE  
CORPORATIST DIMENSION OF REPRESENTATION**

The aim of this article is to clarify the connection between intercessory prayer and representation. The hypothesis is that intercessory prayer is the first step toward representation because intercession allows a doer of prayer to bring another person into the centre of one's life. The argument runs as follows. I observe that St. Paul's prayers are the prayers of eucharistic intercession: he thanks God for his beloved ones. Then I observe that St. James sees mutual confession of sins and mutual intercession as the ground of Christian "healing". Then I observe that Dietrich Bonhoeffer conceptualises the Church as constituted by the practice of intercession. Lastly, I observe that Rowan Williams frames intercession as a discipline of bringing another person into the presence of God. Since a doer of prayer brings another person into the presence of God, she thus makes another person the centre of her life. And from this centre, she cannot help but make this person present to others, to "bear witness" to this person in her words and deeds. But intercession succeeds in bringing another person into the centre of a doer of prayer's life because the "token" of intercession is the "name", that part of human beings which is also a part of language, a "word" that can be exchanged and uttered. To make the other present and to become present in the other is to become present in the "names" we have already exchanged – to make another person's "name" the centre of one's life and to become present in one's "name" which is presented to others. To make another thus present is to continually call upon another's "name" – to approach the other not as a thing under our control but as a person who is to act upon us, who is to become present in and through us. To make nothing besides the self-disclosed "name", trust in our self-presentations, the medium of our communication. What used to be called "hallowing the name". Making another present with the entirety of one's conduct, the life of a human person in the new medium of another's body, the eucharistic act of taking another's "body" into one's own body, begins with the intercessory act of taking another's "name" into one's speech. Thus, representation starts with intercession, the discipline of keeping each other in prayers. In the final section, I examine how the so-called *pomyannik* can be a valuable asset for those who aspire to practice intercession as part of a prayer routine.

Keywords: **Christian Church, political representation, ecclesiology, philosophy of language, intercessory prayer, spiritual exercise, imiaslavie, liturgical theology, Rowan Williams.**

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**I.**

To talk about the diptych (Church Slavonic *pomyannik*) is to talk about one of the most notorious objects and practices in the contemporary life of the orthodox church because this is how the church makes money out of the superstitious flock. In the eyes of many, including the churchgoers, the *pomyannik* is emblematic of the corruption of the church. They might say to me, "How interesting it is that the greedy clergy would applaud your advocacy of *pomyannik* because they will financially benefit from it!" Nevertheless, in what follows, I stand by the proposal. That said, I aim to demonstrate that this disreputable *pomyannik* is central to the Christian life. And from this it can be inferred that the church is in trouble if *pomyannik* is but a superstition. If *pomyannik* does not work, the church does not work either.

Let us start with St. Paul. As a rule, Paul's prayers are the prayers of eucharistic intercession, prayers where he thanks God for people in his life: "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers..." (Ephesians 1:16); "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy..." (Philippians 1:3-4); "we pray for you..." (Colossians 1:3); "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers..." (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3); "I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day." (2 Timothy 1:3); "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers..." (Philemon 1:4). St. James goes further and effectively equivocates the network of intercessory prayer with the community of the healed: "confess your sins to each other and pray [εὐχεσθε] for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Centuries later, in Bonhoeffer, we encounter the explicit declaration that the bonds of intercessory prayer are coextensive with the Church as such: "A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses ... [because the face of an enemy] ... is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner." [1956, p. 76].

It stands to reason that intercession is more than simply asking God to effect a certain kind of change in another person's life. Although commonly translated as "petitioning" and "pleading", the original and primary meaning of the New Testament word for "intercession", ἐντροχάνω, is "to be in the presence of someone or something", "to meet" or "to encounter", as well as "to light upon a thing or a person", "to fill up". It is tempting to think about intercessory prayer in these figurative terms of "filling up" or being "filled up with" someone else's presence; or "igniting" another person's life inside one's heart – a figure of speech found in Alexander Pushkin's poem *What's in my name to you?*, which ends with the words "There is a heart in which I'm dwelling" or, as an alternative translation has it, "there is someone, whose heart remains a home for me" (Rus. *est v mire serdtse gde zhivu ya*). Notably, this is precisely how Rowan William once spoke of intercession, noting that it is akin to letting one's heart become a certain kind of place: "You just hold the image and sense of a person or situation in the presence of God as if you want to let the one seep into the other" [2009].

I *hypothesize* that intercession is coextensive with the Church because it is coextensive with love. In the intercession, a doer of prayer brings another person into the presence of God, and if God is the centre of a doer of prayer's life, then this person also becomes a centre of a doer of prayer's life, at least for the time being. And if another person indeed becomes the centre of a doer of prayer's life, it means that a doer of prayer cannot help but make this person present to others in her actions – cannot help but "betray" or "flesh out" something of this person's identity through her conduct, similar to how those in the Book of Revelation who stood with the Lamb on Mount Zion, "had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1 ESV). Figuratively speaking, the "name" is "planted" into the heart as if it were a "seed" and, through the discipline of "name-hallowing", preserving the representative capacity of the "name", out of this seed the life of its referent is "born anew", is re-presented to others in a new body.

## 2.

The emphasis on the "name" is crucial. Our "names" are that part of us which lives in language. And since it is in language, since our "names" are words, it is that part of us that partakes in the exchange of words, which is *exchanged* with others and thus "ends up" in others. We use our own names only to present them to each other, to introduce ourselves into each other's lives. Moreover, "names" are that part of us which we present to one another without loss, that is, I do not lose my name once you come to know it. It thus provides us without a grounding and a vision of non-zero-sum relations. When a new person enters our life, we exchange names. It is thus another's name which is that part of her which stays with us and our name which is the part of us which stays with her. The "name" is the token of our presence in one another. Hence, becoming present in one another must have something to do with our names.

Once the names are exchanged, the degree of our presence in one another is the degree to which we are present in our names. The degree to which we are present in our "names" is the degree to which we present ourselves to one another. Which means that the more present we become in our names, the more the centre of our lives comes to be in one another. Which is of course what love means. To love is not to dissolve in one another but precisely to become ourselves in one another, to live in one another despite our otherness. The "name" is the only appropriate "channel" of such love because, to address another by the name is to approach another as an active interlocutor, as a person who is to *act upon us*. To make a person genuinely present, we have to call upon that person's name – lest we stay too much in control and representation turns into the exercise of our will, instead of

being the cause of our transformation into a “place” where the other finds a new life. If we do not circumvent each other’s names in our relations, if we ask and listen, if we “make room” and “give floor” to one another – then we transform without compromising our otherness, grow into our fuller authenticity, because the transformation we thus undergo is the exercise of our own creative freedom.

In accord with its etymological origin, the Church can be conceptualized as this sheer act of calling one another by our true names, the mutual summoning into a new life, which is the aftermath of the shock of being called by our true name by Christ (think how, in John 11:43, Jesus raises a man from the dead by saying, “Lazarus, come out!”, or, in John 20:16, a woman her teacher Jesus only after he calls her by her name, “Mary!”). Since our names are words, as we become present in our names, as we make our names the centre of our lives, we become increasingly “word-like”, and since the “word” is that which has the center of its being in what is other, in its referent, then to be “word-like” is also to be “Christ-like”. The Church is the community of intercession because to keep one another in prayers is to make one another the centre of our lives – which is exactly what it means to make Christ the centre of the life of the community.

The Church of the Spirit is a number of persons who hallow the same name, “Jesus”, and thus make Jesus’ life present in their midst – which means that they hallow and live in one another’s name also and thus bear witness to the essence of Christ’s life-in-the-other, to God’s solidarization with what is other to God (with a caveat that the otherness between Christians will always falls short of the otherness between humanity and divinity bridged by God’s incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth). If we “hallow” the names, if we diligently invoke and respond to the names we exchange, language becomes sovereign over our lives and we become “word-like”. And to be “word-like” is to be open to the act of the Spirit, the sheer power of metonymy by which the “communication of names” also becomes the “communication of idioms”, that is, the exchange of properties that “come with the name”, exchange of what can be called the “inner form” of the name. That is to say, the “spiritual exercise” par excellence is the “hallowing” of each other’s names, which is simply the exchange of everything that is associated with these names – the burdens, debts, fears, pains and, yes, the mutual confession and exchange of sins. At this point we can offer a prefatory definition of the Church in terms of *imiaslavie* – the Church is the community of persons who pray and live in each other’s “name”. The saints, those who bear witness to Christ, who make something of Christ’s life present in their lives, are simply those whose names will always be hallowed – called upon in the liturgical life of the Church. And since these names are the only tokens of our communication with the saints, then, taking a stab at the philosophy of language, one can venture that if the names do not make their referents meaningfully present *in, to, and through* those who mention, invoke, and summon them, then there can be no Church. Thus, to put it provocatively, “spirituality” divorced from this discipline of conveying God’s and one another’s presence through our conduct does not make very much sense. The Spirit is simply the “wind” that whirls us into Christ’s life by whirling us into the lives of one another, into each other’s prayers and actions. In one word, into love. And the little book called *pomyanyk* may well serve as a helpful fellow traveller along this tempestuous voyage.

### 3.

The so-called “synodic”, “diptych”, or “*pomyannik*”, Greek συνοδικός, is a small commemoration book used to write down the names of the living and the departed, to be read during private prayer or at the church service. Many a believer owns such a booklet in which she records the names of those nearest and dearest to her, following the example of the liturgical diptych with the inscribed names of the leaders of autocephalous churches.

Archimandrite Rafail Karelin speaks about *pomyannik* as an aid in our relation to the dead, the enemies, and all people. First, “Every name is a mouth that begs us to help, especially the names of the departed, these are the soundless cries from the graves”. Second, “The names of enemies in the *pomyannik* are the key to the spiritual treasury, they are the fire that burns envy like straw, drives out malice and vindictiveness as if serpents from the heart, and turns foes into friends”. Third, “When you pray for others, their guardian angels pray for you; therefore the *pomyannik* is one of the sources of spiritual light for you yourself, since your prayer, as light refracted, strengthened by the prayers of the angels, returns to you.” [Karelin n. d., *my translation*]. In the rest of this discussion, I will focus on the second dimension of *pomyannik*’s utility, that of turning “foes into friends”.

As said Dorothy Day, “I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least.” A Christian is commanded to love others, yet she is at the risk of taking this command too

abstractly, at the risk of forgetting that these “others” are the particular persons with whom she is already in relations – her actual loved ones, friends, acquaintances, and even enemies. *Pomyanyk* is there to orient prayers and thoughts toward those persons who tangibly matter to a doer of prayer and those persons to whom she matters. *Pomyanyk* makes love concrete.

This *pomyannik* does because it aids a doer of prayer to diligently bring the names of the persons she knows into the centre of her life – into the moments when she stands before God. All she has of them are their names – but it is more than enough – for God has the rest of them and the Spirit will communicate it to those who utter their names. We can rest assured of our real presence in one another only because we can rest assured that, in language, in God’s eternal memory, precisely the part of us which is exchanged with another, our “names”. As wrote W. H. Auden,

*“Time that is intolerant  
Of the brave and innocent,  
And indifferent in a week  
To a beautiful physique,  
Worships language and forgives  
Everyone by whom it lives;” [Auden 2009, p. 90].*

What *pomyannik* can do for a doer of prayer is to be a organize steady discipline of bringing the names of her significant others into the light of God’s presence, in the hope that God will teach her to see even her enemies as God sees them, in the hope that God will transform her into a kind of place, where those she loves the least are apprehended and accepted as God’s beloved children, a kind of place where they enter their rest. To conclude, let me quote another verse from another very famous poem by W. H. Auden which conveys this sense of turning one’s life into a resting place where the other, despite all imperfection, is received precisely as other:

*“But in my arms till break of day  
Let the living creature lie,  
Mortal, guilty, but to me  
The entirely beautiful.” [Auden 2009, p. 53].*

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### **ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ДИПТИХА В ПРАВОСЛАВНІЙ ЦЕРКВІ. КОРПОРАТИВНИЙ АСПЕКТ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЇ**

Метою цієї статті є з'ясування зв'язку між молитовним заступництвом і репрезентацією. Гіпотеза полягає в тому, що молитовне заступництво є першим кроком до репрезентації, оскільки заступництво дозволяє тому, хто молиться, поставити іншу людину в центр свого життя. Аргумент будуватиметься наступним чином. Я зауважую, що молитви святого Павла є євхаристійним заступництвом: він дякує Богові за своїх улюблених. Потім зауважую, що святий Яків бачить взаємне сповідання гріхів і взаємне заступництво як основу християнського "зцілення". Далі я звертаю увагу, що Дітріх Бонхеффер концептуалізує Церкву як таку, що заснована на практиці заступництва. Нарешті, я зауважую, що Роуен Вільямс визначає заступництво як дисципліну приведення іншої особи в присутність Бога.

Оскільки той, хто молиться, приводить іншу людину в присутність Бога, він таким чином робить цю людину центром свого життя. І, з цього центру, він неминуче змушений представляти цю людину іншим, “свідчити” про неї у своїх словах і вчинках. Але заступництвом вдається помістити іншу людину в центр життя того, хто молиться, тому що “символом” заступництва є “ім'я” – частина людської істоти, що також є частиною мови, “слово”, яке можна передавати й вимовляти. Зробити іншого присутнім і стати присутнім в іншому – це означає бути присутнім у “іменах”, якими ми вже обмінялися, – зробити “ім'я” іншої людини центром свого життя і стати присутнім у власному “імені”, яке передається іншим. Щоб зробити іншого присутнім таким чином, треба постійно звертатися до “імені” іншого – підходити до іншого не як до предмета під нашим контролем, а як до особи, яка повинна діяти на нас, стати присутньою в нас і через нас. Не використовувати нічого, крім саморозкритого “імені”, довіри до нашого самопрезентування як засобу спілкування. Те, що колись називалося “освяченням імені”. Зробити іншого присутнім у всій своїй поведінці, життя людської особи в новому середовищі іншого тіла, евхаристійний акт прийняття “тіла” іншого у власне тіло, починається з акту заступництва, коли приймається “ім'я” іншого у свою промову. Таким чином, репрезентація починається з заступництва, дисципліни зберігати один одного в молитвах. У заключному розділі я досліджую, як так званий пом'яник може стати цінним інструментом для тих, хто прагне практикувати заступництво як частину молитовної рутини.

**Ключові слова:** християнська церква, політична репрезентація, еклезіологія, філософія мови, заступницька молитва, духовна вправа, імяслав'я, літургійна теологія, Роуен Вільямс.

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