

View from Northeast. Reims Cathedral, 1211—85.

## REFORM OF THE REFORM?

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Reform of the Liturgical Reform introduced into the Western Church during the 1950's and 1960's was the subject of a paper delivered by my friend Rev. Brian Harrison at Colorado Springs in 1995. It was that paper which moved Father Joseph Fessio S.J. to launch the *Adoremus* movement to work towards such a reform.

Having been asked by Father Harrison to respond to his paper, the first question that presents itself is: "How realistic should one be?" It is always possible to indulge personal preferences about an "ideal" liturgy, but, apart from the unlikelihood of these preferences being put into practice, any such scheme would constitute an arbitrary and eclectic exercise of the very sort that Archbishop Bugnini's Consilium permitted itself when producing the existing set of liturgical options. If that conception of liturgical "reform" is in large part a source of the problems we face, more of the same theorizing is not only futile in practice but objectionable in principle.

At the other end of the pragmatic spectrum, there stands the possibility of suggesting a few modest improvements to the 1969 Roman Missal. These would be so small and piecemeal as to present no unified vision, and would be equally open to the charge of subjectivism and eclecticism, which must somehow be avoided if any "Reform of the Reform" is to be intellectually coherent, or to gain acceptance on a wide scale.

I think the most appropriate way into the subject is to attempt to identify the fundamental problem, or *mentality* that has created the present liturgical malaise. To do that, one must begin historically by attempting to trace the motor forces in liturgical change.

## I. THE "MODERN" MENTALITY AND THE SEARCH FOR AN IDEAL LITURGY

The received histories of the Liturgical Movement sometimes deal with the neo-Gallican experiments of the eighteenth century, but more generally begin the story with Dom Guéranger and the Abbey of Solesmes from the 1830's, continue to Dom Lambert Beauduin at the Abbey of Mont Cesar prior to the Great War, and conclude with Odo Casel, Pius Parsch and the other names familiar in liturgically conscious circles during the 1950's.

While not attempting a history of the Liturgical Movement, it is perhaps true to summarize the movement's course by saying that prior to Vatican II, it passed through three "moments" or phases. The **first**, typified by Guéranger, stemmed from the realization that the liturgy was no longer being celebrated perfectly anywhere, and was devoted to creating ideal conditions in which it could be lived out. The **second**, typified by Beauduin, stemmed from the realization that the liturgy was not being celebrated perfectly by the mass of the faithful, and was devoted to promoting the liturgical life as far as possible in the setting of a parish. The **third**, in the period after the Second World War, with increased experimentation in France and elsewhere, and the holding of International Liturgical Congresses annually from 1950, stemmed from the realization that it was impossible to involve the mass of the faithful in the existing liturgy, in a full and equal way. Attention was therefore devoted to changing that liturgy in the hope of procuring the perfect participation of everyone. We note here the beginnings of a Copernican revolution: *initially the idea is to make modern life revolve around the liturgy, but as the movement develops there is an increasing tendency to make the liturgy revolve around modern life.* After the Second Vatican Council, the latter tendency clearly had the upper hand, and the post-conciliar Missal and Office marked a definite break with historic forms in an attempt to make the Church's worship simpler, easier and more immediately comprehensible to *homo modernus*, be he an uninformed Catholic, a non-Catholic, or a non-Christian.

### Jansenist Genealogy

If the liturgical standard of the immediate pre-conciliar period was no worse, and in fact, thanks to the Liturgical Movement, a good deal better than it had been for much of the Church's history, why was a change felt to be desirable in the second half of the twentieth century? Increasing popular education and the democratic or egalitarian spirit of the age may be part of the answer, as these would give rise to an expectation of a heightened degree of universal and equal "involvement" in the liturgy. I think, however, that a more fundamental factor was the increasing awareness in western society of the relativities of human cultures across time.

If a wrestling with historical relativity is the root of the matter, then the spirit of the recent liturgical revolution may be grasped by beginning not with the revivalist ultramontane traditionalism of Dom Guéranger, but with the revolution, part antiquarian, part rationalist, part historicist, that was attempted at the beginning of the contemporary period by the Jansenist party. The most formal move in this direction occurred at the diocesan Synod of Pistoia in Tuscany, convened by Scipio de Ricci, Bishop of Pistoia and Prato in 1786 and which was condemned by the Holy See for the first time in 1794, and for the last in 1947. With the benefit of hindsight, Pistoia can be seen as the beginning of the current Catholic debate on the cultural adaptation of the liturgical *lex orandi*, and on its subtle but profound connection with the *lex credendi*. The Holy See's *volte face* in its response to the kind of adaptation the Synod of Pistoia proposed, also serves to demonstrate how far the Papacy has been prepared to reverse its historico-cultural judgments on liturgical matters in the past. *This in turn should provide supporters of the traditional liturgy with a helpful precedent to cite when the time comes for the Holy See to reform its own recent reform.*

It can hardly be denied that the spirit which hovered over Archbishop Bugnini's Consilium following Vatican II, was more akin to the spirit of Scipio de Ricci and his synod, than to that of Prosper Guéranger and his abbey. In the bull *Auctorem Fidei* of 1794, Pius VI censured as "heretical" the Synod of Pistoia's assertion that "*in recent centuries a general obscuring has occurred regarding truths of great importance relating to religion.*" It is true that the doctrinal assertions of the Synod which contradict the Church's *lex credendi* were the principle object of this condemnation; but the Synod's implicit assertion that the Church's *lex orandi* had also been defective and contrary to the will of God for many centuries would certainly have been held by Pius VI to be, if not heretical, then at least close to it; *haeresi proxima* as the traditional phrase has it.

### **Modern Rationalist Mentality**

The age of Rationalism, standing as it does between a pre-Modern Christendom and the post-Modern present, was an inadequate first attempt to respond to the awakening of the historical sense. With the intensification of historical scholarship from the end of the seventeenth century, (one thinks of the efforts of Jean Mabillon and the Benedictine Maurists, the Jesuit Bollandists, the great Theatine liturgist St. Giuseppe Maria Tommasi, and a philosopher of law and literature such as Gianbattista Vico) the consciousness of change across time, both in the Church and in the general culture, was borne in upon the thinking of the educated classes. (A telltale sign of this shift is the end of the artistic practice of depicting historical characters in contemporary dress). This growing awareness of historical change poses a crisis of confidence in existing practice, whether secular or sacred. What had been predominantly perceived as necessary and timeless, comes to be predominantly perceived as contingent and the product of shifting fashion.

In the "Post-Modern" or the "Radically Orthodox" perspective, we may be inclined to overcome such a crisis of sensibility by frankly acknowledging the historical relativity of much of human culture, and continuing nonetheless to use traditional forms for good reasons of our own, which are impervious to historicist attack. The "Modern" or rationalist mentality, on the other hand, does not react in that way. Its first response to the crisis of historical relativity is an attempt to "dig deeper" beneath existing practice and to "expose" an ideal order which is as "true" and "timeless" as the older forms had been spontaneously assumed to be by pre-critical minds. Deism in religion and "enlightened" revolution of the French kind were both, at the intellectual level, attempts to carry out this enterprise. *Belief in a self-evident order which has been overlaid by historical accretions, but which will satisfy and convince everyone, except the culpably perverse, if only it can be "restored," is the foundation of the Modern approach.*

Although the Jansenist programs of reform in Austria, Italy and elsewhere were ostensibly Christian and patristic in inspiration, the eighteenth century dawn of the Modern spirit definitely influenced the Pistoian call for a change that would be not only the revival of an ideal patristic past, but also the production of a more logical, simple and rational Church. The Pistoians' rejection of post-patristic developments in the forms of Catholic life, was predicated upon the belief that the Christianity of the patristic era was the original, true and normative Christianity, we might almost say the "rational reform" of Christianity, and that it had a prescriptive right to overturn subsequent developments deemed to represent a declension from the primitive ideal. This is really a kind of "patristical rationalism," less radical than the "scriptural rationalism" of the sixteenth century reformers, but based, like it, on the assumption that the Church has been in error for centuries.

### **Search for Liturgical Archetype**

The tendencies inherent in this desire to "restore" a lost rational archetype by means of a sweeping "reform" are analogous whether the instincts be applied in civil legisla-

tion (like that of the Enlightened despots and the French revolutionaries) or in matters ecclesiastical or liturgical (as in the case of Scipio de Ricci or Archbishop Bugnini's Consilium).

*First, the reform is implicitly totalitarian.* If there is one and only one rational or authentic way of doing things, then there is no room for tolerance of any other way of behaving. Tradition, whether in Church or State, will have to submit to sharp and compulsory correction. In liturgical matters, this means that if one can deduce from first principles a "correct" way to celebrate Mass, as the tone of the "General Instruction to the Roman Missal" of 1969 implies, then there is logically no room in the Church for a family of different Mass rites. The Eastern Rites, as well as any of the "unreformed" Western Rites, must be viewed as at best superfluous, or at worst an obstacle to truth. Rights to worship based in long-standing custom are abolished by this rationalist totalitarianism. This is the direct antithesis to the reform of 1570, which aimed to abolish recent innovations and to leave long-standing custom untouched.

*Second, the reform minimizes or denies the worth of historical developments.* If one is "digging deeper" to reach the bedrock of first principles, then the most primitive form of all is closest to Nature, and is thus the most desirable. Historical development can only be seen as the corrupting or overlaying of a pristine original. This mentality rejects the actual course of the development of the liturgy, as Protestantism rejects the actual course of the development of doctrine. Both indulge in an anachronistic and logically incoherent rifling of the resources of the historic mainstream of Christianity, upon which they are parasitic.

Since precise and detailed texts of the liturgy on the Ante-Nicene period are rare, it is to the fourth and following centuries that the more pronouncedly antiquarian kind of reformer must look for his primitive model. So far as the detail of the Roman Rite is concerned, the form recorded in the earliest *Ordines Romani*, giving the practice of the seventh and eighth centuries, before the Carolingian empire adopted and adapted the Roman Rite, must serve as the antiquarian's guide. The more distinctly rationalist reformer, on the other hand, will go even further back and base himself on St Justin martyr's description of the Eucharist in the second century, the earliest we have. From this he will create an "ideal Mass" which has never actually existed, but which will simultaneously derive from and prescind from, all the traditional historic rites of Christendom. *The Neo-Roman Missal of 1969 is the joint production of these two mentalities, antiquarian and rationalist, with the rationalist greatly predominating.*

The extrinsic difference between the Catholic liturgy in the Greco-Roman period on one hand, and in the post-classical period on the other, is that even in the Latin part of Europe, the liturgy ceases to be celebrated in the vernacular speech, since the daily language of the people has developed. Thus the antiquarian possibly, and the rationalist certainly, will conclude, like the Pistoians, that the restoration of a vernacular liturgy is one essential element in a re-establishment of a lost authentic relation between worshippers and the cultic forms in which their worship is expressed.

The rationalist also values the conveying of information above the symbolic, ritual expression that is so fundamental to worship of the divine Mystery. He will therefore tend to shift the balance in the liturgy, and to move it towards a didacticism, in which a relentless stream of informative words takes precedence over sacramental action, ritual singing, silence or ceremonial movement. The making present of a saving mystery, at a variety of levels and in diverse ways, will tend to be replaced by the monolinear delivery of a lecture. To someone imbued with this mentality, a non-vernacular ritual language is simply an absurdity.

## **Pistoia Revisited**

Let us then briefly recall the mixed rationalism and antiquarianism of the Pistoian project, noting the similarities between the changes in theology and practice which that

Synod wished to make, and those which have occurred *de facto* since Vatican II. These include the notions:

- that the Church is wholly ministerial and that therefore the clergy act as delegates of the laity and derive their authority from them;
- that the Pope is likewise a representative of the Church deriving authority from it and not from Christ via St. Peter;
- that the Church should not be governed by binding laws but by moral suasion only;
- that bishops need not obey the Pope but can govern their particular churches and alter traditional discipline as they like;
- that priests have equal doctrinal authority with bishops;
- that local synods can sit in judgment on Roman decrees;
- that the doctrinal decisions made in the past by Rome are not binding on local churches;
- that Masses said by a priest with only a server in attendance are somehow defective;
- that the doctrine of transubstantiation should not be insisted upon;
- that Masses cannot be offered for particular intentions;
- that side altars should be removed;
- that the liturgy should be celebrated aloud and in the vernacular;
- that frequent use of the sacrament of penance should be done away with and that venial sins should not be confessed;
- that indulgences are of no benefit to us upon arrival in the next world and that, in addition, they cannot be offered up for the dead;
- that the minor orders should be abolished and that lay people should take part in conducting public worship as readers, acolytes and so forth;
- that the Church should not regulate marriage law but should accept whatever civil society decrees on the matter;
- that devotion to the Sacred Heart should be done away with;
- that conventional popular devotions should be discouraged;
- that books condemned by the Holy Office should nonetheless be publicized by parish priests;
- that the use of devotional statues and icons should be downplayed;
- that holy days of obligation ought to be reduced or transferred to Sundays;
- and finally that all the traditional forms of religious life ought to be abolished except for the occasional monastery of which the inmates would all be laymen except for a few priests who would concelebrate at a single daily Mass.

**Are these the proposals of the 1780s or the 1980s? They are both.**

Striking as these parallels are, it is even more important to note that the Synod was praised by its supporters as being “perhaps the most regular which has been held for ten or twelve centuries,” that is, since the age of St. Gregory the Great. Taking the patristic Church as normative, the Pistoians, carried along by a spirit of revolutionary pedanticism, outlined an impossible scheme for recreating it. It was a hankering to create a modern analogue of that same patristic Church, which haunted the imagination of many in the reform party in the mid-twentieth century, and which inspired them with the same revolutionary zeal.

## II. THE CHANGE IN CURIAL POLICY

The Pistoian line of argument was solemnly rejected by the Holy See. From Pius VI in the bull *Auctorem Fidei* of 1794, to Pius XII in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of 1947, the papacy explicitly condemned the Synod by name, and also its contemporary emulators, as promoting a false “liturgical antiquarianism.” The Synod had asserted it to be

“against apostolic practice and the counsels of God unless easier ways are provided for the people to join their voice with the voice of the whole Church.” Article 66 of *Auctorem Fidei* condemns this proposition, understood as proposing the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy, as “false, temerarious, disruptive of the order laid down for the celebration of the mysteries, and easily productive of numerous evils.” It is the unhappy privilege of those living in the late-twentieth century to see how prescient that condemnation was! *Mediator Dei* reiterated “the serious reasons the Church has for firmly maintaining the unconditional obligation on the celebrant to use the Latin tongue.” In 1956, at the International Liturgical Conference held at Assisi, the Holy See maintained its warnings against a vernacular liturgy, though the rites for the sacraments were being vernacularized with Roman authority by that time in countries where the more advanced liturgical thinking prevailed. Even as late as 1962, in the encyclical *Veterum Sapientia*, John XXIII said “let no innovator dare to write against the use of Latin in the sacred rites . . . nor let them in their folly attempt to minimize the will of the Apostolic See in this matter.”

### **Annibale Bugnini: Neo-Pistoian Reformer**

From 1948 however, the year after *Mediator Dei* appeared, the Roman line had begun to change. In that year a Commission for Liturgical Reform was established in the Roman Curia, of which the most influential members seem to have been Augustin Bea S.J., confessor to Pius XII, and Annibale Bugnini, the secretary of the Commission, who was to remain the central bureaucratic figure in Roman liturgical reform until his dismissal by Paul VI in 1975. The sentiments of *Auctorem Fidei* are not those of this extremely influential figure, for Bugnini shared Scipio de Ricci's conviction that Catholic worship had been in need of reform for many centuries, and shared also in the complacent conviction that he was just the man needed to reform it.

When in 1969 Hubert Jedin, the distinguished historian of the Council of Trent, criticized the effects of the post-conciliar liturgical changes in an article in the *Osservatore Romano*, and in particular the introduction of the vernacular as sacrificing an important bond of unity in the western Church, Archbishop Bugnini replied saying:

As a good historian who knows how to weigh both sides and reach a balanced judgment, why did you not mention the millions and hundreds of millions of the faithful who have at *last achieved worship in spirit and in truth?* [my italics]. Who can at last pray to God in their own languages and not in meaningless sounds, and are happy that henceforth they know what they are saying? Are they not 'the Church'?

As for the 'bond of unity': Do you believe the Church has no other ways of securing unity? Do you believe there is a deep and heartfelt unity amid lack of understanding, ignorance, and the 'dark of night' of a worship that lacks a face and light, at least for those out in the nave? Do you not think that a priestly pastor must seek and foster the unity of his flock—and thereby of the universal flock—through a living faith that is fed by the rites and finds expression in song, in communion of minds, in love that animates the Eucharist, in conscious participation, and in entrance into the mystery? Unity of language is superficial and fictitious; the other kind of unity is vital and profound . . . Here in the Consilium we are not working for museums and archives, but for the spiritual life of the people of God. . . . The present renewal of the Church is serious, solid, thoroughgoing, and *safe* [Bugnini's italics] even if it also brings suffering and opposition . . . Do you not think, Professor, that historians too ought to search historical events and discover signs of God in them?

The “ignorance and 'dark night' of worship” to which the Archbishop refers is reminiscent of the Synod of Pistoia's belief in a centuries old “general obscuring of truths of great moment relating to religion.” Since Archbishop Bugnini's argument is based on the existence of a non-vernacular liturgy, we must assume that his dark night has reigned from at least the eighth century, if not the sixth; just the same point identified by the Synod of Pistoia's supporters as the beginning of the decadence of the Church.

In his invaluable work *La Riforma Liturgica 1948-1975*, published in 1983, and in English translation in 1990, Archbishop Bugnini makes it plain repeatedly that his

words to Professor Jedin are not a misrepresentation of his habitual state of mind. A very negative and dismissive evaluation of the liturgical practice of the Catholic Church, at least in the Latin rites, ever since the Carolingian period, is a strikingly persistent part of his mentality. The assumption underlying the work of the Consilium over which Archbishop Bugnini presided is distinctly parallel to that of the Pistoian reformers. The assumption is that the Church has been off course for centuries, since the end of the patristic age, and that it is now the task of the Consilium to sweep away whatever it deems appropriate from the "accretions" of the past, in order to implement its own ideas as to what Catholic worship should be. Antiquity can be appealed to where possible, but rationalist clarity or "pastoral need" must be invoked whenever antiquity stands in the way; thus, on one ground or the other, the will of the Consilium can be invoked against it.

### Symbolic Repudiation of Tradition

The two flaws of the rationalist mentality noted earlier, namely its totalitarian and its anti-traditional tendencies, were much in evidence in the Consilium's "reform." First, the implication was drawn that all other Catholic rites, from Milanese to Malabarese, were to undergo a rationalization based on the neo-Roman model. This has consequently been done, with results that Rome has regretted, at least in the South Indian case. Second, no tolerance was shown to those who believed in the merits of the liturgical development that had occurred down the centuries. Such people were seen rather as obscurantists who failed to appreciate what the revolution was trying to achieve. It was entirely in keeping with this spirit that the historic Roman Rite of Mass was put under a *de facto* if not a *de jure* ban between 1974 and 1984, and that some people were even driven by the papacy out of full communion with the Church in pursuance of the Consilium's policies.

We should note in passing that like all revolutions, this one has its unconsciously humorous side. As the poet puts it: "Would that God the gift might gi' us, to see ourselves as others see us." On July 3rd 1999 Cardinal Medina Estevez, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, signed a protocol beginning with the splendid assertion that "after the Liturgical Restoration mandated by the Second Vatican Council, a certain group of the Catholic faithful *appeared*, (who were) strongly attached to preceding forms of the Roman Liturgical tradition." This is like saying that "after England turned Protestant, a group of Englishmen appeared who were strongly attached to the Old Religion." In both cases it is not the appearance of the group in question that is the novelty calling for comment, but rather the disappearance of traditional loyalties on the part of everyone else!

A policy of an *aggiornamento* or updating of the Church, undertaken in the modern context, logically implies that the secularized culture of a decayed western Christendom shall provide the standard by which the Church is to be updated. It was in this context that the reconstruction of the historic liturgy rapidly became a *damnatio memoriae* of the Church's practice, at least since the time of Charlemagne, when the definitive liturgical forms of that same western Christendom emerged.

The symbolic repudiation of the tradition of Christendom, as Cardinal Ratzinger has stated, has contributed very greatly to an undermining of confidence in the Church in general. While it may be possible *logically* to believe in a Church which is an infallible guide in doctrines of faith and morals but which, for most of the time since its foundation, has promoted, in Archbishop Bugnini's striking phrase, "lack of understanding, ignorance and dark night" in the worship of God, it is not possible *psychologically* to carry out a mental juggling act of this sort for very long, or on a scale that involves any great number of people. If the *lex orandi* could be so profoundly misguided for so many centuries, what confidence can be placed in the *lex credendi* upheld through those long centuries by the same misguided papacy and ecclesiastical authorities? Here again the

adage *lex orandi, lex credendi* rules, but with a new and destructive twist. Either the *damnatio memoriae* of the traditional liturgy must be clearly and publicly revoked, or confidence in the Church's authority will never be recovered.

If this is indeed how matters stand, what is to be done?

### III. RESTORING RESPECT FOR THE CHURCH'S TRADITIONAL PRACTICE

If the crisis is one of confidence in the Church and its tradition, then the only way out of the crisis is via a clear, modern reaffirmation of tradition, vindicating the historic Roman *lex orandi* as the Catechism of the Catholic Church has vindicated the historic *lex credendi*. We must attempt a modern presentation of the historic Roman Rite, analogous to the Catechism's modern presentation of the historic Catholic Faith. We must negate the negations and overcome the discontinuities of the post-conciliar period, always remembering, however, that the Faith is one, while liturgies are diverse. The Catechism is for Coptic and Greek Catholics as much as for Westerners, while the liturgical families of the Catholic Church are available at choice to any Catholic who feels particularly drawn to them.

Does such a reaffirmation mean an immobile Traditionalism? Are we to press for the abolition of the 1969 regime and a universal return to the state of liturgical affairs as they stood in 1962? Not at all. The very idea that the Holy See would, or even effectively could, abolish the post-conciliar changes is absurd. In that sense, a "Reform of the Reform" is impossible. One cannot in fact expect any of the permissions, variations, exceptions, delegations or modifications made to the historic Roman Rite in order to transform it into the new set of liturgical options, or any of the ceremonial developments that have accompanied these changes, such as the introduction of communion in the hand and of female altar servers, to be reversed. If one were attempting this impossible task of compulsorily changing the existing official *Novus Ordo*, I would support a reform of the kind which has already been outlined in the *Adoremus Bulletin*.

#### 1962 Missal: Benchmark for Liturgical Reform

In fact, however, I believe Father Harrison is right when he envisages the real way forward as entailing a new *parallel* implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* which would be available to all who wished to use it. His proposal is that "an alternative for implementing the Vatican II Constitution on the Liturgy" should be gradually elaborated and then "presented to the Holy See, possibly some time during the next pontificate, with the request that it be approved for use throughout the Church—perhaps after a period of local use *ad experimentum*—as an alternative implementation of Vatican Council II, having *equal status and recognition* [his italics] with the rite introduced by Paul VI." If therefore any "Reform of the Reform" can only entail the establishment of yet another parallel rite for the celebration of the Eucharist, is the task worth undertaking? To such a proceeding there are many objections. The Holy See and the bishops are unlikely to be favorable. Will not confusion be compounded? Can the eclectic and subjective character of the 1969 reforms be avoided the second time around?

Despite the obstacles and difficulties, I believe the attempt is worth making, provided that the new reform is founded upon a careful respect for the historic Roman Rite.

When they voted for the conciliar decree on the liturgy, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council never imagined that they were launching a process whereby the Mass rite that most of them had known all their lives would disappear. They thought, as they declared in their decree on the Oriental Churches, that the various rites were of equal dignity and that "the Catholic Church wishes the traditions of each particular church or rite to remain whole and entire." In decreeing a reform of the Roman Rite, the Council Fathers did not authorize the introduction of alternatives to the Roman Canon as the sole eucharistic prayer; yet many have been introduced. The Council Fathers did

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not authorize the destruction of the immemorial Roman Lectionary; yet it was destroyed. The Council Fathers did not authorize a recasting of the annual cycle of Sundays or any change to the very ancient Sunday collects; yet both these changes were made. The Council Fathers did not authorize a redistribution of saint days; yet that is what was undertaken. The Council Fathers did not authorize the abandonment or tendentious alteration of over eighty percent of the orations (Collects, Secrets and Postcommunions) throughout the Missal; yet this momentous step was taken. The truth is that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council assumed that the great Roman Rite as known to history would be maintained in all its essentials and would continue to be the principle form for the celebration of the Catholic Eucharist. In this they were deceived. The historic Roman Rite was suppressed *de facto*. The reform as implemented is not the reform the Council authorized. *Adoremus* is therefore attempting to be genuinely loyal to the Fathers' intentions when it takes their document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as the fundamental reference point for any scheme of reform.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* presupposes that the Missal of 1962 is the benchmark from which any change in the Roman rite will commence. After all, the Latin majority of the bishops at the Council, and of Catholics around the world, were using the ancient rite in its 1962 edition to celebrate Mass each morning during the years in which the Council met. Proposals based on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* must therefore be proposals to make variations in that Missal, with everything in it remaining in force unless otherwise specified. I presuppose that the reader is familiar with the traditional Missal, and hence I do not attempt to explain its structure or terminology in the course of this article. My aim is merely to take up the discussion begun by Father Harrison, and to present what I suggest is a legitimate implementation of the conciliar decree of 1963.

There are three principal elements in the Second Vatican Council's proposal regarding the rite of Mass. They are given in articles 50, 51 and 54, which deal respectively with the Ordinary, the Lectionary and the use of the vernacular. Let us deal with them in turn.

#### IV. THE ORDINARY

*Article 50*, in Flannery's translation, reads:

The rite of Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as well as the connection between them, may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved.

For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance. Parts which with the passage of time came to be duplicated, or were added with little advantage, are to be omitted. Other parts which suffered loss through the accidents of history are to be restored to the vigor they had in the days of the Holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary.

##### First Part

Speaking as a priest who has celebrated Mass in a parish church almost daily in the traditional Roman rite since 1989, and the ceremonies of Holy Week since 1993, much of this paragraph seems coy and vague in meaning. First, the "intrinsic nature and purpose" of the parts of the rite become apparent to worshippers insofar as the latter have osmotically absorbed Catholic tradition, or insofar as somebody now takes the trouble to instruct them. Conversely, without instruction, the rites' "intrinsic nature and purpose" can never be made clearly manifest, no matter how much one tinkers with the traditional forms. An uninstructed stranger wandering into a Latin Mass according to the Missal of 1969 is no more spontaneously aware of the meaning of the parts of the Mass than the same uninstructed stranger would be on wandering into a celebration according to the Missal of 1962.

Second, the meaning of a desire to make "the connection between" the several parts of the Mass more manifest is, I am afraid, so unmanifest to me that I cannot see its con-

nection with the historic Roman Rite. Has the connection been insufficiently clear for centuries? Why so, to whom, and in what respect? And how is this connection more clear in a Latin celebration of the rite of 1969? What can the article mean? What did the Council Fathers think it meant? Was it ever explained to them, or is the expression “the connection between them” just a piece of woolly drafting which, intentionally or not, invites post-conciliar committees to indulge in indefinite and unlimited experimentation?

Third, as for “devout and active participation by the faithful” in a wholly Latin liturgy (for it is a revision of the *rite* not the *language* that is under discussion in this article, as distinct from article 54) it seems that such participation had already been encouraged as fully as possible, at least from 1903 on. St. Pius X in his *motu proprio* of that year had officially encouraged the movement towards the singing of the appropriate parts of the Ordinary by the whole congregation. The Instruction on Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy of September 3rd, 1958, issued one would assume with the approval of Pius XII, forms part of the rubrics of the 1962 Missal (*vide No.272*). It encourages and regulates both the fullest possible congregational participation in sung Masses, and also the dialogue Low Mass in its various forms. Once again, it is hard to see how the laity participate more fully in a wholly Latin celebration in the new rite of 1969, than they do when celebrating the historic rite of the City, in the ways encouraged by the Instruction of 1958.

It is interesting to note that the 1958 Instruction also provides (perhaps unwisely) for the simultaneous public proclamation, at Low Mass, of the Epistle and Gospel in the vernacular by a cleric or layman, while the celebrant is reading these texts quietly at the altar. In fact the Instruction even provides (quite unwisely I think) for that debatable creature the “liturgical commentator,” who gives a commentary on events as Mass progresses. He can even talk during the first half of the Canon, and is only obliged to hold his tongue from the consecration to the Our Father!

This being the situation from 1958 onwards, one is forced to ask how *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the new rite in Latin improve on such a state of affairs? What fuller manifestation of the “nature and purpose” of the rites, what fuller manifestation of the “connection between” them, what more “devout and active participation” now takes place in celebrations of the modern Roman Rite in Latin as distinct from the historic Roman Rite in the same language? Has the first half of article 50 actually been implemented by the official post-conciliar changes? Is it at all clear how it *could* ever have been implemented?

It has been suggested that article 50's meaning would be sufficiently grasped and expressed by celebrating the Mass of the Catechumens, or Liturgy of the Word, from the chair and from a lectern or place of reading distant from the altar, as has always happened in pontifical and abbatial Masses, and indeed in High Masses celebrated by a priest, so far as the Epistle and Gospel are concerned. This practice was in fact adopted from January 1965, in accordance with a revision of the rubrics. In Masses with a large congregation, as on Sundays or great feasts, there would be no harm in optionally extending this practice from High Mass to Low Mass. Even so, there seems little point in the change, unless the parts of the Mass in question are also put into the vernacular. At Low Mass on a weekday morning, on the other hand, when the style of celebration is more likely to be quiet and meditative, and a dialogue Mass is perhaps not being used, there seems no point in disturbing the unity and tranquillity of the ritual by turning to read texts which the people can follow in their bilingual Missals if they want to, and which most of them cannot understand in Latin anyway, irrespective of where the reader is standing. At Masses with only a server in attendance, reading the Scriptures from a lectern would be even more redundant. It is suggested that the privileged and central location of the altar as the place of sacrifice would be highlighted by proclaiming the readings at a distance from it, but the traditional rite congregations of which I have experience already possess a strong sense of the altar as the place of sacrifice, which would not be heightened in their minds if the first part of the Mass were read at the chair. Their sensibility does not operate in such narrowly spatial terms.

## Second Part

The second part of article 50 says “the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance,” and that things which have been “duplicated” or “added with little advantage” are to be omitted. If one is to avoid subjectivism and eclecticism at this point, one must not attempt to produce a personal list of elements one would like to retain or to change. Everybody will have his own personal preferences, and these afford no common or reliable basis for a reform. A new reform should, as I have said above, be “founded upon a careful respect for the historic Roman Rite,” and therefore any simplification of the Roman Rite of Mass must respect the clear distinction between what I will call First Order and Second Order elements in it.

Speaking globally and not altogether precisely, one can say that the First Order elements are Greco-Roman in origin, classical in period, public in nature, primary in structural importance, and (excepting the Canon and *Libera nos*) sung at High Mass, while the Second Order elements are the reverse of all these qualities: Frankish in origin, mediaeval in period, private in nature, secondary in structural importance, and said in a low voice. This distinction is perfectly clear, and quite fundamental to any legitimate attempt at reforming the Roman Rite, as distinct from destroying it.

Applying these distinctions to a sung Sunday Mass celebrated by a priest will clarify the matter:

### First Order Elements

*The words and chant of the:*

Introit  
 Kyrie  
 Gloria  
 Collect  
 Epistle  
 Gradual Psalm  
 Alleluia  
 Gospel  
 Creed  
 Oremus  
 Offertory Antiphon  
 Secret  
 Preface & Sanctus  
 Canon  
 Our Father  
*Libera Nos*  
*Pax*  
*Agnus Dei*  
 Communion Antiphon  
 Postcommunion  
*Ite Missa est*

### Second Order Elements

*The words of the:*

Prayers prior to the Introit  
  
 Prayers with the incense  
 Prayers before and after the Gospel  
  
 Prayers with the Offertory  
 Incensation and Washing of Hands  
  
 Prayers at the Commingling  
 Prayers before Communion  
 Prayers at Communion  
 Prayers at Purifications  
*Placeat tibi* and Last Gospel

Of course this listing leaves out some subtleties; as for example that the *Gloria* was primitively sung, we are told, at a bishop's Mass but not in Mass celebrated by a priest, and that the Creed was not used at Mass in Rome until the eleventh century, and other points of that sort. Nonetheless, anyone at all familiar with the history of the liturgy will immediately accept the validity of the distinction between the First Order elements, which from one source or another give us substantially the ancient rite of the City of Rome as it developed up to the seventh century, and the Second Order elements, which constitute the northern European mediaeval embroideries upon the ancient rite, which substantially originated between the eighth and twelfth centuries, and which are all said privately because they represent the personal devotion of the clergy celebrating the Mass. For my part, I welcome these mediaeval additions and see them as an enrichment.

Nonetheless, if simplification, the removal of duplication, and of elements added over time with supposedly little advantage is to be the order of the day as the Council decreed, it is from these Second Order texts that the excisions must come. If a reform is to respect the integrity of the *Roman Rite*, it will have to leave the First Order elements intact. Proceeding thus, one would "simplify while taking due care to preserve the substance." "Substance" here must be taken as meaning the substance of the Roman Rite, not merely the substantial shape of the eucharistic liturgy, as described by Justin Martyr in the second century, and prescinding from all the historic rites of Christendom. To interpret "substance" in the latter, broader sense, would be to open the way to a melting down of all the liturgical families, to an eclectic rifling of material from Oriental and other non-Roman sources, and to the limitless substitution of newly composed material for the genuine texts of the Roman tradition.

These, alas, are the precise faults into which the Consilium's "reform" fell. The result was not really a "reform" at all. It was the creation of a new rite, loosely derived from the historic Roman rite, but differing from it as much as do some of the historic non-Roman rites, and a great deal more than, for instance, the rites of the Carthusians, Cistercians and Dominicans. Monsignor Gamber's terminology of a "Roman Rite," describing the ancient tradition still maintained in the Missal of 1962, and a "Modern Rite," describing the Missal and Lectionary of 1969, is scientifically accurate and just.

### Third Part

The last part of article 50 specifies the restoration of "other parts which suffered loss through the accidents of history." The *Preces*, intercessions or Prayer of the Faithful spring to mind at this point, but they are dealt with as a distinct question in article 53. What other element is therefore intended here? The Introit Psalm perhaps, or the responsorial form of the Gradual Psalm? The congregational reading of the responsorial psalm at a low Mass was part of no ancient liturgy and therefore did not "suffer loss through the accidents of history," but its bathetic and ragged character might lead us to conclude that if it had been part of any ancient rite, its loss would have been far from accidental.

Father Brian Harrison suggests, I suspect correctly, that an Offertory Procession of the type with which we are now familiar in the new rite, is one of the parts the drafters of the decree wished to "restore." It seems, however, that the notion of a vanished procession during the celebration of the Eucharist, in which the laity carried up from the nave of the church the bread and wine to be consecrated at that Mass, is a romantic fantasy. The idea of such a vanished rite is assiduously promoted by Jungmann in his book *Missarum Solemnia*. A close inspection of every piece of evidence Jungmann gives relating to offertories and processions reveals, however, that his argument is an argument from silence. Not one example of a procession of that particular kind in any rite, Latin or Greek, is produced, and they certainly would have been if Jungmann had known of any. Such silence is eloquent. This is not the place to engage in a detailed discussion of the point, but liturgical scholars have assured me that the notion of a van-

ished people's Offertory Procession in the Roman Rite, of the type introduced in 1969, lacks any shred of evidence in the sources. Such a procession cannot therefore now be introduced on the ground that it is being "restored."

### Implementation of Article 50

In the light of these observations and criticisms, how would one implement article 50 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*? The call for simplification, the removal of reduplications, and of elements added with arguably little advantage, seems to be the most coherent and intelligible part of the paragraph. It would be possible to achieve those ends, while respecting the complete integrity of the historic core of the Roman Rite, by optionalizing *en bloc* the Second Order elements identified above. In any one celebration of Mass, all would have to be omitted or retained, since a piecemeal omission or retention of individual elements would be both eclectic intellectually and would create a jumbled confusion in liturgical practice. An *en bloc* optionalization of this sort would remove "accretions" that had occurred over time, but would remove them without doing violence to the historic core of the rite. This would provide a simplified, streamlined, rationalized and in that sense "modern" Roman Rite of Mass, which would paradoxically be at the same time wholly traditional.

Nevertheless, the optional character of this change is very important. It was high handed, unprecedentedly disrespectful to sacred tradition, and pastorally insensitive to attempt to *prevent* priests and people from continuing to worship using the Ordinary they and their ancestors had used from time immemorial. It is simply not possible to show, as required by article 23, that the "true and certain benefit of the Church . . . demanded" the *mandatory* abandonment of texts that had been in daily and devout use for a thousand years. It seems appropriate to record here what an Australian bishop said to me when I told him I thought it was reasonable to create a new rite of Mass, if desired, but unreasonable to forbid the celebration of the traditional form. His words were: "*Oh, but if they hadn't banned the old rite, nobody would have gone to the new!*"

Article 23 of the Council's own decree, in addition to the dictates of equity and common sense, forbade the binding suppression of any part of the historic Ordinary of the Mass. It is precisely that kind of violent attack on tradition that constitutes a *damnatio memoriae*, and it is therefore that kind of change that must be "clearly and publicly revoked," as I noted in Part I, if confidence is to be restored.

The two main objections to what I have just proposed regarding the Ordinary will be that the penitential rite at the foot of the altar and the offertory prayers over the gifts would no longer be obligatory.

It should be remembered in reply that from the time of the Apostles right up until the present century, the celebration of the Mass of the Roman Rite had *never* begun with a public and corporate act of confession and repentance by the congregation. One should have done one's penance before coming to join in the essentially post-penitential celebration of the Eucharist. Of course even the just man sins seven times a day, and a personal spirit of repentance is always in place, but the *apologiae* of the priests and ministers have never traditionally been said by the congregation, or been said so loudly as to be heard throughout the Church. Again, there is no objection to beginning this practice in the dialogue Mass. I regularly celebrate Mass in a dialogue form with a Sunday congregation and can see a value in this novel communal way of reciting these ancient private prayers, but it is not possible to argue on the grounds of preserving or restoring ancient tradition that such communal recitation is an essential practice proper to any rite of Mass or to the Roman Rite in particular. Monsignor Gamber records that it dates in his view from the German youth Masses of the 1920s. It is in any case no more ancient than Dom Lambert Beauduin's phase of the liturgical movement in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

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As to the mediaeval offertory prayers, some people have called for their retention as

an assertion of the sacrificial character of the Mass, but their desire to retain them is largely motivated by the elision of the idea of sacrifice in many of the variants possible under the new liturgical regime. Since in the version of the reform here proposed, the Roman Canon, with its very explicit sacrificial language, is retained as the sole eucharistic prayer, there is no danger of the notion of sacrifice being played down, and it would be quite safe, though not my own preference, to revert to the practice of the pre-Carolingian period and to perform the action of the offertory with only a silent personal prayer of the celebrant accompanying it.

## V. THE LECTIONARY

Let us proceed to *Article 51*. It reads:

“The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word. In this way a more representative part of the Sacred Scriptures will be read to the people in a prescribed number of years.”

### “Representative” Readings?

We should note that upon being opened up, the Scriptures proved to contain such “rich fare” that parts of the banquet were removed at once from the “table of God’s word,” lest they should prove indigestible to liberal stomachs. In twenty-two places the new lectionary expunges whole verses from the text of the Gospels used at Mass in order to remove references to the Last Judgment, the condemnation of the world, and sin (*See R. Kashewsky, in Una Voce Korrespondenz 1982 Nos. 2/3*). A reform of this particular reform would obviously be in order.

The idea of reading “representative parts” of the whole of Scripture at Mass is untraditional. The hour of Matins is the proper liturgical vehicle for reading the Scriptures through in the course of a year. Remember the Cluniac monks getting through the whole of Isaiah in one week of Advent: sixty-two chapters chanted in an icy church during the small hours of a winter’s night in Burgundy; rich fare indeed! The readings at Mass, on the other hand, have always been chosen to illustrate the doctrine or sentiment appropriate to the liturgical day. Even in the time after Pentecost, which has the least pronounced character, a course of moral instruction flowing as a kind of post-baptismal catechesis is discernible in the historic Roman lectionary. As the event has shown, the attempt to impose representative parts of the whole of Scripture upon the rite of Mass simply leads to incongruous Old Testament readings being proclaimed to a bemused congregation.

It has been alleged that the discrepancy in the conjunction of Sunday epistles and gospels in the ancient lectionaries of the Roman rite means that the themes of the readings of each Sunday have been obscured in the traditional Roman Missal. This hypothesis presupposes a very precise, rather than a general, thematic correspondence. To demonstrate that the obvious general thematic correspondence which exists in the traditional lectionary is botched, one would have to reverse the alleged dislocation and show that epistles and gospels were manifestly more connected in that “reconstructed” order. I am not aware that anybody has attempted this demonstration, still less succeeded in making it.

### Cycle of Readings: Theories and Fantasies

The words “in a prescribed number of years” are also ominous. The liturgy, like the natural cycle of spring, summer, autumn and winter, goes in an annual cycle, not a biennial or triennial one. So far as I am aware, all the liturgical rites of Christendom, both

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East and West, have always done the same. To break with this instinct and this tradition, is to go against the poetry of nature as well as the consent of the ages. Only an insensitive rationalism, an obsessive didacticism, could produce such a proposal.

Even overlooking these objections and accepting a two or three-year lectionary, the Conciliar decree does not in the least require the abandonment of the extremely ancient annual Roman cycle of Sunday epistles and gospels, which dates back to an unknown period prior to the seventh century. In his account, Archbishop Bugnini gives no weight at all to the argument from tradition. He tells us: "Some members (of the Consilium) suggested that the lectionary be kept intact and serve as one of the cycles, out of respect for tradition and for ecumenical reasons, since most of the churches issuing from the Reformation use the traditional lectionary. The *ecumenical* argument was given great weight in the discussion, but Father Vagaggini demonstrated, ably and skillfully, that it was in fact weak." Vagaggini, who was one of the key figures in the Consilium and the principal enemy and critic of the Roman Canon, pointed out that most of the Protestants had abandoned or were on the point of abandoning the ancient Roman cycle of readings. On October 8th 1966 it was arranged that the Protestant observers attached to the committee should "read a statement in the public assembly in which they asked the Roman Church not to consider itself obliged for ecumenical reasons to abstain from revising the lectionary." Once it was clear that Protestant support, which was paradoxically deemed to be the only serious reason for saving the ancient Roman cycle, did not exist, the members of the Consilium voted for its extirpation, with only one dissenting voice. (*Vide* Bugnini, op. cit., p.417).

If antiquity had really been the criterion for the reform, that is, in the Council's words, the restoration of "parts which have been lost through the accidents of history," then the Consilium would not only have retained the Sunday cycle, but would have restored the ancient ferial readings for Wednesdays which are found in our earliest detailed sources, the eighth century manuscripts of Wurzburg and Murbach which record the Roman practice of the seventh century and earlier. The Friday readings given in one or other of these documents could also have been used with the Wednesday ones to create one of the two new weekday ferial lectionaries. A three-year Sunday cycle could have been formed, as Archbishop Bugnini says was suggested at the time, by declaring the traditional epistles and gospels those of year A, and forming complementary years B and C from a wider range of Scripture in accordance with the conciliar injunction. As is in fact the case with the Sundays of Lent in the 1969 Missal, a rubric should have been inserted stating that the readings of year A could be used in any year. This would allow those who were perfectly happy with the historic one-year cycle to retain it.

As regards the Old Testament, we are repeatedly assured that there was an Old Testament reading each Sunday morning at Mass, but that quite mysteriously these all vanished by the seventh century, and vanished leaving no memory that they had ever existed: no homilies on them by Leo or Gregory, no inadvertent cross references to them in any surviving source, not one palimpsest listing one pericope and the Sunday to which it was assigned, no tradition as to what Pope suppressed them and why; just an *a priori* assertion that there is a reading missing between the Gradual and the Alleluia, which would, incidentally, place the Old Testament reading after the New, contrary to practice elsewhere in the traditional Missal. This argument from silence is wildly improbable. There are indeed Old Testament lessons on penitential days in the traditional Roman lectionary, but these are quite a different matter. The alleged set of vanished Old Testament readings are, I fear, a romantic fantasy like the vanished peoples' offertory procession. They are only a theory on the lips of a liturgist, like the smile on the face of the Cheshire cat that isn't really there. If it is now thought desirable to introduce Old Testament readings, let a new three-year cycle of them be drawn up and introduced, but on an optional basis, and not on the specious ground that some element due in the liturgy had disappeared.

## Extend Commons, Prefaces & Apologies!

After a decade or so of celebrating the traditional Roman Rite, I can see that a broadened choice of readings for the Commons might be desirable, and that a wider selection of prefaces could be introduced without damage to the integrity of the historic rite. We note in passing that a still unpublished report on the Roman Rite made by a committee of eight cardinals in 1986 at the request of the Pope, encouraged adaptations of this kind. We note too that the cardinals also found, by a majority of seven to one, that in law the Roman Rite had never been suppressed and that every priest of the Latin Rite is, and has always been, entitled to use the historic liturgy. In the now flowing spate of papal apologies, and admissions of truths supposedly long denied, might not the current Roman authorities admit the truth about the legal status of the Roman Rite, and apologize for that truth's confused suppression since 1974, and for its studious suppression since 1986?

## VI. THE VERNACULAR

The last of our three paragraphs from *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is *No. 54*:

A suitable place may be allotted to the vernacular in Masses which are celebrated with the people, especially in the readings and the "common prayer," and also, as local conditions may warrant, in those parts which pertain to the people.

... Nevertheless care must be taken to ensure that the faithful may also be able to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass seems desirable, the regulation laid down in article 40 of this Constitution is to be observed.

### Fallibility of Prudential Judgments

This is the paragraph that sank a thousand missals, and more than a thousand years of unity in the Roman Rite, which had been one of the principal factors in the emergence of a unified western civilization.

There is the famous story of how the Dominican Cardinal Browne urged the Council Fathers to beware of allowing the vernacular, lest Latin vanish from the liturgy within ten years or so. He was laughed at by the assembly, but as so often, the pessimistic reactionary proved to be more in touch with the flow of events than the optimistic progressives.

The Council Fathers' incredulous laughter at Cardinal Browne helps to remind us that a general council, like a Pope, is only infallible in its definitions of faith and morals, and not in its prudential judgments, or in matters of pastoral discipline, or in acts of state, or in supposed liturgical improvements. It is thus false to assert that a Catholic is logically bound to agree with the prudential judgments a council may make on any subject. It is still more illegitimate to extrapolate from the negative immunity from error which a general council enjoys in definitions of faith and morals, to belief in a positive inspiration of councils, as if the bishops were organs of revelation like the Apostles, and their prudential decrees inerrant like the Scriptures. It is only a false ecclesiology and a false pneumatology that can lead to the exorbitant assertion that a council is "the voice of the Holy Spirit for our age." Are we really *obliged* to believe that the Holy Spirit demanded the launching of a Crusade at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215? And *must* we hold that in 1311 the Holy Spirit dictated the Council of Vienne's rules regulating the use of torture by the Inquisition? And is it *de fide* that when Alexander IV ordered those suspect of heresy to be tortured to confess their guilt, this was what "the Spirit was saying to the churches" on May 15th 1252? If so, are we to condemn the Catechism of the Catholic Church of August 15th 1997, which comes to us on the same papal and episcopal authority and which condemns the use

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of torture to extract confessions of guilt, and openly says that “the pastors of the Church” erred on the matter?

As to the liturgy, is it mandatory to believe that in 1963 the Holy Spirit wanted the abandonment of the principle of the weekly recitation of all 150 psalms, on which the Office of the Roman Rite has been based from its very beginnings prior to Saint Benedict? And is it *de fide* that God wanted the Hour of Prime suppressed from January 1964 on? No, this doctrine of the Infallibility of the Party Line simply will not do. It is not Catholic teaching that the Church is infallible in pastoral or prudential judgments. We are therefore logically free to hold that any council can be ill-advised when making these kinds of decision, and thus ill-advised in allowing the conversion of the liturgy into the vernacular, even if that had taken the form of a direct translation of the 1962 Missal.

### **Liturgical Language Set Apart**

For what are the facts? Historically the liturgy, like the Faith, has been received by cultures as a sacrosanct whole at the time of conversion, and has never been put into another language thereafter. Whether that language was the vernacular or not, seems to be utterly arbitrary and a matter of historical accident. In Italy, Gaul, and Spain, the Latin liturgy was initially vernacular, but ceased to be so within five hundred years; the language however remained sacrosanct precisely because it was used for sacred purposes. In Russia, the liturgical language now known as Old Church Slavonic was used for the vernacular version of the Greek books; it is now *old* Slavonic precisely because it differs from the current language; but because it is sacred, it has been left undisturbed. In Ethiopia the liturgical language is Gheez, which centuries ago was replaced by Amharic as the vernacular; again no change was made to the liturgy. On the other hand, among the Irish, English, Dutch, Germans, Basques, Poles, Swedes, Ceylonese, Bantus, Vietnamese, Finns, Norwegians, Lithuanians, Hungarians and so many others, the liturgy had never been in the vernacular up until the 1960's. And are we to say that these great peoples and cultures were never Christian, never properly evangelized as a result? In South India the Faith had been quietly flourishing for a thousand years prior to the arrival of the Portugese in the sixteenth century, but the liturgy had never been translated and was still celebrated in the Syriac tongue in which it had arrived. English Catholics from St. Augustine of Canterbury until the 1960's never used the vernacular for Mass.

In the 1960's, when mass literacy, cheap peoples' Missals, and bilingual editions were more in evidence than ever before, and it was thus easier to follow the Mass than ever before, there was less justification than there had ever been for switching to the vernacular. Why then did it happen?

### **Secularizing Liturgy for Secular Man**

In addition to the growing awareness of historical and cultural relativism I mentioned in Part I, and the rationalist temptations to which that gives rise, I think we must add the spirit of an anthropocentric liberalism as a crucial ingredient in the mixture; after all, did not Paul VI proclaim in his speech closing the Council that the Church too had now adopted the “Cult of Man”?

The whole aggrornamentist enterprise can, in lengthening retrospect, be seen as the moment when the Church at last gave in to that rising cult of human liberty which has increasingly dominated the Western imagination since the eighteenth century. Liberal Man wants an atomistic freedom to “do his own thing.” In this context, a binding, sacral, non-vernacular and theocentric liturgical ethos enshrined in ancient tradition, must be replaced by an option-filled, secularizing, vernacular and anthropocentric approach, reflecting the aspirations and tastes of the human spirit in the present day. The

authority of the Roman Church and its historic liturgy had to be taken out of the way as an essential precondition to the installation of the cult of freedom. It is the entry of this *Zeitgeist* into the temple of God, through the window thrown open by John XXIII, that is the fundamental driving force behind the liturgical revolution. The mass desertion of the liturgy among peoples of old Christian culture which began the instant the new anthropocentric rites appeared, shows not only that the renewal has been a failure *de facto*, but that, at the time of the changes, the bulk of the faithful felt no overwhelming attraction to the vernacular

If it be argued that the needs of mission territories called for the abandonment of Latin, then it should be remembered that all the Christian cultures of northern Europe were once as barbaric as Rwanda, and that in the passage of centuries a Black Latin Christendom could have proved no more absurd or unattainable than a Teutonic Latin Christendom must have seemed in the age of Augustine and Boniface. The pressure for change did not in fact come from the missions but from European liturgical scholars, and European liberal Catholics who were losing confidence in their own traditions. I will never forget one Corpus Christi at Bolsena, when a sanctuary full of white priests could barely stumble through the *Pange Lingua* while the only black priest among us sang it perfectly from memory!

### **Precise Translation of '62 Missal**

Now that the vernacular has triumphed, for the time being at least, it seems to me that one way towards the recovery of the doctrinal, ritual and other values of the Roman Rite, would be a careful translation of the 1962 Missal into the vernacular, *sicut jacet*, with all its rubrics unchanged. This would be a legitimate reform of the reform, since it would, paradoxically, be closer to what the Council Fathers *thought* they were voting for in 1963 than is the neo-Roman Missal produced by the Consilium in 1969. It would obviously be closer to the Fathers' wishes than the current *de facto* regime of evolving options and permutations, which, by polite misnomer, is still called a Rite of Mass.

## **VII. SOME OTHER POSSIBLE REFORMS**

Having concluded our consideration of articles 50, 51 and 54 of the conciliar decree (and setting aside a host of other issues such as the Bugninan committees' unauthorised suppression or modification of the Sunday collects, which action constitutes an alteration of the *lex credendi* through a manipulation of the *lex orandi*) let me end by mentioning two areas in which the 1962 typical edition of the Missal does seem to stand in need of reform.

### **Rationalize Sanctoral Cycle**

The sanctoral cycle contains some interesting personages, such as St. Venantius of Camerino, St. Martina and St. Catherine of Alexandria, of whom St. Robert Bellarmine remarked that he wished he could be certain she was more than a literary fiction. The martyr status of most of the early Popes is in the same dubious category. Common sense would dictate that the world-wide fellowship that follows the Roman Rite does not need to devote a whole liturgical day every year to the celebration of persons of whom nothing is certainly known, and whose very existence is in some cases unproven. Space also needs to be found for new saints' days as the sanctoral cycle goes through its inevitable growth towards congestion. The changes of 1955 and 1960 had done much in this regard, and there is a simple way of going one step further.

A rubric in the 1962 Missal allows any commemoration to be celebrated *ad libitum* as a third class feast; a parallel rubric should be added allowing any third class feast

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to be reduced *ad libitum* to a commemoration. Perhaps, going further, the historically unknown saints could be left in the Martyrology on their traditional dates, with the option of celebrating a votive Mass in their honor on the day in question. These proposals are not new. The elimination of unhistorical feasts, and the reduction of those below the rank of double major (that is, the vast majority) to the rank of a commemoration, was proposed by Benedict XIV's reform commission as long ago as the 1740's.

### Restore Easter Readings

The second matter unmentioned by the Council, but which the reformers of the 1960's took in hand, this time with some real success, was the readings of the Easter Vigil, which had been reduced to unintelligibility in 1951. Archbishop Bugnini explains how he reformulated the shape of the very ancient "Mother of all Vigils," and sprang it on the universal Church for the Easter of 1952. Many of the Archbishop's characteristic methods were first displayed in this original exercise in "reform." The back stairs approaches to the Pope while deliberately keeping the hitherto responsible authorities (chiefly the Sacred Congregation of Rites) in the dark, the cavalier disregard for ancient tradition, the calculation that an absurdly centralized and bureaucratic manipulation of the liturgy would be swallowed by the whole Church, out of loyalty to the Pope or from sheer indifference, are features of the process that Archbishop Bugnini was often to repeat after the Council.

Having celebrated the Easter Vigil from 1993 to 1997 with the four readings retained in 1951 and reproduced in the typical edition of 1962, I increasingly felt that there was something wrong with the readings; they suffered from an undeniable air of anti-climax and incoherence. When I took the time to study the traditional series of twelve "prophecies," each followed by a collect summing up its meaning in the mind of the Church, and to study the sung responsories mysteriously placed after the fourth, eighth and eleventh in the series, I realised that they were not twelve readings in a row, but rather three nocturns of four readings each, and that each nocturn had a theme that was summed up in the sung responsory that marked its end. The first four; the Creation, the Flood, the Sacrifice of Isaac, and the Crossing of the Red Sea, are about God's creation of a Chosen People; the second four are about the increasing inadequacy of that people's response to God's Call; while the last nocturn is about God's solution of this conundrum through the sending of the Messiah, who is foreshadowed in three readings as respectively Priest, Prophet and King.

The twelfth reading, mysteriously placed after the final sung responsory and unaccompanied by the penitential gesture of kneeling, is explained by the fact that the Vigil, properly speaking, is over; the reading looks forward to what is immediately at hand. In the crowded Baptistery on Easter night, the candidates descend up to their waists into the waters of the enormous font and walk about in them, saved and praising God for their deliverance from the worship of the idol of Caesar which the Roman imperial power had so recently demanded. The *baptizandi* are seen by the Church, through its choice of Old Testament reading, as foreshadowed by the three young Hebrews who walk about in the flames saved and praising God in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, likewise delivered from the worship of the idol of the Babylonian king and from the dilemma of physical or spiritual death. The fiery furnace is a kind of archetype of the Lateran Baptistery.

In retaining only the opening description of the Creation, and the readings that happened to be followed by sung responsories, the changes made in 1951 were an incomprehending dismantlement of a finely crafted structure, which left behind a correspondingly incomprehensible debris. The new optional seven reading vigil of 1969, though retaining only two of the original twelve prophecies, is in itself a great improvement. The fact that the 1969 Missal requires as a minimum only the Red Sea reading and one other has meant, however, that the Easter Vigil has been effectively abol-

ished in many churches. The Vigil deserves the restoration of its triadic structure, reflecting the dialectic of salvation in the themes of its three nocturns, which also correspond to the three watches of the night, just as the twelve prophecies correspond to the twelve nocturnal hours.

Having celebrated the Vigil with its traditional readings for four successive Easters from 1998 on, I can testify that doing so is not only pastorally possible, but also vastly more satisfying than using only the fragmented readings that survive in the Missal of 1962. Ironically, it is the unreconstructed form that, in accordance with the Council's wishes, "sets before the people a richer fare from the word of God." I suggest that this return to tradition be publicly encouraged by Rome. There is no reason why the ancient set of readings should not be used in the 1969 vigil ceremonies. If their length is thought to be prohibitive for *homo modernus*, who is deemed to love the liturgy but not to love it all *that* much, then the first nocturn, from the Creation to the Crossing of the Red Sea, could be used, with the other two nocturns being optional.

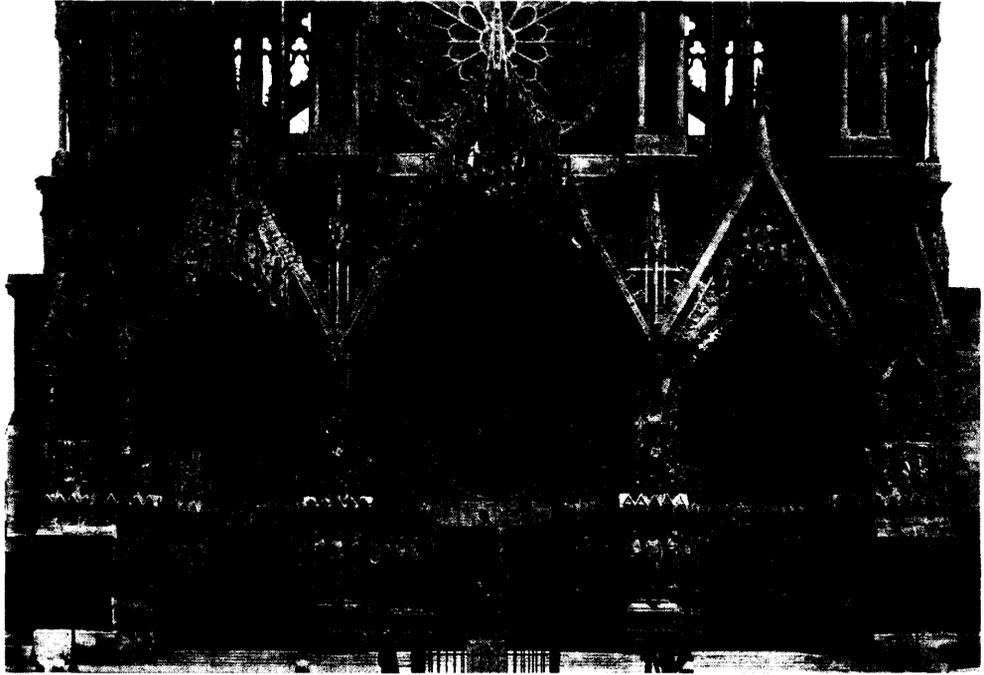
## CONCLUSION

To conclude: the aggiornamentist Quest for the Ideal Liturgy that would solve all problems of popular incomprehension and lack of participation, has failed, and the spirit of liberalizing rationalism that inspired it was, like the spirit of the Synod of Pistoia, never wholly congenial to historic Orthodoxy. No liturgy can be all things to all men, and therefore the quest for an impossible perfection has turned out, as so often in human affairs, to be the enemy of an existing good. As Lord Salisbury observed a century ago: "It is a characteristic of the Progressive Mind to believe that all problems admit of a solution. Conservatives, on the other hand, are quite prepared to confess that the solution to some problems may escape us altogether."

Yet more profound is Dietrich von Hildebrand's citation of a remark by Hans Urs von Balthasar:

"If that mythical entity 'Modern Man' becomes the measure of what God has or has not to say, then religion is obviously at an end."

FATHER JOHN PARSONS



*West Portals. Reims Cathedral, c.1250.*

# SACRED MUSIC

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## *La question liturgique*

In an early confrontation with the Modernist heresy in France, Catholics were confronted with what came to be known as "*la question biblique*." What was under consideration was the divine inspiration of particular parts of the Bible, especially the creation accounts in Genesis. Ultimately what was at stake was the very concept of divine inspiration. Today we have, what I would call, "*la question liturgique*." While this question involves such issues as the proper implementation and success of the post-Conciliar reforms, and the proper role of the Tridentine Mass in the life of the Church, the ultimate question is this: What is the object of worship—God or man?

Keeping in mind that *this* is the ultimate question and that the readership of this journal is agreed on the answer, it is important for us to have a respectful dialogue when it comes to differences of opinion on what are *ultimately* subordinate issues. It is to this end that I have republished an interesting reply to Fr. Brian Harrison's famous address on the "Reform of the Reform," which was originally given in 1995. I did not republish Fr. Harrison's original address (which was published in the first three issues of *Adoremus Bulletin*; Vol. 1, nos. 1-3) due to space considerations and because Fr. Parsons' reply stands on its own. Whereas Fr. Harrison's proposal concentrated on an alternative and more traditional implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Fr. Parsons takes a, at times, critical attitude to parts of the Conciliar document itself—questioning the assumption that the prudential judgments of a Council are necessarily infallible. He also makes an interesting connection between the 20th century liturgical movement and the liturgical movement associated with late 18th century Jansenism. Finally, Fr. Parsons does take up Fr. Harrison's proposal of an alternative implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, but, as a result of his critique, attempts to give it a more objective foundation. At any rate this is an extremely good article and I hope that my republication of it will contribute to our on-going "respectful dialogue" concerning liturgical reform.

Kurt Poterack

*Editor's note: I must apologize for a mistake I made in the last issue of Sacred Music (Vol. 129, #1). The Church Music Association of America's new secretary is Miss Rosemary Reninger, not Mrs. Kathy Rheinheimer—who is, nonetheless, a highly valued member of the Association.*

### **Music Director Position Open**

Organist/Music Director. St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 1813 Oakdale Road, Modesto, CA 95355. Phone (209) 551-4973. Fax (209) 551-3213. Email frjillo@aol.com. Growing parish of 4000 families seeking principal organist and choir director. Would direct one large choir (25 voices) and one children's choir, coordinate cantors for three Masses and provide music for funerals and weddings for extra compensation. Knowledge of Catholic liturgy and the Catholic musical tradition, from Gregorian Chant to contemporary hymnody. Salary range \$25,000-\$30,000, depending on education and experience. Full benefits. Send resume, cover letter, references and salary requirements to Fr. Joseph Illo at above addresses.

FROM THE EDITOR