



THE ROMAN RITE old and new

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The Roman Rite: Old and New - II

Catholicism, Protestantism, and the theology of the New Roman Rite

In the second portion of our presentation of Don Pietro Leone's "The Roman Rite: Old and New", the author goes to the heart of the matter: if the Traditional Rites have always represented and transmitted (in the very sense of the word Tradition) what Catholics believe and are both the source and the summit of Eucharistic Dogma, as defined forever in Trent, what are exactly the source and character of a New Rite transformed in almost all its characteristics?

Catholicism and Protestantism

We proceed to set forth and compare the theology of the Mass of the Old and the New Roman Rite, first as contained in official Church documents, then as contained in the rites themselves.

A. In Official Church Documents

1. The Old Rite

Catholic Dogma on the Blessed Eucharist is set forth definitively in the Council of Trent. The Council declares: "And so this Council teaches the true and genuine doctrine about this venerable and divine sacrament of the Eucharist... The Council forbids all the faithful of Christ henceforth to believe, teach, or preach anything about the most Holy Eucharist that is different from what is explained and defined in the present decree." (Session 21, Introduction).

If we ask ourselves how this theology corresponds to the theology of the Old Rite, we must reply that it is identical, since the principal reason for the definition of Eucharistic dogma as for the reform of the Roman rite was to provide "a bastion of the true Faith against Protestant heresies": a bastion at once dogmatic and liturgical (MD p. 8). In the same vein the Critical Study of Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci (September 1969) speaks of "the Catholic theology of the Holy Mass as it was formulated in Session 22 of the Council of Trent, which, by fixing definitively the "Canons" of the rite, erected an insurmountable barrier against any heresy which might attack the integrity of the mystery." The identity of the theology of the Old Rite with the dogmas of the Council of Trent is, in fact, a particularly eminent instance of the principle "Lex orandi, lex credendi"[1].

In order briefly to expound the theology of the Mass as expressed in the Old Rite, we shall proceed to quote three principal eucharistic declarations of the Council of Trent:

"If anyone were to say that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice were not offered to God, or that what is offered were anything other than Christ to be consumed by us, Anathema Sit." (Session 22, can. 1)[2]

“One and the Same is the victim, and He Who now offers the sacrifice in virtue of the priestly ministry, is the Same Who offered Himself then on the Cross, only the mode of offering being different.” (Session 22, ch. 2)[3]

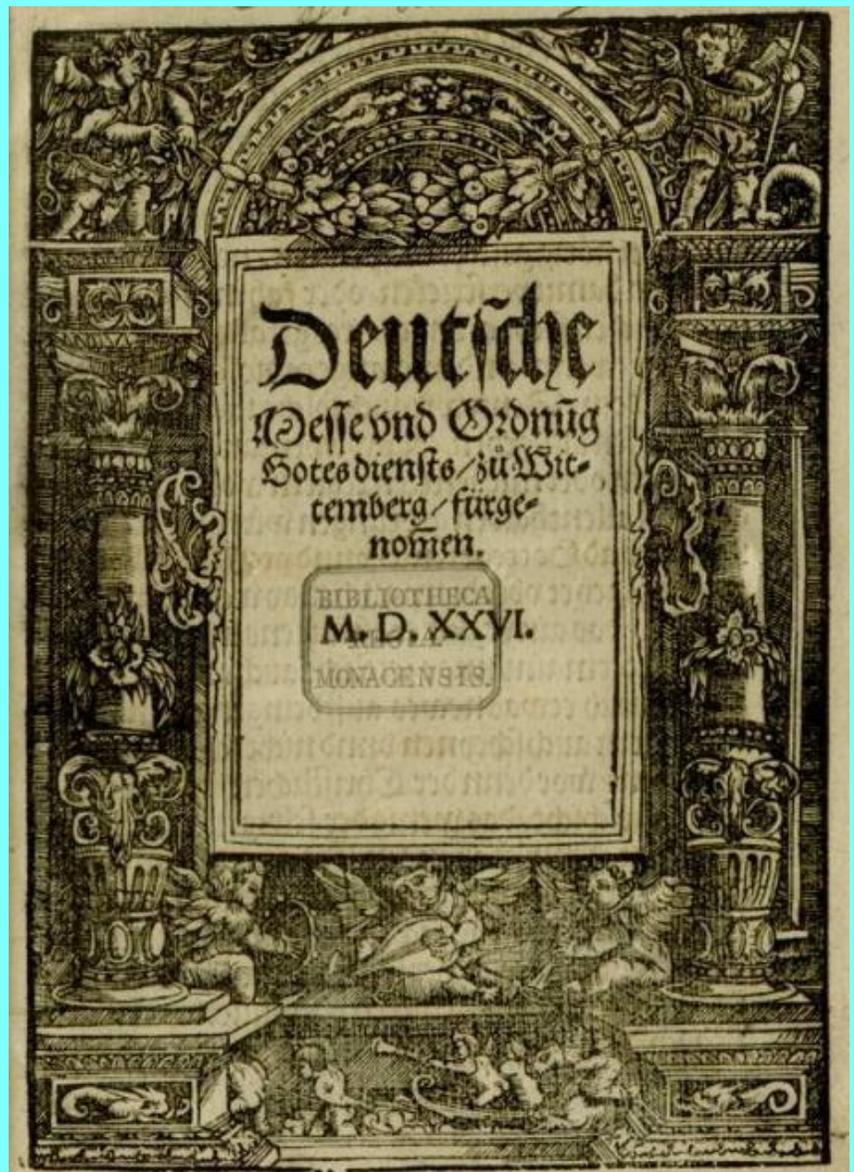
... the sacrifice by which that bloody one (sacrifice) which was to be made once on the Cross was to be made present, and its memory was to remain till the end of time, and its salutary power for the remission of sins which are daily committed by us was to be applied.” (Session 22 ch.1)[4]

In conclusion then, the Mass is a Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of Christ, because Christ is the victim and priest in the Mass as He is at Calvary. The relation between the Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass is that the Sacrifice of Calvary is made present, recalled, and its fruit applied in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

In the next section we shall describe in detail the sacrificial character of the Old Rite, turning now to the theology of the New Rite, as expressed in official Church documents.

2. The New Rite

We shall briefly consider two such documents: Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963) and Missale Romanum (1969), the first and the last of the series of documents that govern the New Rite. In the words of Michael Davies (p. 22): “The most important passages in Sacrosanctum Concilium were the ‘time-bombs’. These were apparently harmless phrases which could be used as a mandate for a revolution after the Council.” Amongst these phrases[5] are those referring to the promotion of union of all Christians (Art. 1); to Christ being present in different ways in the Mass (Art. 7); the priesthood of the faithful (Art. 14); the presidency of the priest over the assembly - coetui praeest - (Art. 33); the greater use of the



Holy Scriptures - abundantior, varior, et aptior lectio sacrae Scripturae - (Art. 35); the wider use of the vernacular (Art. 36); and inculturation (Art. 37, Art. 40-41).

So much then for the implicit intentions of at least a number of the Council Fathers. As far as the explicit intentions of the Fathers in general is concerned, it must be said that the reform of the liturgy greatly exceeded them (“elle va bien au delà” in the words of Fr. Gélinau, op.cit. MD p. 82).

Now the document which expresses most clearly the theology of the Novus Ordo is the *Instructio Generalis* to the *Missale Romanum*. This was a General Instruction accompanying the new Roman Missal and presenting the Eucharistic doctrine which it expresses.[6] “It can be described as a mandate for undermining Catholic teaching, but with an orthodox phrase thrown in here or there” (MD p. 282). We shall limit ourselves to quoting only one of its articles, the controversial Article 7.

“The Lord’s Supper, or Mass, is the sacred assembly or meeting of the People of God, met together with a priest presiding, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord. For this reason, the promise of Christ is particularly true of a local congregation of the church: where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst.”

Article 7 may be criticized both in regard to what it expresses and in regard to what it suppresses.

In regard to what it expresses, its theology, anticipated obliquely in the SC, is entirely compatible with Protestant theories of the Mass: Cranmer described his 1549 rite as “the Supper of the Lorde and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Masse” (MD p. 285), where the essence of the Lord’s Supper is considered to be the coming together of the people; the “priest” is viewed as simply a president devoid of sacramental or sacrificial power; and where Christ is present only spiritually in the assembly and not in His Real Presence.[7]

As to what Article 7 suppresses, we remark that neither here nor anywhere else in the Instruction is it asserted that the Mass is the Sacrifice of Calvary, a propitiatory sacrifice, offered by an ordained priest in the Person of Christ independently of the presence of the congregation. The Critical Study states with respect to Article 7 that the deliberate omission of every one of the dogmatic values essential to the Mass “amounts, at least in practice, to their denial.”

The Protestant character of the 1969 version of the Instruction caused wide-spread indignation within the Catholic Church, leading to a revision published the following year. In this revision, certain Protestant teachings were eliminated such as the teaching that the Last Supper (rather than the Sacrifice of the Cross) is made present at the Mass (Article 48); while other Protestant teachings are qualified by their juxtaposition to Catholic teachings. In the revised Article 7, for example, [8] we read in the first sentence *Missa seu Cena dominica*: the

Mass or the Lord's Supper; and in the second sentence *memoriale Domini seu sacrificium eucharisticum*: the Memorial of the Lord, or the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Here Catholic terms are equated illicitly with other terms 'which have been invested with a Protestant and anti-Catholic signification' (MD p. 290). A further example is the assertion that the priest presides over the people and "act[s] in the person of Christ".

While the first version is overtly Protestant in character, the second is a masterpiece of equivocation. There is no precise and unambiguous theological terminology (as required by *Mysterium Fidei* of Pope Paul VI) such as the use of the word 'Transsubstantiation',^[9] so that everything may be understood in accordance with Protestant eucharistic heresy.

But whatever may be said of the virtues of the 1970 revision, its importance can only ever be minimal, for the overtly Protestant 1969 version is, as we have said, that which expressed the theology of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, which was itself never revised. In the classic French critique of the New Rite "La Nouvelle Messe" Prof. Salleron writes (p. 191): "Il ne faut pas oublier que c'est la rédaction primitive qui servait d'introduction au nouvel ordo missae, lequel n'a pas été modifié : We should not forget that it is the original edition which served as the introduction to the *Novus Ordo Missae*, which was not modified."

Notes

[1] law of believing, law of praying

[2] "Si quis dixerit in Missa non offerri Deo verum et proprium sacrificium, aut quod offerri non sit aliud quam nobis Christum ad manducandum, A.S."

[3] "Una eademque hostia, idem nunc offerens sacerdotium ministerio, qui seipsum tunc in cruce obtulit, sola offerendi ratione diversa."

[4] "... sacrificium quo cruentum illud semel in cruce peragendum repraesentaretur eiusque memoria in finem usque saecula permaneret atque illius salutaris virtus in remissionem eorum quae a nobis quotidie committuntur peccatorum applicaretur".

[5] see 'In the Murky Waters of Vatican II' TAN 1999 by Atila Sinke Guimaraes.

[6] We note Mgr. Bugnini's comments on the "liturgia del popolo di Dio,...sempre più delle "celebrazioni",... una assemblea riunita per ascoltare e rispondere alla parola di Dio, partecipare al sacramento, fare memoria del Signore Gesù, rendere grazie a Dio Padre : liturgy of the People of God, which have more and more the character of celebrations, an assembly come together to listen and to respond to the Word of God, participate in the Sacrament, to commemorate the Lord Jesus, and give thanks to God the Father." (La Riforma Liturgica I.4. p.53-4). We note also that Pope Paul VI asked him to have the Instruction approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which, greatly to the Pope's chagrin, he did not.

[7] Since many faithful to-day seem to view the Mass as a “commemorative meal” or “feast” in line with this Protestant theory, we consider it useful briefly to examine this view: first in relation to the element of the meal or feast, then in relation to the element of commemoration.

Now one of the names by which the Catholic Church calls the Mass is “Supper”, because it was “instituted during the salutary mystery of the Last Supper” as the Catechism of Trent explains (in the section on the names of the Mass at the beginning of the treatment of the Blessed Eucharist), but it is not essentially a supper but a sacrifice, as we have shown above.

In consequence of the definitions of Trent, the Mass may only be described as a supper if the sacrifice is identical with a supper. This in fact could accord with a problematical, minority theological opinion espoused for example by St. Robert Bellarmine, who argues that the Holy Communion of the celebrant constitutes the destruction of the Divine Victim.

But clearly we are not justified to present as Catholic doctrine a minority view, and a minority view which is problematic at that; and much less are we justified in defining it in the very same terms as were used by the Protestant heresiarchs.

The common opinion of the theologians, including St. Thomas Aquinas, is rather that the sacrifice consists in the Consecration alone (Summa III 82.10). As for the Holy Communion, St Thomas argues that is a participation in the effect of the sacrifice (Summa III 83.1). We may therefore conclude that the Holy Communion is an integral, rather than an essential, part of the Mass. This also corresponds to the statement in *Mediator Dei* (562) that “ad...sacrificii integritatem habendam requiritur solummodo, ut sacerdos caelesti pabulo reficiatur: for the integrity of the sacrifice it is only necessary that the priest is restored by the heavenly food.”

We cannot define the Mass as a “supper” or a “meal” then; much less can we describe it as a “feast”, for a feast requires the participation of a number of people, whereas the Mass can be validly offered without the Communion, or even the presence, of the congregation or even the Mass-server. We note that the Protestants’ feast theory corresponds to their heretical rejection of the private Mass (cf. the Council of Trent S.22 ch.6, can. 8).

In regard to the commemorative element of the Mass, the fact that it commemorates the Last Supper clearly has no bearing on its essence; and the Council of Trent declares that the Mass both commemorates and renders present the Sacrifice of Calvary (S.22 cap.1): “...Sacrificium, quo cruentum illud semel in cruce peragendum repraesentaretur, eiusque memoria in finem usque saeculi permaneret...”, but anathematizes any-one who should say that it is a mere commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross (S.22 can.3): “... Si quis dixerit Missae Sacrificium... nudam commemorationem sacrifici in cruce peracti...Anathema sit”.

[8] where incidentally there is still no mention of transsubstantiation (cf. Iota Unum s.272, p.602).