



THE ROMAN RITE old and new

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The Roman Rite: Old and New - III

The theology of the Traditional and New Rites: Offertory, Canon, and the ‘Eucharistic Prayers’

In the third part of our presentation of Don Pietro Leone’s “The Roman Rite: Old and New”, the author continues his analysis of the problematic theological aspects of the New Mass, in particular how the ancient Protestant criticisms of the Offertory and of the Canon were somehow internalized by the agents of the post-Conciliar liturgical revolution.

I. Catholicism and Protestantism

B. In the Rites Themselves

We proceed to examine the theology of the Old and New Rites as contained in the rites themselves. Since our aim thereby is to manifest the Protestant character of the New Rite, we shall present the relevant material first in the Old Rite, then in the Protestant reformed rite(s), and then in the New Rite.

We shall start by considering two parts of the Mass, we shall then consider various of its general features. In regard to the Protestant reformed rite(s) and the New Rite, we may say with Michael Davies (p. 285, quoting Dr. Francis Clark’s comment on Cranmer’s rite) “It was not what was expressed but what was suppressed that gave significance to the whole.”

In fact what was suppressed was almost everything pertaining to the very essence of the Mass, that is its sacrificial nature. It is in this light, then, that we shall compare the theology of the two rites. §1 on the Offertory concerns the anticipation of this Sacrifice; §2 on the Canon concerns the making present of the Sacrifice; §3 on the Real Presence concerns its object, namely Jesus Christ Himself; §4 on the Sacrificial Priesthood concerns the minister empowered to make the Sacrifice; §5 on the Ends of the Mass concerns the finalities of the Sacrifice; §6 on the Latin concerns the language which befits it; §7 on the Orientation of the Celebrant concerns the orientation appropriate to it; §8 on the Altar and Table concerns the altar of sacrifice; and §9 on Intelligibility and Participation concerns their principal object, namely the Sacrifice itself.

The two parts of the Mass that we shall examine are “the two particular Protestant bêtes noires” (MD p. 9): namely the Offertory and the Roman Canon.

1. The Offertory

The Offertory is the oblation of the bread and wine in a mode “intrinsically ordered” to the oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Consecration. In the words of Alan Clark (MD p. 312): “The Mass, liturgically speaking, is one protracted Act of Oblation by the Church of the Sacrifice of Christ”, an act of oblation which is “anticipated” prior to the consecration and “postponed” after it. This anticipation of the consecration is common to numerous ancient liturgies: e.g. the Ambrosian, Gothic, Mozarabic in the West, and in the Divine Liturgy of Saint

James and that of the Armenian Church in the East. The former Eastern liturgy contains the prayer: "... the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Christ our God comes forward to be sacrificed." And the latter: "let us welcome the King of Heaven and Earth whom legions of angels escort unseen."

In the Old Roman Rite the celebrant offers the unleavened bread to God with the following words: "Receive O Holy Father, Almighty Eternal God, this Immaculate Host which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for mine own countless sins, offenses, and negligences, and for all here present; as also for all faithful Christians living and dead, that it may avail for my own and for their salvation unto life everlasting. Amen." Fr. Pius Parsch remarks (MD p.316): "This prayer, so rich in doctrine, could serve as the basis for an entire treatise on the Mass."

The prayer of the oblation of the wine and the supplication of the Holy Trinity after the individual oblations of the bread and wine, are comparable in their depth and their sacrificial tone.

From the Protestant point of view the Offertory is unacceptable because of its sacrificial character. Martin Luther refers to "all that abomination called the Offertory, and from this point almost everything reeks of oblation"[1]. Thomas Cranmer suppresses all the Offertory prayers.

The authors of the New Rite suppress almost all the Offertory prayers but for fragments which "can be interpreted as referring to the self-oblation of the people, symbolized by the bread and wine" (MD p. 324). They substitute the prayer of offering of the bread with the following prayer: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which Earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life." They substitute the offering of the wine for a comparable prayer[2]. These prayers are often accompanied on feast-days by a procession of the people.

What has happened is that the Oblation of the Divine Victim to God by the Church has been replaced by the oblation of bread and wine to God by His people. In effect, then, the Offertory (in any meaningful sense of the term) no longer exists.

Luther of course substitutes the idea of sacrifice with that of a meal, as he expresses for example in his comment: "'Eat and drink.' This is the only work that we are told to do in the Eucharist."[3] Similarly in the prayers which have replaced those of the old Offertory in the new rite, the idea of the sacrifice has not only been suppressed, but has been replaced by the idea of a meal, because the new prayers are ordered towards the bread and wine becoming "the bread of life" and "our spiritual drink".

2. The Canon

The Canon constitutes the very heart of the Mass, which extends from the Sanctus to the Pater Noster exclusively. In the words of Michael Davies: “There is not the least doubt that, apart from the Gospels, the Roman Canon is the most precious treasure in the heritage of the Latin Church” (p. 327). As the *De Sacramentis* of Saint Ambrose proves, it had already come very close to its present form more than sixteen hundred years ago. The Council of Trent teaches (S.22 cap.4) that: **“Holy things must be treated in a holy way and this Sacrifice is the most holy of all things. And so that this Sacrifice might be worthily and reverently offered and received, the Catholic Church many years ago instituted the sacred Canon. It is free from all error and contains nothing that does not raise to God the minds of those who offer the Sacrifice. For it is made up from the words of Our Lord, from apostolic traditions, and from devout instructions of the holy pontiffs.”**

Cd. Gasquet explains that in the 16th century “Luther swept away the Canon altogether and retained only the essential words of Institution” (MD p. 328). Cranmer substituted a new prayer of about the same length as the old Canon, leaving in it a few shreds of the ancient one, but divesting it of its character of sacrifice and oblation.

As far as the *Novus Ordo* is concerned, the *Consilium* that created it “originally intended to forbid the use of the Roman Canon but... Pope Paul VI insisted on its retention[4]” (MD p. 329).

We shall now examine three points relating to the changes in the Canon: the eucharistic prayers, the silence, and the formula of consecration.

i. The Eucharistic Prayers

The *Consilium* proceeded to compose three new “eucharistic prayers” as alternatives to the Roman Canon. These prayers are remarkable for their suppression or reduction of sacrificial content: the distinction between the sacrificial priesthood and the people has been suppressed in all of them; in the second one the word *hostia* (victim) is no longer used, the Greek word *hierateuein* (which means to act as a priest, and is, as Michael Davies points out (p.342), “the one word of this anaphora that most strongly suggests sacrificial action...”) is translated by the ambiguous Latin word “ministrare”, and the reference to Holy Communion shifts the attention, as it has done in the new Offertory prayers, from the Sacrifice to the meal.

The upshot is that this second canon can be celebrated with a clear conscience by a priest who believes neither in transubstantiation nor in the sacrificial nature of the Mass and, for that reason, it would also lend itself very well to the celebration by a Protestant minister (see *Critical Study VI*).

In respect to the motivation of the person[s] responsible for creating the second Eucharistic prayer, we may say with Michael Davies (p. 335): “if liturgical experts composed a Eucharistic

Prayer compatible with Protestantism, then surely it is reasonable to presume that this was what they intended”.

ii. Silence

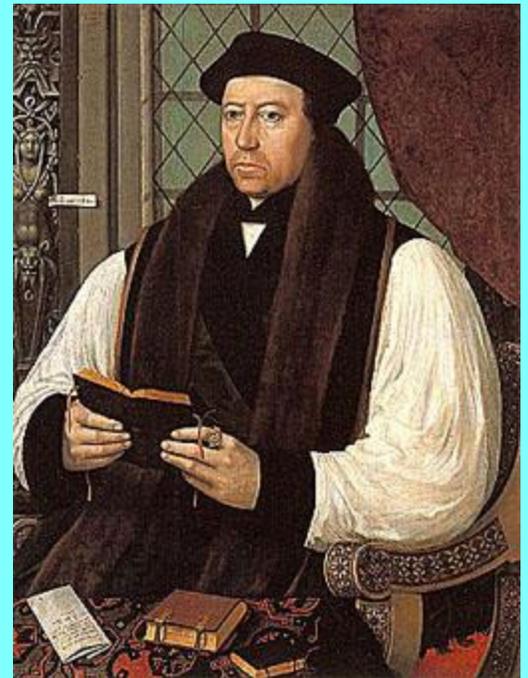
The Council of Trent (Session 22, can. 9) anathematizes anyone who condemns the silent Canon (that is, the canon recited in a low voice). We may regard the rationale of the silent Canon as two-fold: first, in the words of Fr. Gehr it “betokens the Consecration and Sacrificial Act to be an exclusively priestly function” (p. 381); second, that it befits the ineffable mysteries enacted on the altar: that is, the rendering present of the Sacrifice of Calvary.

As the Council of Trent teaches of the silent Canon and other features of the Old Rite (S.22 cap.5): **“All these things are used to point up the majesty of this great sacrifice and to raise the minds of the faithful through these visible signs of religion and piety to the contemplation of the very exalted things hidden in this sacrifice.”**

It is the same rationale which explains the silent Canon in the Eastern liturgies, and the fact that the celebrant is veiled by a curtain at this point, or withdraws behind the iconostasis, in order to recite it.

From the Protestant point of view, by contrast, which does not admit of a sacrificial priesthood nor of the Sacrifice of Christ in the Mass, the silent Canon is unjustifiable. This explains why Cranmer ordered his entire service to be said “plainly and distinctly” (MD p. 381).

Four centuries later, the *Instructio Generalis* declares: “The nature of the presidential prayers (i.e. the Eucharistic prayer and the orations) demands that they be spoken in a loud and clear voice....” (MD p. 383).



Some may claim that the intention of the *Consilium* was to make the Canon more intelligible, but in reply it should be said that if this is true of each individual word that it contains that it is not true of the Catholic theology which it expresses, to understand which an adequate theological formation is required. Rather, the average church-goer, who lacks a theological formation, is inclined to think, when he hears the words of Consecration being proclaimed, that an account of the Last Supper is being narrated in memory of Christ. In other words, what he understands is not a Catholic, but a Protestant, theology of the Mass.

We shall now see how this Protestant theology is manifest in the new formula of Consecration (following the *Critical Study IV 4*).

iii. The Formula of Consecration

a) The Formula is now entitled “narrative” - *narratio institutionis*. The passage from the narrative to the sacramental and affirmative mode is no longer signalled by a full stop and capital letter, and by the sacramental words in larger characters in the centre of the page[5] and in a different colour.

Various changes to the text of the consecration favour its putative narrative character: the insertion of the phrase *pro vobis tradetur* (see (c) below); the displacement of the phrase *Mysterium Fidei* (see (d) below) which interrupts the scriptural text in the Old Rite; and finally the reduction of the words *hunc praeclarum calicem* (this excellent chalice) simply to *calicem* (the chalice), which favours the heresy that the consecration is only a narrative, since it suppresses the reference to the one and unique Sacrifice of Calvary being rendered present timelessly upon the altar.

b) The Pauline “Anamnesis” with which the consecration now ends: “*hoc facite in meam commemorationem: do this in memory of Me*”, shifts the accent from the sacrificial action (expressed more clearly in the original words) to Christ Himself, so that the congregation’s understanding of the whole consecration is coloured by the concept of the Commemoration of Christ with which it concludes.

c) The Pauline phrase “*quod pro vobis tradetur*” (which will be given up for you), which has been added to the formula for the consecration of the bread, is protestantizing: first, because like the phrase quoted in (b) above, it manifests a preference for biblicity over apostolic Tradition; second, because it may be interpreted solely in a subjective sense, as Luther remarks in “The Shorter Catechism” (MD p. 339): “the word ‘for you’ calls simply for believing hearts”; thirdly, because it is the very phrase adopted by Luther and Cranmer in order to break with the Roman rite.

Michael Davies notes that this phrase not only occurs in the three new Eucharistic Prayers, but has also been inserted into the Roman Canon and states: “No, there is only one credible explanation. The words of consecration in the venerable Roman Canon were brought into conformity with the Cranmerian version for ecumenical reasons. This constitutes a scandal, an outrage without precedent in the history of the Roman Church.... It verges upon blasphemy to so much as suggest that the Roman Canon required improvement” (MD p. 355).

In regard to the preference for biblicity over apostolic tradition, St. Thomas Aquinas remarks in his commentary to I Corinthians 11.vv.25-6, that some say that any of the consecratory forms found in the Holy Scriptures is valid, but it seems more probable to say that only those words are valid which have traditionally been used by the Church[6].

One should remark at this point that it is not possible to question the validity of the new formula of Consecration since the Church has approved the New Rite, but that it is possible to question the motivation of the innovators in this regard.

d) The phrase *Mysterium Fidei*, which has been pronounced in the Old Rite after the Consecration of the wine since the 6th century[7], has been removed from all the canons (including the Roman Canon) from this context to a place immediately following the canon, where it serves to introduce the “Acclamation”.

In the Old Rite the phrase was a profession of the priest’s Faith in the mystery of the Consecration: the Transubstantiation and the Sacrifice of Calvary, a profession which indicates that fulcrum point of the entire Mass at which that very mystery is made present; in the New Rite it becomes a profession of the people’s Faith in what they proceed to acclaim: the Death, Resurrection, and Second Coming of the Lord, Holy Communion, and the Redemption (depending on which of the three forms of acclamation is used), all of which takes their attention away from the mystery of the consecration (see Critical Study IV 4).

Mgr. Bugnini is pleased to declare, in opposition to St. Thomas Aquinas[8] and the Council of Trent itself[9], that the Consecration of the bread is “notably incomplete from the point of view of the theology of the Mass: *E’ per se stessa notevolmente incompleta dal punto di vista della teologia della messa*” (Riforma Liturgica 29.3 p.448), giving as one of the reasons for changing it the desire to avoid disappointing many bishops, pastors, liturgists, and theologians.

This innovation is protestantizing first because it was introduced originally by Martin Luther himself[10], second because it takes attention away from the mystery of the Consecration, and third because it corresponds to the Protestant doctrine of the non-sacramental priesthood. The Lutheran theologian Ottfried Jordhan (MD p. 344) quotes the Lutheran Ordinances to the effect that: “In this acclamation the priestly concelebration of the whole congregation at the Lord’s Supper finds a particularly clear expression.”

[NOTES:]

[1] “Et abhinc omnia fere sonant ac olent oblationem” Formula Missae et Communionis (1523) WA 12,211, 14-22)

[2] These new prayers are presented as prayers of thanksgiving at table or harvest time and represent not only an impoverishment but also a falsification of the Mass: *Darin liegt nicht nur eine Verarmung, sondern eine Verfaelschung’* Fr. G. May ‘Die alte und neue Messe’ p.66, *Una Voce Helvetica*.

[3] ‘Comedite et bibite.’Hoc est universum opus, quod in Eucharistia facere jubemur.(De Abroganda missa privata Martini Lutheri sententia (1521)WA 8,439, 34-40.

[4] Although the pacifists are happy to believe that the Roman Canon is unaltered, so that they claim that celebrating the New Rite with the Roman Canon (combined for example with the celebration in Latin and versus Dominum) is in essence equivalent to celebrating the Old rite, it must clearly be stated that (apart from all the changes in the remainder of the rite) the Roman Canon has indeed been altered: the silence has been abolished (as we shall see later in this section); the genuflections have been reduced (as we shall see in the following section); the signs of the Cross have been greatly reduced (*ibid.*); the bows and altar-kiss have been removed as well as the rubrics governing the closure of the celebrant's fingers; brackets have enclosed the concluding formula *per Christum Dominum Nostrum* (cf. section 10 below) as well as a quantity of the saints' names; directions for concelebration have been added; and even the wording of the Consecration has been changed, as we shall discuss in subsection (iii) on the formula of consecration below, with the introduction of the phrases *quod pro vobis tradetur* and *hoc facite in meam commemorationem*, and the displacement of the phrase: *mysterium fidei* – the first and third changes following the lead of Martin Luther.

[5] Although some recent editions have reintroduced this usage.

[6] *Dicunt ergo quidam quod quaecumque formae horum verborum proferantur quae sunt scripta in canone sufficere ad consecrationem. Probabilius autem dici videtur quod illis solis verbis perficitur consecratio quibus Ecclesia utitur ex traditione Apostolorum structa. Evangelistae enim verba Domini recitare intenderunt quantum pertinet ad rationem historiae non autem secundum quod ordinantur ad consecrationem sacramentorum, quas in occulto habebant in primitiva Ecclesia, propter infideles.*

[7] see Mgr. Gamber *zur Reform des Ordo Missae in der Reform der Roemischen Liturgie* (*op.cit.*).

[8] see his commentary to I Corinthians above.

[9] see the extract from S.22 cap.4 quoted above at the beginning of this section on the Canon.

[10] see Fr. Léon Cristiani *du Luthéranisme au Protestantisme*, Blond et Cie. 1911