



THE ROMAN RITE old and new

Don Pietro Leone Monselice

RORATE CÆLI

The Roman Rite: Old and New - IX

The motivation behind the New Mass? A liturgy for the World

In the ninth installment of Don Pietro Leone's "The Roman Rite: Old and New", the author concludes the second part of his study, going to the core of the motivation behind the New Mass, the revolutionary change that was not ordered by the Council: a liturgy made for the world, for a Church that wants to be "accepted" by the World, "loved" by Protestants, understood and engaged with Modernity. Behold the thinking of The Architect, Archbishop Annibale Bugnini. Behold the Liturgy of Man.

Motivation [behind the New Mass]: Rapprochement with the World

In the first part of this essay, we considered the ecumenical motivation of the changes made to the Old Rite, in other words the motivation of rapprochement with Protestantism; in this second part, we consider the motivation of rapprochement with the world.

Evidence of such motivation may be found in the works of Mgr. Bugnini ("La Riforma Liturgica"), and of four of his collaborators, Fathers Augé (on the Collects), Raffa (on the Secrets), Fervetti (on the Postcommunions), and Braga (on the New Roman Missal and the Propers of the Saints): see the respective articles in "Ephemerides Liturgicae" 84 (1970).

Mgr. Bugnini speaks of "adaptations" (La Riforma Liturgica III 25.1 p.391[1]); Fr. Augé speaks of abridging texts that were "too negative, moralizing, or polemical" (p. 298); Fr. Braga speaks of "not putting in difficulty the psychology of the man of to-day who has other problems, a different way of thinking, and also lives in a different material and disciplinary situation: non porre in difficoltà la psicologia dell'uomo di oggi, che sente altri problemi, ha un diverso modo di pensare, vive anche in una situazione materiale e disciplinare diversa" (p. 272).

The same liturgist, when justifying changes to the propers of the saints, speaks of ecumenical needs, adaptation to new positions that the Church has taken, the overcoming of "devotional aspects, or particular ways of venerating or invoking the saints... to put in light new values and new perspectives: aspetti devozionali o particolari modi di venerazione e invocazioni dei santi...per mettere in luce nuovi valori e nuove prospettive" (p. 419).

Let us confine ourselves to discussing two of the principal concepts of the liturgical reformers: "negativity" and "the man of to-day."

In the Ampleforth Journal, Summer 1971, p. 59 (quoted by Michael Davies p.150), it is observed of "negativity" that: "attempts to define it in philosophical or theological terms tend to get nowhere." How are we to understand it, then? From the standpoint of the Faith, talking of realities such as sin and Hell is not negative, but positive, because it helps us to avoid them. Do we call a light-house negative? Or a hand-rail along a cliff path? Or, in other words, if we call it "negative" to talk of Hell, then it is surely more negative to be in Hell, so therefore it is positive

to talk about it, in order to avoid it. In fact, sin and Hell and the other “hard sayings” (Jn. 6.61) of Our Lord are only negative from the standpoint of the World: from the standpoint of some - one who has no Faith. For if they do not correspond to reality, then it is clearly only depressing to meditate upon them.

Who is the “man of to-day” so revered by the liturgical reformers? Man is the same to-day as he always has been: fallen, and in need of Grace and the ascetical life. The Mass according to the Old Rite is concerned with man understood in this way, it has been concerned with him for 2,000 years: it will be concerned with him forever. If the man of to-day does not share this view of himself, then he must change it because it is false: it is not for the Mass to change.

But does the man of to-day in fact have a different view of himself? Did he in fact even have a desire to reform the Mass? Michael Davies remarks (p. 83): “there was definitely no wide-spread desire for liturgical change in English-speaking countries before Vatican II among the laity, the parish clergy, or the bishops.” It was not desired by the people: rather it was imposed upon them, taking less account of their sensibilities than had the reform of Martin Luther[2]. This would explain the alienation of the faithful from the Mass in subsequent decades[3].

No, the desire for change came rather from a minority of intellectuals. Evelyn Waugh wrote of the proponents of liturgical change, in the “Tablet” (15th February 1964, MD p. 83): “we had looked upon them as harmless cranks who were attempting to devise a charade of second-century habits[4] ...suddenly we find the cranks in authority.”

It is these intellectuals who have created the ideal of the ‘man of to-day’: the ideal of the man who is not fallen, but wholly good: who is in effect the subject not of the *natura lapsa* but of the *natura elevata*, and they have accommodated the liturgy to him: in order to flatter him, and to confirm him in this false vision of himself.

Now the spirit of fallen man is the spirit of the World[5], and the deliberate introduction of the spirit of the World into the Church is nothing short of a revolution. We refer to Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Michael Davies’ book “Pope Paul’s New Mass”, being the third volume in the trilogy “Liturgical Revolution”. The chapters bear the respective titles: Revolutionary Legislation, Reform or Revolution? and a Successful Revolution. As he states (p. 81): “the purpose of a revolution is to overthrow the existing order”, and shows how this existing order was destroyed and a new order created.

In relation to the destruction of the old order, we refer the reader to the introductory section of this essay, quoting at the same time the most damning indictment of this destruction: “Truly if one of the devils in C.S. Lewis’ “The Screwtape Letters” has been entrusted with the ruin of the liturgy, he could not have done it better.” (Dietrich von Hildebrand “The Devastated Vineyard”, p. 71, MD p. 80).

In relation to the creation of a new order, we quote Mgr. Bugnini's words: "it is a question ... I can say almost [of] a recasting" (La documentation catholique 1493, 7th May 1967); "the liturgical reform is a major conquest of the Catholic Church (grande conquista della Chiesa cattolica) a sort of trail-blazer (una specie di battistrada)" (Notitiae 92, April 1974, p. 126, MD p. 81).

The reformers are revolutionaries then, the creators of a New Order: new men creating new things: *novi homines* creating *novas res*[6], and united in their scorn for the past: "non hanno alcun amore: they have no love," writes Cardinal Antonelli,[7] "alcuna venerazione per ciò che ci è stato tramandato. Hanno in partenza disistima contro tutto ciò che c'è attualmente. Una mentalità negativa, ingiusta, e dannosa: no veneration for tradition. From the outset they have scorn for all that exists in the present. A mentality that is negative, unjust, destructive."

They demolish "the old building" (in the image quoted in the introduction to the present essay), which was not just a building, but a house, and the house of God: His most ancient, His most glorious, and most sacred. They work in a way characterized by the "incompetenza di molti, sete di novità, discussioni affrettate, votazioni caotiche pur di approvare al più presto: the incompetence of many, thirst for novelty, hurried discussions, chaotic voting to have things passed as quickly as possible" (Fr. Nicola Bux p. 50 La Riforma di Benedetto XVI, La Liturgia tra Innovazione e Tradizione, summarizing the evaluation by Cardinal Antonelli).

They build a new house, which serves the same purpose as the old, but is no longer appropriate to that purpose. For like all revolutionaries, they are inspired not by Faith, but by the World, and in the centre of this World is not God, but man[8].

Notes

[1] "La tradizione deve inserirsi nel contesto storico di ogni tempo, tenendo fede ai principi dottrinali, ma adattandosi sul piano pratico delle attuazioni : Tradition must insert itself in the historical context of every time, faithful to the doctrinal principles, but adapting itself on the practical level of actualizations."

[2] see the quotation of Mgr. Gamber in Part I C above.

[3] see the Epilogue to this essay.

[4] the archaeologizing practice condemned by the encyclical *Mediator Dei* (at the end of Part I) of Pope Pius X but exercised by Pope Paul VI himself who sought to resuscitate a tradition "obscurcés in the course of the centuries and particularly at the Council of Trent: *obscurci au cours des siècles et particulièrement au Concile de Trente*" Jean Guitton *Paul VI Secret* p. 158

[5] Two characteristics of this spirit particularly manifest in the cult of man are pride and indolence (or *acedia*, spiritual laziness): exalting what is subjective and demeaning what is objective - if it requires the slightest effort.

[6] the Latin term for revolution.

[7] in N. Giampietro's: "Il cardinal Ferdinando Antonelli e gli sviluppi della Riforma Liturgica dal 1948 al 1970", Pontificio Ateneo, Sant'Anselmo, Rome 1988, p.258, quoted in "Liturgia" p.158-9

[8] Prof. de Mattei observes that the later Paul VI saw in the 'liturgical movement' the ecclesial formulation of Maritain's humanism (p. 569 op.cit.). In regard to the cult of man we quote the following prophetic words written in 1920 by the theologian Cd. Louis Billot S.J. in *La Parousie* (p. 122): "Quelque nouveau monstre d'idolatrie établi dans nos temples devenus les temples du Dieu Humanité, du Dieu Raison, du Dieu Immanent au monde, triomphant enfin après tant d'efforts de la libre pensée, du Dieu transcendant de la Révélation chrétienne ?... installé au plein soleil au lieu et à la place des Tabernacles renversés de Notre-Seigneur Jésus : Some new monster of idolatry set up in our temples, become temples of divinized Humanity, of divinized Reason, of a God Immanent to this world, triumphing at last, after so many efforts of the free thinkers, over the Transcendant God of Christian Revelation ? ... installed in the full light of day in the place and in the position of the overturned Tabernacles of Our Lord Jesus ?"