

Recollections of a Survivor^{*}

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MANY OF YOU will be familiar with the words of a French aristocrat who, being asked in the early years of the nineteenth century what he had done during the revolution, replied that he had survived: *quant à moi, j'ai survécu*.

My talk tonight is entitled “Reflections of a Survivor”: a survivor who was ordained to the priesthood in 1962 and has lived through the last forty-five years of the Church’s history. It does not matter very much what value judgment you bring to bear on these years, whether you think, that is, that this period represents a tragic tale of high hopes, great learning, and noble aspirations gone sour; or a story of an unholy cabal of malevolent and destructive liturgists, theologians, and curial officials bent on the dismemberment of Catholicism; or, indeed, any number of permutations and combinations of these extreme positions; for no matter what your take on these years since Vatican Council II may be, it is undeniable that they have

^{*} This paper was written for a colloquium, sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute of Chicago, on my book *The Mass and Modernity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005). The colloquium was held in April 2007, several months before the publication of Pope Benedict’s *moto proprio Summorum Pontificum*. If properly implemented the Pope’s document could go a long way to make, what we must now learn to call the extraordinary form, or the *usus antiquior*, of the one Roman Rite an integral part of Catholic worship.

In view of the publication of the *moto proprio* it would seem that the last few pages of what I wrote in the early months of 2007 in this essay will prove to have been unduly pessimistic; and I sincerely hope this is the case. Well, we will have to wait and see how things work out. In the meantime, though, we should render our heartfelt thanks for the lucidity and courage of the Holy Father who has given us a light shining in the darkness. We should all pray for a measure of his courage and lucidity in trying to follow that light.

been tumultuous and very hard on priests. They have been hard on many other people as well, but I am writing this paper to give expression to my own experience, and my own experience is the experience of a priest.

When John Henry Newman came to write his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, he realized that it was not enough to refute false arguments and untrue allegations; he had, somehow, to win his hearers over. “False ideas,” he said, “may be refuted by argument, but by true ideas alone are they expelled.”¹ That, however, was easier said than done; and after a certain amount of agonizing over the best way of making his case, he decided that a sort of autobiography would be the most effective way of winning a fair hearing. “I will vanquish, not my Accuser, but my judges. I will indeed answer his charges . . . but such a work shall not be the scope nor the substance of my reply. I will draw out, as far as may be, the history of my mind. . . .”² His arguments did not become true because he clothed them in an account of his experience. It is rather the case that the faithful recounting of his experience gave both weight and accessibility to what he wanted to say; and the continuing power and fascination of Newman’s arguments stem from this unflinching witness to his lived experience.

In a somewhat similar way, *si parva licet componere magnis*, I want to say that the introduction of a personal dimension into my discussion will add an element of authenticity to what I have to say. My stance on the liturgy is not only consonant with what I have understood to be the dogmatic teaching of the Church, as well as its directives concerning worship, but it is also the fruit of my own experience in trying to put this teaching and these directives into practice.³

Aristotle said that it is the mark of an educated person to expect the sort of proof which the subject is capable of providing. In Book Six of

¹ John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (New York: Image Books, 1956), 122.

² Ibid.

³ C. N. Cochrane, in *Christianity and Classical Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), contrasts the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius with the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. “The former,” Cochrane writes, “is concerned never to expose a weakness, remembering that it is his business to exemplify so far as possible the conventional type of excellence enshrined in the heroic ideal. The latter is content to defy every canon of Classicism in order merely to bear witness to the truth” (387). St. Augustine’s *Confessions* shows us “the picture of a concrete human being in whose presence the barriers of time and space drop away to reveal him as one in all respects akin to ourselves; a being so far unique in history, yet clothed with the common graces and disgraces of mankind” (387). It was the description of experience as “continuous and cumulative” (to use Cochrane’s words) that was Augustine’s gateway to the truth—without what was his own, he would have produced another version of Aurelius’s *Meditations*; but to repeat the point, the truth was more than Augustine’s experiences.

the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says that the soul arrives at truth through a variety of activities, and he lists five of these.⁴ We have to understand, he teaches, something about the kind of subject we are dealing with, and the sort of results that enquiries into the subject are capable of furnishing.

It strikes me that we need to remember this wisdom of Aristotle in our discussions of the liturgy. Liturgy is something done (like art), and not merely thought about, like *scientia*. Furthermore, things that are done have a contingent, or a historical, element about them. Morality may proceed from the fixed principles of the natural law, but these principles need to be applied to the here and now; we may think this application is by an exercise of the virtue of prudence, or perhaps the application should be based on some system of casuistry, but the point is that merely to study principles is not really to study morality. In a similar way, it is possible to have a deep knowledge of the law from a theoretical point of view, and yet not be able to use it to any great effect in the courtroom.

I would contend that liturgy, like morality or the practice of law, cannot really be understood in a merely theoretical way. Knowledge is essential, but without the experience of worship within the context of contemporary society and of what an eighteenth-century philosopher called the *climate of opinion*, the specialist is in danger of leading us astray. He will do this not because what he says is false in itself, but because what he does say will be abstract—abstract, that is, because it is based on an inadequate awareness of the complexity of the reality with which he is dealing.

At the heart of the post-conciliar turmoil in the Church were the changes in the way the Mass was celebrated; and it is concerning the Mass, and the situation in which it is celebrated, of which I wish to speak. I do not imagine for a moment that my description of how we have arrived at where we are today is exhaustive or particularly new, nor do I maintain that what I have said in my book, or I am going to say in this paper, for rectifying the situation is totally adequate or particularly innovative. I can say, though, that both the description and the suggestions are the fruit of my own intellectual and first-hand ecclesial experience. Furthermore, if I am correct in thinking that we cannot understand liturgy without some awareness that it is a practical activity, more like what Aristotle called an art than anything else, then the value of what I write about liturgy depends in part on the effort to make sense of the variety of perspectives my own life has given me. I am not, of course, maintaining that the experiences are relevant merely by the fact of their being my own. I do want to contend, however,

⁴ We arrive at truth by art (*technē*), by science (*epistēmē*), by practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), by intuition (*nous*), and by speculative genius (*sophia*) (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b15).

that if some activities require that they be done before they can be understood, then the experience of those performing those activities is relevant to ascertaining the truth about those experiences.⁵

I was educated as a philosopher in Montreal and Edinburgh, and I have been a full time member of various secular departments of philosophy, including Edinburgh and McGill. I was trained for the priesthood in Rome; and, after my ordination, I was Cardinal Léger's English-speaking secretary for four and a half years, until he retired. I founded the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Montreal (which was subsequently moved to Toronto); and for the last thirty years, as superior of the Oratory, I have had the overall charge of first one and then two adjacent parishes in downtown Toronto. During this period the Oratory in Toronto founded a seminary of philosophy which is affiliated with the Lateran in Rome.

Nothing in my experience has led me to question the traditionalist motto that it is the Mass that matters. Furthermore, the traditionalists are quite right in maintaining that the Mass, both for priests and for people at the parish level, no longer matters in the way that it used to. It is true, of course, that a great deal of attention is often paid to what is variously termed "liturgies," or "Eucharistic celebrations," or, perhaps somewhat more rarely now, "happenings," but the ideal of the Mass as what shapes, or should shape, a priest's identity has all but disappeared. The Mass from having been an end in itself has become a means to help bring about other purposes. These purposes, often enough, are those of the priest himself, and there are those in the laity who complain that the Mass has now become the occasion for the worst sort of clerical dictatorship.

In my book *The Mass and Modernity*⁶ I argued that cultural and intellectual history has had a profound influence on this de facto re-evaluation of the importance of the Christian Sacrifice as well as on the way the Mass is celebrated today. For many this is a point so obvious that it is not worth making; nonetheless, while it may not be directly denied, its importance

⁵ One of the most attractive aspects of the early phenomenologists was their clear conviction, a conviction which they derived from their master, Husserl, that philosophy was a cooperative enterprise. They thought this not only because of the true conviction that there was so much to do that no one person could hope to pursue all that must be pursued, but also from a philosophical conviction that the experience of other people is required before we can understand even our own. I would also want to argue that the self itself is partially constituted by these experiences. As we are concerned with liturgical experience, I would maintain, as a consequence, that to alter drastically the worship of the Church does more than merely affect the worshipper's reactions; rather, it is the case that these changes radically alter the character of the worshipper himself.

⁶ Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).

is not really understood. And in my book I outlined some of the main currents of the intellectual history of Europe and argued that much of the malaise of the present liturgical situation could be traced to an uncritical acceptance of many of the ideas which had gone into the fashioning of the modern world.

I tried to show that large numbers in the Church after the Council opted in practice for a policy of assimilating many of the fundamental principles which helped to create the modern world, and, furthermore, that this assimilation was carried on without sufficient awareness of the source and development of those principles. It is in the post-conciliar liturgical changes that the noxious effect of this osmosis is most clearly to be seen. I contended that

[t]he present state of the liturgy reflects the alienation of modern Catholic thought and practice from the tradition of the Church, but now it also contributes to it. Modern liturgical practices are defective, and they are in place, and they reinforce people's understanding both of their faith and of how the faith should relate to the modern world. This means that the "reform of the reform" will be a long, hard business. How the reform will happen is at best opaque.⁷

Because I am a philosopher by training, I wrote the book from a philosopher's point of view. It may be, as the French would put it, that my *déformation professionnelle* obscured my vision; I do not think, however, that it totally blinded me. Nonetheless, I have been criticized for having produced a book which is abstract, and one of the arguments adduced in favour of this view is that those in charge of the disciplinary reforms of the liturgy after the Council had not read Hegel and Marx and were innocent of first-hand knowledge of Enlightenment thinkers. (Of course, my critics all knew the Enlightenment was a *good thing*, and from this it followed that I was being obscurantist in failing to recognize that the Enlightenment was a blessing which should be immune from criticism.)

It is difficult to know how to respond to this as the critics seem to want to have it both ways: on the one hand, they say we must be open to the modern world, yet, on the other hand, when one shows oneself to be open, at least in the sense of being in possession of some of the ideas that went to make up modernity, one is then criticized for pointing out that these ideas have not proved an unmixed blessing.

If the liturgical reforms had resulted in higher attendance at Mass, an increase in vocations, and a redoubled missionary effort, no one would

⁷ Ibid., 342–43.

have hesitated to associate this happy situation with the changes in the liturgy. No doubt, attention would have been drawn to other factors, but (cannot one hear it being said?) the proof of the pudding is in its eating: here are the changes, and here are the happy results. However, things did not turn out that way, but now we are told that the ideas of modernity had nothing to do with the present parlous situation, and that it is to argue *post hoc propter hoc* to assert any connection between the principles that fashioned the world we live in and the present condition of the liturgy.

I want now to pursue some of these criticisms a bit more deeply. *The Mass and Modernity* has been out for over three years, and one way or another I have had occasion to try to sharpen up, although not as yet to retract, some of the things I wrote in my book. First of all, I want to say something about *secularization*, and here I will argue that because there are no laws of history, it follows that the future is still open and that therefore there is no need either for despair or for taking refuge in an apocalyptic interpretation of Christianity.⁸ On the other hand, the prevalence, perhaps I should say dominance, of a postmodern attitude in intellectual life and in society makes it difficult to see how in practice the modernist mind-set is to be countered. Next I want to say something more about external worship and true religion. The liturgy is the public worship of the Church and so, obviously, has an aspect of externality about it; but what relation does this externality have to purity of heart or authentic Christianity? Finally, I will say a few words about the role of the Old Rite of Mass in the present situation as well as make a remark or two about the attitudes that must be brought to bear on the liturgy if there is to be any improvement in the current situation. In the course of my discussion of this third point, I want to emphasize that present-day discussions of the liturgy do not pay enough attention to the difference between the need to preserve, or guard, the Faith in contrast to the responsibility of evangelization, or of spreading the Faith.

Secularization

When the word secularization is mentioned, something like the following is usually intended. We live in a world, so it is often said, for which the language of traditional Christianity is a dead letter. The intellectual framework, the images, and the moral teaching of the faith no longer colour the ordinary consciousness as they once did. We inhabit, as Iris Murdoch put it, “a scientific and anti-metaphysical age in which the

⁸ All I mean by this term here is that strand of apocalypticism that centered on hopes for the coming purification of the Church at the end of the ages.

dogmas, images, and precepts of religion have lost much of their power.”⁹ It is this weakening of the religious aspect of the modern consciousness that we intend when we use the word *secularization*; modern society has been secularized. Sometimes the word is used to describe the cause of this condition: people seem to be convinced that secularization is a kind of force, or irresistible current, which is sweeping away faith. At other times the word describes what this force or current has brought about, that is, a secularized society.

We have to distinguish, then, between the *fact* of secularization and the *process* of secularization. In this section I want to argue that however it may be that we have arrived at the present situation (which can certainly be called secularized), it has not come about because of a development from primitive societies that are believing and unsecularized to our own situation, which is unbelieving and secularized. The anthropological evidence is against this. If there is no anthropological evidence that all primitive societies are composed of believers, then the secularist is forced to substitute some sort of metaphysical law in the place of the non-existent historical basis. Comte’s law of the three stages, or classical Marxism’s belief that the real force of the dialectic are the material forces of production, would be examples of what I mean. But there are no such laws, and so I would deny the existence of a law which determines a movement away from belief to unbelief. Finally, I shall make a few remarks on the role of postmodernism in our present culture of postmodernism.

Charles Taylor says, and here he is surely correct, that the term secularization “is more a locus of questions than a source of explanations.”

It describes a process which is undeniable: the regression of belief in God, and even more, the decline in the practice of religion, to the point where from being central to the whole life of Western societies, public and private, this has become sub-cultural, one of many private forms of involvement which some people indulge in.¹⁰

Taylor’s description is not entirely free of ambiguities, but it is an essentially fair-minded and accurate description of at least the climate of opinion, or intellectual atmosphere, in which we all find ourselves. I think, though, that if we are not to be petrified by this situation, like a rabbit in front of a cobra—the metaphor is Charles Taylor’s—then we should hold onto the following propositions. First of all there is no necessary connection between

⁹ Iris Murdoch, “Against Dryness,” in *Existentialists and Mystics* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), 287.

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 309.

unbelief and the modern world; and, secondly, there is no necessity which dictates the movement from belief to unbelief.

One of the frightening aspects of Charles Taylor's cobra is the conviction, or at least the suspicion, it instills in us that belief is somehow fit only for primitive and uneducated societies and that you cannot be a modern man without being an atheist, or, if not an atheist, then someone who regards religious belief with a certain high-minded tolerance as, of course, probably not being true, but as being useful to some people in situations of great stress.

On this view secularism is thought to be a necessary concomitant of modern industrial life, and marks the end of a development from superstition to a rational, scientific, and democratic view of existence. This argument depends on the belief that primitive society is somehow of its very nature a society of believers, and that unbelief is a peculiarly modern phenomenon. Yet, in fact, there are serious anthropologists who maintain that it is totally false to say that primitive man is by nature religious and that unbelief is to be found only in modern society. For example, consider the following passage from the distinguished English anthropologist Mary Douglas:

Secularization is . . . an age-old cosmological type, a product of a definable social experience, which need have nothing to do with urban life or modern science. . . . The contrast of secular with religious has nothing whatever to do with the contrast with traditional or primitive. The idea that primitive man is by nature deeply religious is nonsense.¹¹

She goes on to say that all the modern attitudes towards religion are to be found in tribal societies, and, furthermore, to think otherwise is to falsify our understanding of early societies and therefore of our own as well.

The truth is that all the varieties of skepticism, materialism, and spiritual fervour are to be found in the range of tribal societies. They vary as much from one another on these lines as any chosen segments of London life. The illusion that all primitives are pious, credulous and subject to the teaching of priests or magicians has probably done even more to impede our understanding of our own civilization than it has confused the interpretations of archaeologists dealing with the dead past.¹²

Our determined secularist might admit the anthropological evidence for the existence of primitive unbelief and of unreligious tribal societies,

¹¹ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (London: Routledge, 1996), 18.

¹² *Ibid.*

but go on to argue that such primitive and unbelieving societies were heralds of the dawn of reason and enlightenment; early unbelieving societies mark the beginning of a development from belief and superstition to the bright morning of enlightenment. This move, while it may not be the mark of desperation, is at least the abandonment of the historical basis of the secularist argument. It is the giving up of the claim that all primitive societies are believing to maintaining that those unbelieving societies are in the van of progress. But that is to base the argument on the value judgement that secularism is true and not on the historical premise that all primitive societies are believing.

There is, however, a more serious fault in the secularists' way of arguing. The study of history is about the past and is not the pseudo-discipline of discovering laws which have governed the development of mankind in the past, and, being laws, will govern this development in the future. History is about the past; it is not about the future. I take the view that, in the words of Michael Oakeshott, the historian's concern is not with causes, but with occasions:

In the historian's understanding of events, just as none is 'accidental', so none is 'necessary' or 'inevitable'. What we can observe him doing in his characteristic inquiries and utterances is, not extricating general causes and sufficient conditions, but setting before us the events (in so far as they can be ascertained) which mediate one circumstance to another.¹³ . . . [T]he historian's concern is not with causes but with occasions.¹⁴

Oakeshott adduces the example of de Tocqueville's method to illustrate what he means:

[The historian] knows only a set of happenings which, when fully set out, makes the outbreak of *this* war seem neither an 'accident', nor a 'miracle', nor a necessary event. This, for example, is what de Tocqueville does in *L'Ancien Régime*: the French Revolution is come upon, and its character is exhibited, not as the necessary and inevitable consequence of preceding events, but as an intelligible convergence of human choices and actions.¹⁵

We should, then, take courage from the fact that believers are not up against any sort of iron law towards godlessness, a law that predetermines all our efforts to vindicate the truth of Catholicism to failure before we

¹³ Michael Oakeshott, "The Activity of being an Historian," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, new ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), 172.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

even begin to try. With this assurance there is no just cause either for despair or for taking refuge in an apocalyptic withdrawal from the world. The Church is not predetermined to failure because of an iron law of progress, nor is her only hope in an apocalyptic view that we have to wait for either the second coming or an angelic pastor before things can be set right. The patient, often tedious, effort to evangelize society is not doomed to failure before we begin.

It must be said, though, that one of the great difficulties in accepting what I have just said is the growth of an attitude we have all learned to call neo-modernism, or postmodernism.¹⁶ The writings of the postmodernists have been variously understood and written about. There is, however, one theme that usually surfaces, and that is the refusal to accept even the possibility of master or overall accounts of reality, what are also called *grands discours* or meta-narratives. Plato's view that metaphysics is the effort to see things steadily and to see them whole is thus held to be totally wrongheaded. This is held to be the case because Plato was looking for a comprehensive statement about the nature of reality; and even to begin looking for such an account, so the postmodernists claim, is to embark on an enterprise that is not only futile but actually harmful. It is futile because there is no reality as such to be described, and it is harmful because a metaphysical view of the nature of reality always goes hand in hand with oppression of various sorts.

The malice of this intellectual stance for Christianity is twofold. In the first place: Christianity is a "master" or "overall" narrative, it is a *grand discours par excellence*, and believers think this master narrative is the key to understanding their existence. If in fact such an account is an impossibility, then any sort of understanding of Catholicism as being true falls by the board.

Yet, this is not all, because, secondly, one of the effects of postmodernism in the real world of society is to place a powerful tool in the hands of those who are in control of governments and courts. Post-modernism is usually presented in a way that assumes that all really educated people accept the attack of the Enlightenment on the particularity of the Christian revelation. This does not mean, however, that either governments or courts are willing to accept the absence of *grands discours* when it comes

¹⁶ "This is an expression," as I wrote in *The Mass and Modernity*, "that has become so common that we find it in the daily papers and hear it on the radio and television. What it seems to mean at this level is that everything is in flux, and this includes the person who experiences a world in which there are no stable centers or fixed meanings. Everything has been shaken up, and nothing much has been put together again" (171).

to their own activities, that is, either in the making or in the application of the laws of the State. The solvent of postmodernism is applied to any and every form of belief and practice except those of the law, and how the judges interpret it.

In the place of this powerful and pervasive current of postmodernism, a current that is, I think, another metaphysics or worldview, we have at least to remind ourselves of an older and a saner view of the world. It may be difficult to establish this view in the modern world of the postmodernists, but we must try to keep some sort of a sense of objectivity and truth alive in the wilderness of modern intellectual life.

Liturgy and Inwardness

The principle that mere formalism in religion is displeasing to God and destructive of genuine morality is as old as the Prophets, and it has been an integral aspect of Catholic thought from the beginning. Furthermore, subjectivity in the sense of the soul's ascent to God is a perennial note in Catholic experience. The first question before us is to determine why the element of interiority seems to have taken precedence over every other sort of consideration and has now become the touchstone of genuine religion. Then, secondly, I want to at least point out that the sacramentality of Catholicism carries with it the necessity of taking seriously what is visible and external.

We can elaborate the first question by considering the question of importance; that is, why do some people think some things are important while to others they appear to be of no consequence? For example, the *Catechism* cites a well-known text in the conciliar document *Lumen Gentium* that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life."¹⁷ Why is it that this centrality of the Mass does not seem to be, in practice, the dominant principle of action among many Catholic people? Part of the answer may be found in false teaching, ignorance, and infidelity. There are many books in which those sorts of reasons are discussed. I am trying to ask a more fundamental question as to why attitudes in fact hostile to Catholicism seem so acceptable to many in the Church who nonetheless are of apparently good will. The answer must surely be that other things appear more important in the here and now, and this perceived importance becomes the focus of attention. Then, gradually, as a consequence of this focus, a mind-set develops in which the Mass and the other Sacraments are viewed as mere tools, or means, toward helping the realization of extrinsic purposes which may even be laudable and

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1324; Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, §11.

Christian in themselves. It must also be said that the harshness of the rhetoric of some of those who are justifiably outraged by many aspects of the contemporary situation has been counter-productive. In fact, it seems to be the case that this strident polemic has had the contrary effect of frightening many in the direction of a complacent liberalism.¹⁸

Now if, as Catholics, we believe that the Eucharist is something more than a commemorative rite designed to manifest the unity of the Church and to provide Holy Communion for the People of God, then how is it that the Mass seems so often to be regarded as nothing more than the Christian Synaxis,¹⁹ or else as the *Most Blessed Sacrament*?²⁰ I emphasize *nothing more*, because as the Catechism teaches, the Mass is in fact a visible expression of the Church, and clearly the community aspect is important; furthermore, we are also taught that the providing of Holy Communion is also an integral part of the Mass.²¹ Yet, why does it seem self-evident to many Catholics that other understandings of the Mass are irrelevant and even harmful? Specifically I want to ask about the origin of the automatic response that the notion of sacrifice belongs to the past—and that it should remain in the past. What is the source of the superior attitude that sacrifice and expiation are relics of primitive and superstitious ways of thinking?

I suggest there are two reasons for these often half-formulated responses: one is the modern view that real religion has to do with the heart, or with interior dispositions; the second is that history is thought to be the story of progress and freedom and that whatever can be identified as primordial can only belong to the intellectual and moral child-

¹⁸ “La masse cléricale préférerait écouter les sirens sympathiques du progressisme bon enfant plutôt que de trembler sous la fêrule des maîtres de la Sapinière ou de leurs descendants.” Interview with Jean Borella, “Intelligence spirituelle et surnaturel,” in Eric Vatré, *La droite du Père: enquête sur la tradition catholique aujourd’hui* (Paris: Trédaniel, 1994), jean.borella.neuf.fr/intelligencesets.htm.

¹⁹ The Catechism says that one way of referring to the “inexhaustible richness” of the Eucharist is “the *Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)*, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church” (§1329).

²⁰ The next section of the Catechism says that another way of referring to this “inexhaustible richness” is to “speak of the *Most Blessed Sacrament* because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. The Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by the same name” (§1330).

²¹ One unintended response to the seemingly unending series of liturgical initiatives has led to viewing the Mass as a focus for purely Eucharistic devotion. The celebration of Mass provides the hosts to be consumed; the celebration of Mass provides the host to be adored in the monstrance or the tabernacle. In this perspective the Mass itself seems to have become solely an act of adoration.

hood of mankind which it is not only our prerogative but our duty to supersede. So, the belief that all true religion is only interior, coupled with the view that the ideas of expiation and sacrifice are primitive, leads to the denigration in practice of the symbols and ritual of the Mass, and then, inevitably, to the importance of the Mass itself.

There are many tributaries that have contributed to this undervaluing, when it is not the active distrust, of rites and ceremonies. In the history of Western Christendom, it would be possible to trace a stream that flows from the German Reformation through Pietism, ending with the conviction that religion is "the reaction of human nature in its search for God."²² But I think that the *fons et origo* of the attitude is the dissemination, through the universities and learned opinion in society and finally from the pulpit, of the work of Hegel. It was Hegel who took the idea of justification by faith and reworked it into a powerful amalgam of subjectivity and anti-Catholicism; and it was this amalgam which entered into the consciousness of the West. Luther may be more important than Hegel in strictly religious circles, but my contention is that the popularizing of Luther's justification by faith, even amongst those who have no knowledge of German Protestantism, is due more to Hegel's role in forming popular culture than any other factor.

Hegel's thought has been enormously influential in forming the way we think about ourselves and our world. His views on philosophy, politics, history, art, community, and religion are still a vital aspect of contemporary writing on who we are and how we fit into the scheme of things. A good deal of this writing has influenced thinkers in the Church.²³ Hegel maintained in his analysis of the Reformation that the corruption of the Church was not due to the moral turpitude of the clergy, but was rather the result of what he termed a "native growth."²⁴ "[T]he principle of that corruption is to be looked for in the fact that the specific and definite embodiment of the Deity which it recognizes, is sensuous—that the external in a coarse form, is enshrined in its inmost being."²⁵

It was owing, says Hegel, to "the time-honoured and cherished *sincerity of the German people*," that there came about a revolution "out of the honest

²² This is A. N. Whitehead's expression in *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), 237.

²³ John Milbank writes, "In recent Catholic theology, the Hegelian and Marxist traditions have acquired an unprecedented degree of influence." *Theology and Social Theory Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1990), 206.

²⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 412.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 412–13.

truth and simplicity of its heart.”²⁶ This revolution was Luther’s conviction that salvation is brought about essentially by an inner experience:

This, then, is the Lutheran faith, in accordance with which man stands in a relation to God which involves his personal existence; that is his piety and the hope of his salvation and the like all demand that his heart, his subjectivity, should be present in them.²⁷

So, what Hegel takes Luther to be saying is that when a man has an inner awareness of his personal relationship to God, then he is liberated from anything external which might interfere with his freedom.

Luther’s simple doctrine is that the specific embodiment of Deity—infinite subjectivity, that is true spirituality, Christ—is in no way present and actual in an outward form, but as essentially spiritual is obtained only in being reconciled to God *in faith and spiritual enjoyment*.²⁸

With this inner certainty real freedom is finally achieved, and it has been achieved in the depths of man’s inmost nature; in “faith and spiritual enjoyment” man is finally at home with himself and at home with God.²⁹ This paean of praise on behalf of subjectivity is then contrasted explicitly with Catholic worship: “All externality in relation to me is thereby banished, just as in the externality of the Host; it is only in communion and faith that I stand in relation to God.”³⁰

Hegel had many sensible things to say about the effort to construct a morality on a purely subjective basis,³¹ but when it came to the actual practice of religion, he clearly taught that subjectivity, or as we might now say, authenticity, is what counts for real religion. If the sacraments help with this cultivation, then well and good, but if not, then we should not worry too much about that. However, unlike Kant, who never went to Church, Hegel was concerned with the religion practiced by the citi-

²⁶ Ibid., 414.

²⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *The History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, trans. E. S. Haldane (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), 149. It has been pointed out to me that Hegel’s description is radically distorted. This does not, however, touch my point that it is Hegel’s description of Lutheranism that has been the source of the view that Protestantism is *really* about inwardness, and that this version of Protestantism is what *real* Christianity is about.

²⁸ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 415.

²⁹ Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 148.

³⁰ Ibid., 149.

³¹ I have dealt with some of these questions in *Duty and Hypocrisy in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

zens of the state, and he would never have counseled a good German to give up on the practice of the Sacraments. This seems to be so because the practice of Lutheranism, at least for a German, was an element in what it meant to be a good citizen. Such a *ratio* is not explicitly religious, and it is not all that clear as to what Hegel himself really thought about these matters; but it does not matter for our purposes as it is his exoteric teaching with which we are concerned.

This perception that pure religion is essentially subjective receives powerful support from the view that taking external religion seriously is primitive and morally stultifying. I have already discussed Mary Douglas's view that secularism is not particularly modern, but even if she is correct in maintaining that there have always been non-believers and secularists, might it not still be the case that external religion, or at least very much external religion, is irrelevant, useless, or even harmful for modern man?

In answer to this I would first of all like to construct a very simple argument from authority. The Church, as we have already noted, teaches that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life," and you cannot have the Eucharist without at least some symbolic and ritualistic elements. The Eucharist is a sacrifice that *re-presents* (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is a memorial, and because it applies its fruit.³² Whatever is thought to follow from this teaching, it is clear that the sort of sacrifice referred to here is symbolic and ritualistic and is not a memorial designed merely to arouse subjective experiences. Of course, nothing follows directly from this as to the question of what symbols and what rites should be employed for this purpose, but if we think about the centrality of symbols and rites in themselves, a centrality which flows from the centrality of the Mass, we will be strengthened in our conviction that such questions really are important and central to the practice of our religion. We will be fortified when we might be tempted to give in to those good souls who assure us that we are quarreling over inessentials, and the half-voiced judgement that our attitudes are pharisaical.

But what about the people who say that while some external appearances are necessary, nonetheless the whole perspective, the whole "feel" of, say, the Old Rite, is primitive and superstitious? Mary Douglas, commenting on Pope Paul VI's *Mysterium Fidei*, remarks that the doctrine of the Eucharist is indeed primitive in what it teaches.³³ It is worth pondering

³² CCC, §1366. The section continues with a citation in the text to the teaching of the Council of Trent.

³³ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 49. The first edition of her book was written before the publication of the Catechism, but her words apply just as accurately to one document as to the other.

what she says, because we believe that the Christian sacrifice is a sacrifice, and if so, it must be recognizably the same sort of activity as that which at least some of mankind has always practiced. Furthermore, what she says ought to furnish us with material for meditation on what is really going on at Mass. If we believe in the Mass, we ought not to be ashamed to be thought fools for Christ's sake,³⁴ nor embarrassed that we share attitudes towards worship that would have been recognized by Abraham, our father in Faith.

Mary Douglas reminds us that what we are involved in is inextricably linked to the here and now that characterized the Incarnation of our Redeemer, and still characterizes the Sacrifice of the Mass. This is not to say that the Mass reveals itself as true because it shares the here and now of more primitive forms of worship, but that, in the spirit of St. Clement of Alexandria, the true Mystery is not alien to our human nature.³⁵

Here is a doctrine as uncompromising as any West African fetishist's that the deity is located in a specific object, place and time and under control of a specific formula. To make the deity inhabit a material object, whether shrine, mask, juju or piece of bread, is ritualism at its starkest. The condensation of symbols is staggering in its range and depth. The white circle of bread encompasses symbolically the cosmos, the whole history of the Church and more, since it goes from the bread offering of Melchisedech, to Calvary and the Mass. In this compass it expresses themes of atonement, nourishment and renewal.³⁶

The Mass, however, is not merely a symbolic representation in the here and now of the sacrifice of Calvary; it is also symbolism in action, and symbolism in action is what we call ritual. The Mass is a representation through ritual of the mystery of our redemption. Mary Douglas goes on to say:

But this is not all. Symbolizing does not exhaust the meaning of the Eucharist. Its full meaning involves magical or sacramental efficacy. . . . The crux of the doctrine is that a real, invisible transformation has taken place at the priest's saying of the sacred words and that the eating of the consecrated host has saving efficacy for those who take it and for

³⁴ 1 Cor 3:18: "If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."

³⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, XII, 119, 1: "Come I will show you the Word and the mysteries of the Word, and I will give you understanding of them by means of images familiar to you." Cited in Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, trans. Brian Battershaw (New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1971), 3.

³⁶ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 50.

others. It is based on a fundamental assumption about the human role in religion.³⁷

Catholicism knows nothing of a religion of pure inwardness. It is not only false to hold that only the heart matters, it is also counter-productive when it comes to maintaining and to spreading the Faith.³⁸ I say this because, as I tried to say in *The Mass and Modernity*, it is the Mass itself which is our most precious instrument in any evangelization that is to result in anything recognizably Catholic. Our best hope in restoring all things in Christ is through the symbolism and ritual of the Mass, and what I have said in this paper is an unrepentant re-affirmation of my thesis that, humanly speaking, it is difficult to see our way out of the present situation until we return in practice to the traditional doctrine of the Church in the celebration of the Mass.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In his foreword to Martin Mosebach's book *The Heresy of Formlessness*, Father Joseph Fessio, S.J. writes that even "a rubrically correct and reverently celebrated *Novus Ordo* Mass appears and is experienced by those with a deep understanding and appreciation for the Church's liturgical tradition as a 'rupture' or 'break' with tradition."³⁹ Both the word "rupture" and "break," Father Fessio reminds us, are words used in this context by the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

Father Fessio's statement seems to me indisputably true. I want to add, though, that it is not only those who possess "a deep understanding and appreciation of the Church's liturgical tradition" who experience the new ways of celebrating Mass as a rupture or break. I say this because anyone, and you do not even have to be a Catholic, who has experienced the old way of doing things, and what goes on now, can sense the rupture or the break. The difference between those who are pleased with the changes and those who are not does not consist in what is perceived but

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The experience of Edith Stein's Jewish family is relevant here: "It was central to Auguste Stein's life that she was a devout and observant Jew, herself brought up in one of those small Jewish communities that had flourished on both sides of the Silesian border, communities that had been able to provide their members with only the bare elements of instruction in their religion, but that had been sustained by their observances of the Sabbath and the High Holy Days." Alasdair MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue, 1913–1922* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, Inc., 2006), 10.

³⁹ Joseph Fessio, S.J., foreword to *The Heresy of Formlessness*, by Martin Mosebach, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 9.

in the value judgment that is brought to bear on the changes. I mean by this that even those who approve of the changes do not have any difficulty in admitting the changes; it is rather the case that, recognizing the breaks and the ruptures, they glory in them.

Mosebach describes his experience of the changes in the Church:

I was no longer going to Mass. But I heard people say that the priests had taken off their black suits and soutanes and went about dressed like petty-bourgeois students or petty-bourgeois postmen; there was no more Latin in the Mass; the priest no longer stood facing the altar but stood behind it, as if he were behind a counter, and he looked at them and happily bawled the hymns at them; at Communion he put the Host into their hands, not on the tongue as formerly.⁴⁰

Perhaps some of you might dislike the tone of the above passage, but it does describe how the changes were perceived. Now for the value judgment:

The people I knew welcomed these innovations as something long overdue, but even my mother was quite definite that no one *had* to attend that kind of thing. I recall similar conversations with older Catholics who were clearly pleased with the reforms while at the same time being quite determined that “they would not be going”.⁴¹

Once again, this is an accurate description of an apparently contradictory, but nevertheless true, phenomenon: on the one hand, people maintained that the changes were a good thing, but, on the other, did not want to have anything to do with them. Mosebach’s description is surely verified by the fact that there was relatively little outcry from the laity when the changes first came out, but at the same time in spite of this, they voted with their feet and left off practicing their religion.

The usual response to this reaction on the part of those who wish to defend the *principles* behind the changes, if not the way they were carried out, is to say with Father Fessio that “from a strictly theological view, there is a continuity in the underlying doctrine and structure of the celebration of the Mass in its pre-conciliar and post-conciliar forms.” I have used this argument myself time and time again in trying to dissuade people from joining the Society of St. Pius X or just giving up practicing. I have used the argument because it was the best I could think of, but I have never found it watertight and find it even less so today, even though I believe that trying to persuade people to stay with the ship is an obligation for a priest.

⁴⁰ Mosebach, *The Heresy of Formlessness*, 14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

The difficulty with the argument is that liturgy is more than a theology lesson, or a purely intellectual grasp of dogma; liturgy is, as I said earlier, something that is done. Andrew Louth, writing about Basil the Great, puts this in a compelling way:

[D]ogma . . . is the experience of the mystery of Christ within the bosom of the Church, which is to be kept secret from those outside, from those who do not have faith—it is growing understanding of the faith mediated through the experience of the liturgy of the Church and a deeper grasp of the hidden significance of the Scriptures.⁴²

Liturgy, then, is one of the ways the truths of faith are grasped in a manner that is more than, and I would say deeper than, what is merely propositional. It is in and through the celebration of Mass that we should be helped towards a deeper grasp of the Faith. Although this is a statement of what liturgy should be about, I hardly think that any version of this view of St. Basil's about the role of dogma and liturgy would be the first thing to spring to the mind of contemporary Catholics, much less seem self-evident, or even comprehensible.

How could this situation be rectified? The first practical necessity would be a determined effort on the part of the clergy to allow the liturgy to do its own work without the constant intrusion of their own personality and concerns. Indeed, I want to go further than that and contend that priests should have very little to do with determining the form and content of public worship. I say this because I think that the main purpose of the liturgy is to render present on the altar the sacrifice of Christ, and the recognition of the presence of this sacrifice is accomplished by loving, non-personalized repetition. The whole concept of liturgical commissions and committees, not to say of creative liturgy, is inimical to Catholic worship. Priests should not have to think, Sunday after Sunday, about what they are to do to brighten things up or make them more acceptable to their people. They should only have to think about how to do what is prescribed for them to do in a better way.

It is true, however, that in the present situation, both because of prevailing liturgical trends and because of the facultative nature of the *Novus Ordo*,⁴³ we are forced to think about liturgy more than is really

⁴² Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 27.

⁴³ A friendly critic has accused me (in a private letter) of speaking of the *Novus Ordo* as if it were actually a rite whereas "it is just a set of options which positively require that a priest make his own decisions about all sorts of things, and, since there is so much up for grabs, he is to be forgiven if he thinks that everything is up for grabs." I suppose the question turns on what we understand by a *rite*; and I

desirable; but, still, I do believe that there is nothing worse for the good of the People of God than constant, semi-public musing at the parish level about what to do next.

In the last chapter of *The Mass and Modernity*, I gave some indications as to how I thought the celebration of Mass could be improved. Although I am convinced that some version of “a reform of the reform” is the best way to deal with the present malaise, my discussion was based on the conviction that the Old Rite Mass should be used as a standard or ideal against which to measure more modern celebrations of Mass. I organized these indications around three themes, those of *order*, *knowledge*, and *being-at-work*, taken from Dionysius the Areopagite (or the Pseudo-Dionysius, as he is sometimes rather unhappily called). I have been impressed that by far the most serious reviews of *The Mass and Modernity* have been by those who accept my analysis of how the present situation came about but disagree with my reform-of-the-reform stance. I do admit that the last part of my book is mild for some tastes; but I was obliged to celebrate the *Novus Ordo* for over thirty-five years if I wanted to stay in the Church, and am not now going to say that somehow or other I was not saying Mass, nor that I was being cowardly. Some younger priests today are critical of my generation of priests, but we had no choice. It is also worth pointing out that those of us who, over the years, have tried to keep as traditional an approach as possible while using the new rites have often been accused by those of a more progressive stance, or by those who imagine that they are in the middle of the road, of being unfaithful to the spirit of Vatican II. It has been difficult to keep one’s balance so as not to overreact during the post-conciliar years, but here are some practical convictions based on my own experience.

First of all, I continue to believe that the Old Rite must be the standard for our worship. The Old Rite by its nature taught the centrality of God, the need for a contemplative attitude, the vital importance of ritual and symbols and of the helplessness and sinfulness of mankind before the majesty and purity of God. As a result of this conviction, that is, of the superior capacity of the Old Rite to teach unspoken but true lessons, I think that the use of the Old Rite Mass should be extended. And we are led to believe this will be the case.

I do not think the idea of using one rite as a standard for another one is a fanciful or unrealistic one. When we took over our first parish in Toronto in 1979, we instituted a *Novus Ordo* sung Latin Mass at 11:00 on Sundays. It took us years, often very discouraging years, to establish this

think by using the phrase “facultative nature” I have pointed to an agreement with what my critic is saying without going all the way down the road with him.

both in terms of the numbers attending as well as of financial support. We persevered, and now the Church is comfortably full, although not packed, and the Mass is well supported financially. However, that is not the point I want to make. During the difficult years, we used to say that the 11:00 Mass was our flagship and set the standard for our other five Sunday Masses, as well as those celebrated during the week. In a similar way, I believe that the presence of even low Masses in the Old Rite would help to set the standard for other celebrations not excluding *Novus Ordo* Masses. I think the rubrics of the *Novus Ordo* are too susceptible to diverse interpretations to allow the New Rite to be generally used as such a standard.

If the Old Rite is to serve as a standard for other celebrations of Mass, then it must be integrated into the regular timetable of other parish Masses. If this is not done, it will continue to be regarded as somehow licit, but very suspect, and therefore having nothing to teach most Church-goers. What in fact militates against the success of my suggestion is the impression amongst those few Catholics who have even heard about what they probably call "Tridentinists" that they are involved in a sectarian activity.⁴⁴

What is a sect? Well, the word is easier to use, especially as a term of opprobrium, than it is to define. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* suggests that "[u]nlike the Church, the sect considers itself a fellowship of the saved rather than a mixture of saints and sinners; sinners are excommunicated and even shunned." The article goes on to note: "Other positions characteristic of the sect include an emphasis on some minor theological doctrine such as perfection, spiritual healing, speaking in tongues, or Adventism."⁴⁵ I do not suppose any of us think questions about the rite of Mass are minor, but the harping on one theme to the exclusion of all others is a possibility even when the theme is of great importance.

Old Rite Catholics would be less likely to act in a sectarian way, or be treated by the majority of Catholics as though they really did belong to a sect, if the Old Rite Mass were integrated into the timetable of other Sunday celebrations. I have seen this work. One reason is that many Catholics go to a particular Mass because the time is convenient; and if, for example, the 8:00 Mass on Sunday morning were said in the old way in Latin, a large number of those attending because the time is convenient would get used to it, and it would become no big deal. In this way,

⁴⁴ See Thaddeus Kozinski, "The Gnostic Traditionalist," *New Oxford Review* 74 (June 2007): 24–34.

⁴⁵ *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), s.v. "Sects and Cults, American," 31.

if I may express something very important in a homely way, the Old Rite Mass would become domesticated and no longer be in danger of appearing sectarian.

I want to conclude by drawing your attention to a distinction so obvious that we overlook its importance. It is one thing to try to preserve the faith in a parish, and another thing to try to go out and attract new people to the parish or recover some of those who have left off practicing their faith. It is probably true that the priest who is not interested in building up his parish will not be much good in keeping what he has together; nonetheless, the two activities are distinct in more than a merely formal way.

With all the talk of making the Mass more accessible, there seems to have been precious little consideration given to the regular church-goers, and especially those who go to daily Mass. I think the Old Rite nourished and sustained such people. It is not true that they did not understand what was going on; they understood very well. Their level of culture may have varied a good deal, but people did not get up early in the mornings to attend something that meant nothing to them. Or, to take another example from my own experience, when I was first ordained and was stationed at the cathedral in Montreal, the Church was full every weekday for the noonday Mass by workers from the surrounding office buildings. Most of those who attended were taking time off their lunch hour and carried missals with them. Weekday worship should have been left untouched. The weekday Masses were attended by the fervent, and the hungry were filled with good things.

On the other hand, I accept, as I accepted then, that Sunday worship certainly needed to be thought about, and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was the Church's effort to improve Sunday worship. There is no use going on once again about how the document was implemented, but if we are interested in trying to restore Catholic worship, then we should at least consider re-instituting daily Mass in the Old Rite. The presence of this authentic, traditional worship of the Church would then affect the way the Sunday Mass is said.

Why would there be a change for the better? There would be a change for the better because the priests who would say the Old Rite Mass all week would import something of the order, reverence, and awe that the traditional Mass instills to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. They would begin to behave differently on Sundays.

I do not suppose for a moment that this is going to happen, because the hatred of the Old Mass is not hatred of a Rite as such; it is a rejection of the Catholic past. Henry Ford said that history was bunk; and that

seems to be the de facto attitude of a great many of those who call the shots in today's Church.

On the other hand, I do not think that Sunday celebrations of the Old Rite are going to fulfill the Church's obligation to preach Christ Jesus and Him Crucified to the lapsed and the unbelieving. The reasons for saying this are manifold, but the most important is that after forty years of the New Rite the Old has lost its unequivocal character as the Mass of the Church. To become an Old Rite Catholic is now a matter of choice and is no longer the necessary mark of being a Catholic. You may think that is a sad state of affairs, but it is the way things are; and, as, Joseph Butler, an eighteenth-century British philosopher wrote, "everything is what it is, and not another thing."

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