

## Reforming the Liturgy



John F. Baldovin, SJ

# REFORMING THE LITURGY

*A Response to the Critics*

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*To the memory of*

Edward J. Kilmartin, SJ (1923–1994)

Aidan J. Kavanagh, OSB (1929–2006)

Thomas Julian Talley (1924–2006)



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## Preface

This work originated in a series of articles for various publications. The first was a *Festschrift* for Nathan Mitchell in which I published an article on Catherine Pickstock's treatment of medieval liturgy.<sup>1</sup> The second was an article solicited by Paul Bradshaw, editor of *Studia Liturgica*. That essay dealt with the post-Vatican II liturgical critique of Klaus Gamber.<sup>2</sup> Finally, there was an essay on Joseph Ratzinger in a volume in honor of Paul Bradshaw.<sup>3</sup> After finishing those essays I decided to embark on a project that would survey the various types of criticism that have been aimed at the post-Vatican II reform of Roman Catholic worship. The present book is the result.

Writing a book is a solitary activity, but one never really does it alone. I am grateful to the editors of the volumes and journal in which the original three essays appeared, as well as to R. Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, and Joyce Ann Zimmerman, CPPS, the editors of *Worship* and the *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* in which the appendix first appeared. The bulk of this work was done while I was on a sabbatical granted by Weston Jesuit School of Theology (now the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry). I am grateful to then-President Robert Manning, SJ, and Dean Randy Sachs, SJ, for granting me this sabbatical. The writing was done at the Fairfield University Jesuit community, and I am most grateful to its rector, Walter Conlan, SJ, and the president of the university, Jeffrey von Arx, SJ, as well as the most genial Jesuit community for their gracious hospitality. I am also indebted to Martin Jean, director of Yale's Institute of Sacred Music, who facilitated my use of Yale's wonderful libraries. I am also thankful for

<sup>1</sup> Clare V. Johnson, ed., *Ars Liturgiae: Worship, Aesthetics and Praxis: Essays in Honor of Nathan D. Mitchell* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2003), 55–76.

<sup>2</sup> "Klaus Gamber and the Post-Vatican II Reform of the Roman Liturgy," *Studia Liturgica* 33 (2003): 223–39.

<sup>3</sup> Maxwell Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, eds., *Studia Liturgica Diversa: Essays in Honor of Paul F. Bradshaw* (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2004), 211–28.

the kind invitations of Paul Lakeland (Fairfield University), Walter Conlan, SJ (the Fairfield Jesuit Community), the Catholic Academy of Liturgy, James Hayes, SJ (Jesuit Community at the College of the Holy Cross), and Jerome Maryon (Committee on Contemporary Spiritual and Public Concerns, St. Paul Parish, Cambridge, MA) for their invitations to share the results of my study.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Gregory Semeniuk, CM, for assembling the bibliography, and to Brian Flanagan who compiled the index, not to mention Linda Maloney, Peter Dwyer, Michelle Verkuilen, and Hans Christoffersen of Liturgical Press.

Several friends and colleagues read all or part of the manuscript. They kept me from making a number of egregious errors, with regard to both style and fact. I am very grateful to my faculty colleagues at Weston Jesuit, as well as to Lawrence Borchardt; Andrew Cameron-Mowat, SJ; Paul Cavendish; John Page; Marc Reeves, SJ; and Joseph Villecco.

This book is dedicated to the memory of three of my significant mentors in liturgical studies.

## Abbreviations

CDWDS	Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments
DOL	<i>Documents on the Liturgy 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts</i> (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982)
DS	Denzinger/Schönmetzer
EACW	<i>Environment and Art in Catholic Worship</i>
GIRM	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i>
ICEL	International Commission on English in the Liturgy
LA	<i>Liturgiam Authenticam</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
SP	<i>Summorum Pontificum</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>



## Introduction

Since the very beginnings of the implementation of Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, hereafter SC), the reform and renewal of Roman Catholic worship has been severely criticized. This criticism by scholars and writers on many fronts has taken on new force since the publication of the Congregation for Divine Worship's 2000 instruction, *Liturgiam Authenticam* (*On the Correct Translation of Liturgical Texts*) and even more recently with Pope Benedict XVI's *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum* (July 2007). The present book arises from the conviction that serious critique of the reform—both in its formulation in the Liturgy Constitution and in the subsequent reformed liturgical books and their implementation—needs to be attended to. It also arises from the conviction that these criticisms need an equally serious assessment and response.

The liturgical reform prompted by SC was the fruit of decades of research and conversation about the state of Catholic worship. Beginning with the adoption of historical method in the retrieval of ancient and medieval texts and continuing with the monastic revival of Dom Prosper Gueranger and others in the mid-nineteenth century, the liturgical movement was initiated in earnest at the beginning of the twentieth century by Dom Lambert Beauduin and a host of other liturgical historians and theologians. That movement has been well documented elsewhere, as has the implementation of the Liturgy Constitution.<sup>1</sup> There is no need to repeat these valuable studies. But one

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider's View of Liturgical Renewal* (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1998); Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990); Piero Marini, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal*, Mark Francis, John Page, and Keith Pecklers, eds. (Collegeville,

fact should indeed be emphasized. The post-Vatican II documents, from Paul VI's *motu proprio*, *Sacram Liturgiam* (25 January 1964) and the Sacred Congregation of Rites' Instruction, *Inter Oecumenici* (26 September 1964) forward are the implementation of the guidelines for reform and renewal provided by the council's Liturgy Constitution.<sup>2</sup> Just as the Council of Trent's decrees could not have reformed the liturgy, but rather laid the groundwork for what has come to be called the Tridentine liturgy, so the general principles given by SC required the difficult and painstaking work of the liturgical commissions created to actually implement it at the end of the council. All too often criticism of the liturgical reform has pretended that the entirety of the reform can be located in the council document itself. What *can* be contested is whether the official implementation was faithful to the Liturgy Constitution.<sup>3</sup> The pastoral implementation of those official reforms can also be debated. Much of what follows hangs on differentiating between the Liturgy Constitution and the subsequent implementation by the Consilium for the implementation of the liturgical reform that Pope Paul VI established under Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro and Vincentian Father Annibale Bugnini in the aftermath of the approval of the constitution. That story has now been ably told by Archbishop Piero Marini, papal master of ceremonies from 1987 to 2007.<sup>4</sup>

I have decided to select a number of serious critiques of the liturgical reform with a view to engaging the opposition to the reform as a whole. The bibliography of these works and authors is very large indeed, and so some discretion is required in dealing with the volume of criticism that has been offered. My selection is inevitably somewhat subjective, but I do think that I have chosen to examine some of the most impor-

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MN: Liturgical Press, 2007). For the period immediately preceding Vatican II see Carlo Braga, "Per la Storia della Riforma Liturgica: La Commissione di Pio XII e di Giovanni XXIII," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 117 (2003): 401–04.

<sup>2</sup> The official documents of the reform in English translation can be found in International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982). I will cite the document numbers from this collection—here at 276ff. and 293ff.

<sup>3</sup> For example: "Those who claim to have 'implemented' *Sacrosanctum Concilium* have repudiated the foundations of that document, have conceived a different inspiration, and have led the Roman Church in quite a different direction from that given by the liturgical movement and ratified by the council." Serge Kelleher, "Whatever Happened to the Liturgical Movement? A View from the East," in Stratford Caldecott, ed., *Beyond the Prosaic: Renewing the Liturgical Movement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 74.

<sup>4</sup> Marini, *A Challenging Reform* (see n. 1 above).

tant and persuasive critics. Needless to say, there have been a number of critics (as well as defenders) of the reform who are less intellectually compelling, but my selection does not imply that every serious critic is accounted for in these pages.<sup>5</sup>

#### A BRIEF CHRONICLE OF OPPOSITION

As Archbishop Marini's book on the creation of the *Consilium* shows, opposition to the implementation of SC began as soon as the constitution was approved. Paul VI was unwilling to entrust the reform of the liturgy to the Congregation of Rites because its leadership was opposed to the reform in the first place. Therefore he created something new with the awkward name of the *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra liturgia* (usually shortened to *Consilium*). This office reported directly to the pope and, according to Marini, was the object of a great deal of suspicion in the Roman Curia. The *Consilium's* work was essentially completed by 1969, when it was absorbed into the newly created Congregation for Divine Worship. In a harbinger of things to come, the Congregation for Divine Worship was dissolved in 1975 and replaced by the current Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Bugnini (now an archbishop and secretary of the Congregation) was dismissed (and sent as papal nuncio to Iran). The Vatican's proactive stance toward liturgical reform lasted until 1975. From then on, one document after another drew back on the reforms or at least expressed a good deal of caution with regard to them. In my opinion the year 1994 marked a definitive turning point when the fourth Instruction on the Reform of the Liturgy, *Varietates Legitimae*, on the subject of inculturation, was promulgated.

Marini chronicles the early opposition to the reform, which was associated with the Roman Curia. For example, a book in Italian by Tito Casino that was extremely critical of the work of the *Consilium* appeared in 1967. It was remarkable for the fact that its preface was by a curial cardinal, Antonio Bacci.<sup>6</sup> Bacci also joined with Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani in 1969 in a letter to the pope that accused the reform

<sup>5</sup> I should add that the topic of liturgical reform is much too large to address in this modest book. See the monumental series of books in honor of Angelus Häussling, OSB: Martin Klöckener and Benedikt Kranemann, eds., *Liturgiereformen: Historische Studien zu einem bleibenden Grundzug des christlichen Gottesdienstes*. 2 vols. Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 88–89 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002). For the post-Vatican II reform and its reception see Vol. II, Part VI.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

of serious deviation from Catholic theology and doctrine.<sup>7</sup> Around the same time scholars like Klaus Gamber in Germany were voicing serious discontent with the reform, and an organized opposition under Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre began to call for a return to the traditional (pre-Vatican II) Mass.<sup>8</sup> Paul VI himself exhibited a good deal of caution in his addresses to members of the *Consilium* and the Congregation for Divine Worship.<sup>9</sup> The pope also required changes in the first edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* because it had been criticized as overly Protestant.<sup>10</sup> Organizations like *Una Voce* as well as Lefebvre's movement had, in fact, begun their work very early. These groups (and their heirs) opposed the reform as a whole. In fact, there have been so many approaches taken to the reform (pro and con) that it is necessary to organize them by categories.

#### ASSESSING THE REFORM

One of the best templates for assessing the current reform of the liturgy has been provided by M. Francis Mannion in a paper delivered at a congress convened at Oxford in 1996 to discuss the current state of Roman Catholic liturgy.<sup>11</sup> Mannion employs the "models" typology popularized by H. Richard Niebuhr and Avery Dulles to distinguish five discernible agendas at work with regard to contemporary liturgical reform. He admits that these five approaches are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, I can find myself in agreement with four of the five on various points and I am certain that I am not alone. These are the five agendas:

1. Advancing the official reform
2. Restoring the preconciliar
3. Reforming the reform
4. Inculturating the reform
5. Recatholicizing the reform

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–43.

<sup>8</sup> Enrico Cattaneo, *Il Culto Cristiano in Occidente: note storiche* (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano—Edizioni Liturgiche, 1978), 643ff.

<sup>9</sup> Texts quoted in *Il Culto Cristiano*, 645–47.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 651, thus causing a confusing double numbering system of the paragraphs, since the addition was made as a preface to the original instruction. This confusion was cleared up by the 2002 edition of the *GIRM*.

<sup>11</sup> M. Francis Mannion, "The Catholicity of the Liturgy: Shaping a New Agenda," in Caldecott, *Beyond the Prosaic* (see n. 3 above), 11–48.

### 1. *Advancing the official reform*

The basic lines of each agenda are easy enough to describe. The first takes its inspiration from the Liturgy Constitution and the subsequent implementation by the *Consilium for the Implementation of the Sacred Liturgy*, which was subsumed into the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1969. The major architect of the official reform was Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, whose thorough chronicle was referenced above. Even within this particular agenda there are significant differences. Mannion points to a more progressive approach to advancing official documents in the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and a more traditional approach in the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Since this essay was written, the lay of the land has changed considerably and ICEL can no longer be said to represent a progressive approach to advancing official reform.<sup>12</sup> That ground is left to United States groups like *We Believe!* and the Catholic Academy of Liturgy and similar groups in other countries.

### 2. *Restoring the preconciliar*

As the title suggests, this agenda rejects the conciliar reform of the liturgy completely. In fact, it has grave reservations about most of the council's documents, especially its teachings on episcopal collegiality, ecumenism, and religious liberty. It is important to note that for many of the people supporting this agenda (for example, the followers of the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre), liturgical reform is only part of a much larger package that has to do with the contemporary direction of Roman Catholicism as a whole. Aspects of this agenda will be treated in our consideration of Pope Benedict XVI's widening of permission to use the preconciliar rite.

### 3. *Reforming the reform*

The third of Mannion's agendas is directly relevant to our subject. Many of the authors we shall study in these pages would put themselves in this camp. These are not people who desire a return to the pre-Vatican II liturgy. They recognize that the liturgy needed reform and that the liturgical movement of the twentieth century provided many fruitful avenues for development. If they have a core position, it is founded on paragraph 23 of the Liturgy Constitution:

<sup>12</sup> I will deal with the fortunes of ICEL in chapter 5 below.

In order that sound tradition be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, a careful investigation—theological, historical, and pastoral—should always be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised. Furthermore the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy must be studied in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indults granted to various places. Finally, there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them, and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.<sup>13</sup>

The operative word here is “organically,” and we shall deal with it at greater length in a later chapter. The major theme of these writers is that the reform happened too quickly and too radically (although, as we shall see, Catherine Pickstock will argue that it was not radical enough). The variations on this theme will be clarified in later chapters. In the United States the “reform of the reform” is represented by Jesuit Father Joseph Fessio and by an organization he helped to found—Adoremus: Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy.<sup>14</sup> One of the more outspoken representatives of this agenda in Great Britain is Father Aidan Nichols, OP.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. *Inculturating the reform*

If “reforming the reform” is most relevant to the subject of this book, this next agenda is probably least relevant. The project of inculturating the reform is based on the premise that the reform of the official books of the Roman Rite is only the first step in the process of a thorough adaptation of Catholic liturgy to the various cultures in which it finds itself celebrated.<sup>16</sup> The charter for this agenda can be found in the famous paragraphs on culture in SC (§§37–40). Mannion points to the North American Academy of Liturgy, an ecumenical/interfaith association of liturgical scholars and experts in allied disci-

<sup>13</sup> SC §23. Translation from Austin Flannery, OP, ed., *Vatican Council II. Volume 1: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents* (new rev. ed. Northport, NY: Costello, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> This group publishes a newsletter: <http://www.adoremus.org>.

<sup>15</sup> See Aidan Nichols, *Looking at Liturgy: A Critical View of Its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Mannion, “Catholicity of the Liturgy,” 21.

plines (e.g., architecture) as the foremost representative of this agenda.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, there is a sense in which this agenda is also aimed at criticizing the current Roman Catholic liturgical reform, especially given the cautious (if not backtracking) statements of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS) on inculturation, beginning with the so-called Fourth Instruction on liturgical inculturation, *Varietates Legitimae*, of 1994.<sup>18</sup> The focus of this study, however, is on critics who mainly consider the Vatican II reform to have gone too far or to have betrayed the tradition of Roman Catholic worship.

### 5. *Recatholicizing the reform*

As Mannion frankly admits, the fifth agenda is not so much separate from the rest as it is meant to transcend the current debate over the liturgy. As with many typologies or models approaches, Mannion saves his preferred model until last. His basic inspiration is the important work on ecclesiology by Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*,<sup>19</sup> with its treatment of catholicity from above, from below, in breadth, and in length. As Mannion puts it, “the recatholicizing agenda is primarily committed to a vital recreation of the ethos that

<sup>17</sup> In the interests of transparency I note that I am a past president of this organization and have been actively involved in it since its inception at Scottsdale, Arizona in 1973. I should probably add—with reference to the first agenda, advancing the official reform—that I have in the past served on ICEL’s Advisory Committee and its Subcommittee on Translations and Revisions. I have also served as an advisor to the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy. So I have been quite actively involved in two of Mannion’s agendas.

<sup>18</sup> See David Lysik, *The Liturgy Documents: Volume Two* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), 107–36; the theme continues with the “Fifth Instruction” on translation (*Liturgiam Authenticam*), ET published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2001). There is also a new chapter on inculturation (chapter 9) in the third edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2003). Finally, we should mention the instruction of the CDWDS (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*) that followed Pope John Paul II’s encyclical on the Eucharist, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003). This instruction can be found at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20040423\\_redemptionis-sacramentum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html).

<sup>19</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

has traditionally imbued Catholic liturgy at its best—an ethos of beauty, majesty, spiritual profundity and solemnity.”<sup>20</sup>

This agenda is not concerned with rewriting the liturgical books, either in a progressive or in a traditional direction, but rather with a deepening of the spirit of the liturgy, the inculcation of a liturgical spirituality. Two aspects of the recatholicizing agenda strike me as quite pertinent to the subject of criticizing the reform. The first is the aesthetic dimension of worship. People with academic degrees (like me) find it convenient and comfortable to deal with texts. Scarce though texts may be for some of the earlier centuries of Christian worship, they can be analyzed by various accepted methods. We find it more difficult to deal with the nonverbal or aesthetic aspects of liturgy including art, architecture, music, gesture, and movement. But much of the lived experience of the recent liturgical reform has precisely to do with those aesthetic elements in the liturgy. Thus I agree with Mannion’s claim that “there does not exist today an adequate theology of ceremonial in Catholic liturgical life,”<sup>21</sup> and much of the present study will inevitably deal with aesthetic issues.

A second pertinent aspect of the recatholicizing agenda has to do with how contemporary students of the liturgy view history. We shall frequently see the claim that the guild of liturgical historians is biased toward a kind of antiquarianism. That claim, most importantly made by Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), does at times have validity and needs to be dealt with in the chapters that follow. How to discern from liturgical tradition what may be normative is no easy matter, but it lies at the center of the debate we are about to survey.<sup>22</sup>

I think it worthwhile to repeat some of the cautions Mannion makes elsewhere—especially since this book is written from the point of view of a North American and has as its main (though by no means exclusive) intended audience North American Roman Catholics. In 1988 he published a very important article in *Worship*, titled “Liturgy and

<sup>20</sup> Mannion, “Catholicity of the Liturgy,” 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> I have made a plea for the ongoing relevance of liturgical history in “The Usefulness of Liturgical History,” *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* (2007): 18–32, also published as “The Uses of Liturgical History,” *Worship* 82 (2008): 2–18. It is an appendix to this study.

the Present Crisis of Culture.”<sup>23</sup> Mannion argues that, contrary to the perception of many students of the liturgy, one of the greatest problems of the contemporary liturgical renewal has not been the insufficient adaptation of liturgy to culture but rather the fact that the liturgy was too inculturated, that we had surrendered to a number of features of contemporary Western culture that were positively harmful to authentic liturgical celebration. He outlines three, the first of which is “the subjectification of reality” or the radical individualism that has been so characteristic of our world and has been illuminated by authors like Robert Bellah, Christopher Lasch, and Richard Sennett. The impact on liturgy of this cultural feature is not too difficult to assess. If the supreme criterion for judging a liturgy is my own intellectual, emotional, and spiritual satisfaction, the liturgy falls prey to manipulation and technique rather than the mediation of divine presence. Many of the authors we shall deal with are very concerned with this trend. It is also related (as are the following two aspects) to a certain congregationalist drift found in many U.S. Catholic parishes.<sup>24</sup>

A second negative cultural dynamic is “the intimization of society,” by which Mannion means that formal or ritual elements in worship are felt to be inauthentic or hypocritical. Ritual etiquette is merely a concession to the scale of worship services. The ideal would be small intimate gatherings of worshippers where everyone would be comfortable with everyone else. Then we could have truly “meaningful” liturgies. Anyone who has read Aidan Kavanagh’s *On Liturgical Theology* will recognize that we are lounging here in his suburbia of personal taste in our flight from the *civitas*, the city or civilization where difference is encountered and redeemed.<sup>25</sup>

The third and final feature is named “the politicization of culture.” Mannion is quick to point out that he is not referring to the sensitivity to social justice and the “Christian commitment to systemic social reform” that are a significant outcome of the Second Vatican Council.

<sup>23</sup> *Worship* 62 (1988): 98–123, reprinted in Eleanor Bernstein, ed., *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 1–26. Much of the following paragraphs can be found in John F. Baldovin, “Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice: On the Seriousness of Christian Liturgy,” *Antiphon* 7 (2002): 10–17.

<sup>24</sup> M. Francis Mannion, “Catholic Worship and the Dynamics of Congregationalism,” *Chicago Studies* 33 (1994): 57–66.

<sup>25</sup> See also M. Francis Mannion, “The Church and the City,” *First Things* 100 (2000): 31–36.

Rather he is concerned with the manipulation of the liturgy for specific and narrow political outcomes. His concern seems to be with left-wing groups, but it seems to me one finds the very same tendency to manipulate on the right. I am reminded of the exasperated plea of Robert Hovda, who wrote: "What do you mean 'we need more peace liturgies.' Peace liturgies are the only kind we have."<sup>26</sup> In other words, the eucharistic liturgy in particular and all Christian worship in general is a celebration of God's vision of a redeemed world, or to use Kavanagh's phrase, "Church Doing World."<sup>27</sup>

#### THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

In my attempt to analyze and (more to the point) to respond to the contemporary critics of the post-Vatican II Catholic liturgical reform I shall pursue the following itinerary. A number of approaches and methods have been employed to criticize the reform. Although authors sometimes overlap in the approaches they use—e.g., no one completely avoids historical arguments<sup>28</sup>—it will be instructive to see the variety of angles from which the critique has come. The first part of the book (four chapters) will outline and analyze philosophical, historical, theological, and sociological/anthropological approaches. The second part of the book will focus more precisely on the issues that arise from these approaches: liturgical music, architecture (especially the placement of the altar and the orientation of the presider), liturgical language, and finally the 2007 papal *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*, and the liberalization of the use of pre-Vatican II liturgy—the so-called Missal of Blessed John XXIII (1962).

We shall begin with the very challenging critiques of the reform made by a philosopher, the British Anglican scholar Catherine Pickstock, and the Oratorian Jonathan Robinson. The next chapter will deal with the historical critique as represented by three figures: Klaus Gamber, a German scholar; Alcuin Reid, at one time a Benedictine at Farnborough Abbey in England; and a French musicologist, Denis Crouan. The third approach examined will be that of theology, and the chosen representative will be the current pope, Benedict XVI, especially in his

<sup>26</sup> See John Baldovin, ed., *Robert Hovda: The Amen Corner* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 170–76.

<sup>27</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984), 52ff.

<sup>28</sup> See the appendix.

influential writings as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Criticism of the liturgical reform under Paul VI has also involved the work of sociologists and anthropologists as well as of philosophers, historians, and theologians. Therefore a fifth chapter will analyze the critiques launched by Kieran Flanagan and David Torevell, both from Great Britain. Needless to say there have been many more significant authors, e.g., Aidan Nichols, Uwe Lang, Thomas Kocik, and Laszlo Dobszay, who have made important contributions to the critique we are examining. These authors will certainly appear in the pages of this study, but I have chosen for better or worse to focus on several representative figures, especially since much of the critique (as the reader will surely discover) has a somewhat repetitive quality.

The second part of the book begins with chapter 5, which deals not with approaches but with issues: language, space, translation, and the liberal use of the preconciliar liturgy. A final chapter will summarize the conclusions and (much more important) suggest some ways forward in what has become a war over the liturgy.

## CONCLUSION

One of the more serious debates in Catholic historiography during the past few years has been over the significance of Vatican II. Various authors have challenged the so-called Alberigo School of interpreting Vatican II. Italian church historian Giuseppe Alberigo and others considered the council a monumental watershed in the history of modern Catholicism.<sup>29</sup> Much of the implementation of the council, significantly represented by Pope John Paul II and his prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger, has been undertaken on the premise that the council did not change anything important in the church. Certainly the council documents themselves can yield both interpretations. This has been one of the problems in assessing the significance of the liturgy constitution. My sympathies lie with

<sup>29</sup> See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Short History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006); idem, ed., with Joseph Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*. 5 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995–2006). For the anti-Alberigo camp see Rino Fisichella, ed., *Il Concilio Vaticano II: Recezione e attualità alla luce del Giubileo* (Milan: San Paolo, 2000); as well as Pope Benedict XVI's Christmas address to the Roman Curia for 2005, available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf\\_ben\\_xvi\\_spe\\_20051222\\_roman-curia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html); and an interview given in 2007 by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, former papal vicar of Rome, available at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/506/122.php>.

two Jesuit colleagues, John O'Malley and Stephen Schloesser, who in recent articles in *Theological Studies* have articulated the understanding that Vatican II represents a change in Roman Catholicism that transcends the documents themselves.<sup>30</sup> That has clearly been true of the reform of the liturgy.

As we move forward let me make it clear that I would not have written this book if I had thought the critics had nothing to offer. My hope is that in a respectful and non-polemical atmosphere the positive contributions made by the critics can be appreciated by a wider audience, including what might be called "the academic liturgical establishment." Why has there been so much contention over the reform? Why the current battles over the liturgy? There are several reasons, I think. First, we are at a crucial point in world history when the fate of Christianity, at least as we know it, seems to be in the balance. Second, one of the clearest signs of change in the Catholic Church in the past century has been the liturgical reform following Vatican II. That reform coincided with a virtual cultural revolution in the West and the various interconnections between culture and the reform of worship are extremely difficult to disentangle. Third, the liturgy lies at the very heart of Catholic identity and practice. Decades of teaching have taught me that very little inflames the passions and commitment of my theological students more than liturgical and sacramental questions. While this can be frustrating at times, I suppose it is as it should be. No matter where we stand, the liturgy is precious to all who bear the name Christian—and so thinking about it, even arguing about it, is an important and necessary endeavor.

<sup>30</sup> John O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *TS* 67 (2006): 3–33; Stephen Schloesser, "Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II," *TS* 67 (2006): 275–319.

## Chapter One

### The Philosophical Critique

Some of the most fundamental criticisms of the Vatican II reform of the liturgy stem from the conviction that the entire reform program (in the Liturgy Constitution) and its application (in the subsequent reform) were founded on bad philosophical premises. We shall deal with two representative figures, each with a distinctive understanding of the philosophical errors at the basis of the reform.

#### CATHERINE PICKSTOCK: *AFTER WRITING*

Catherine Pickstock is a theologian who has dealt with some of the most fundamental philosophical presuppositions of the liturgical reform. A number of the scholars we shall review in the course of this book accept the Constitution on the Liturgy as Vatican II proposed it, but take issue in one way or another with its implementation. This is not the case with Pickstock, who has questioned the very foundations of the reform. For her the reform proceeds from “modern” presuppositions such as the triumph of “mapping” reality after the sixteenth century, the victory of nouns over verbs, the supposed virtues of simplicity and non-repetition, and a preference for writing over orality or speaking. What results is perhaps the most intriguing critique of the reform in recent years, a powerful and difficult book, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> Since its publication she has captured the interest of a number of liturgical scholars.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will first situate Pickstock’s treatment of liturgy within her overall project and also within the movement known as Radical Orthodoxy.

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Nathan Mitchell, “The Amen Corner: Worship as Music,” *Worship* 73 (1999): 249–59, especially 254–59.

Second, I will offer an analysis of her treatment of the medieval Roman liturgy of the Mass and the theology it represents. Third, I will consider her views on liturgy and society. An assessment of Pickstock's questioning of some of the fundamental basics of the Vatican II reform of the liturgy will conclude this section.

Catherine Pickstock is associated with Radical Orthodoxy, a theological movement begun in Cambridge in the 1990s and spearheaded by John Milbank, Graham Ward, and herself. These three scholars edited *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, which serves as a kind of summary of the "movement."<sup>3</sup> In their words, Radical Orthodoxy "in the face of the secular demise of truth, seeks to reconfigure theological truth."<sup>4</sup> In other words, these authors are self-consciously responding to the modern and postmodern critiques of power. What makes them self-conscious, and not merely restorationist, is their recognition of the place of language in construing reality. In this sense they understand themselves to be thoroughly postmodern. Language is unavoidable, as the deconstructionists like Derrida and Foucault have well understood. On the other hand, Radical Orthodoxy is a direct response to the cynicism and relativism that come in the wake of the postmodern deconstructionists. In that sense they are not postmodern at all. They seek to revive an Augustinian Neoplatonism as a holistic vision of the world and social order,<sup>5</sup> and consider themselves to be Christian Socialists.<sup>6</sup> After all, it is difficult to call oneself a theologian if one takes a completely agnostic attitude toward understanding truth, which seems to be the position of a good number of postmodern thinkers.

For a critic like Russell Reno, the project of Radical Orthodoxy fails to preserve the specific identity of Jesus Christ in favor of theological abstraction, thus sliding back into "modern" presuppositions. Reno lays this failure at the door of Milbank et al.'s Anglo-Catholicism, which he regards as an invented tradition.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this is also why

<sup>3</sup> John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999). See also Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> See the perceptive analysis of Russell R. Reno, "The Radical Orthodoxy Project," *First Things* 100 (2000): 37-44.

<sup>6</sup> See Stratford Caldecott, "Radical Orthodoxy," a 2001 interview with Pickstock, at <http://www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=4174>.

<sup>7</sup> Reno, "Radical Orthodoxy Project," 40-41. We shall see below whether a similar criticism can be applied to Pickstock's treatment of medieval liturgy.

this movement is criticized by Stratford Caldecott as lacking an ecclesiology.<sup>8</sup>

Of course Milbank, Ward, and Pickstock hardly fall into the category of radical postmodernism, one of whose characteristics is the principle of the indeterminacy of meaning and truth, based on the ever-fluid interpretation of the written word. The contemporary French philosopher Jacques Derrida is well known for this kind of deconstruction of meaning. Derrida's target is the Western metaphysical tradition with the privilege it gives to the spoken word, the *Logos*.<sup>9</sup> One can guess immediately that the defense of the spoken word, so central to both christology and the performance of liturgy, will be a major element in Pickstock's program. For her, many contemporary postmodernist philosophers (and their progenitors) have put dissecting reality over the act of praise (doxology), which is precisely what liturgy ultimately is. For Pickstock, doxology (= liturgy) is not just an event that happens now and then, but rather constitutes a whole way of life.<sup>10</sup>

And so *After Writing* begins with a rereading of Plato's *Phaedrus* in an attempt to show why Jacques Derrida's denigration of orality (as opposed to writing) is an error. It is important to note that Pickstock has a rather particular reading of Plato—one in which reality (Being) is not static but rather dynamic and inevitably incarnated in time and space. This rather opaque passage gives some idea of what she is after:

In the *Phaedrus*, reliance on the written word is seen as representing an immanentist attempt to *circumvent* temporality and contingency and to spatialize time by gathering up the present moment with a view to offering it to an anonymous posterity, not for the sake of interpersonal benefit through time, but as a means to ensure lasting reputation, a

<sup>8</sup> Caldecott, "Radical Orthodoxy," 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); and especially his "Plato's Pharmacy," in idem, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone Press; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 63–71. I do not want to dismiss the many valuable insights that postmodern thinkers have given us, e.g., the importance of perspective for interpretation or the discernment of power relations in human enterprises. But it is important to understand what is at stake philosophically with claims about reality when one accepts the thought of someone like Derrida wholeheartedly. For a positive evaluation of postmodern thought see Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 39.

reflexive “gift” which does not freely inhabit time, but seeks to reclaim identically the anterior moment of donation, thus transposing time into a spatial domain.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, Derrida (and those who think like him) create “the polity of death” by isolating snapshots on the written page. Pickstock eventually refers to this process as “spatialization”<sup>12</sup> and it will have an impact on contemporary understanding of the liturgy. Spatialization refers to the tendency in writers from Petrus Ramus (sixteenth century) onward to privilege static analysis and mapping (*mathesis*) over the dynamism given by temporality. The deconstructionists therefore represent the dead end of a project of mapping and dissecting reality begun by Petrus Ramus and solidified for Western philosophy by René Descartes in the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> The result is the loss of the narrative connections that hold reality together, and the technical name for this process in terms of language is “asyndeton, syntax characterized by the absence of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.”<sup>14</sup> Hence we have another symptom of the frenzy to map and categorize everything by lists. Verbs lose out to nouns in the process.<sup>15</sup> The passion for nouns leads to what Pickstock calls “necrophilia.” I will let her speak for herself:

modernity seeks less to banish death, than to prise death and life apart in order to preserve life immune from death in pure sterility. For in seeking *only* life, in the form of pseudo-eternal permanence, the “modern” gesture is secretly doomed to necrophilia, love of what has to die, can only die. In seeking only life, modernity gives life over to death. . . .<sup>16</sup>

In other words, since modernity (as Pickstock conceives it) cannot allow for the truly transcendent and thus for having to take some account of death, it is ironically left only with death itself. And so it is essential that the continuum that could be called “the great chain of

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 47ff.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 49–61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 95. See also her “Liturgy and Modernity,” *Telos* 113 (1998): 26.

<sup>15</sup> Pickstock perceives a good example of this process in the contemporary English translation of the Creed: “Asyndeton: Syntax and Insanity. A Study in the Revision of the Nicene Creed,” *Modern Theology* 10 (1994): 321–40.

<sup>16</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 104.

being” is maintained. Along with other members of the Radical Orthodoxy “school” she thus argues for a return to an Augustinian Neoplatonism, which we shall see below is vital to her interpretation of St. Thomas on transubstantiation.

One final step in Pickstock’s program must be described before I deal directly with her treatment of medieval liturgy and the question of liturgy and culture. She lays the modern problematic not at the doorstep of Petrus Ramus in the sixteenth century but rather at that of the fourteenth-century Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus, whose denial of the Thomistic analogy of being (*analogia entis*) made the concept of being univocal. In other words, if the idea of being must be predicated in exactly the same way for everything that exists, then ultimately God is constrained to behave like every being. This idea is not so much an attempt to control God as it is to make the universe intelligible. But this denial of what is called the ontological difference (between God and the created order) ultimately leads to an arbitrary God (the *potentia absoluta Dei*) since the effort to make God unique must also (in Scotus’ system) make him somewhat despotically irrational.<sup>17</sup> By the same token, dispensing with the analogy of being leads to what is called “occasionalism” in sacraments—crudely put, the sacraments are not effective because of a certain fittingness in their constitution and operation but simply because God has decided that it shall be so. In other words, instead of being able to construe a logic to the activity of God in a sacrament, we must posit God’s activity on the basis of the divine will.<sup>18</sup> Thus Pickstock blames (“blames” is not too strong a word here) Scotus for the turn to the priority of epistemology over metaphysics—a turn she finds disastrous for modern theology.<sup>19</sup> Because he denies the analogous nature of being, Scotus cannot maintain the real distinction between essence and existence, which for Pickstock allows for a being’s “always arriving, always coming.” She puts it this way:

The real distinction between existence and essence is therefore the inner kernel of both *analogia entis* and participation because it permits essence to be realized as essence only through the Being from which it always remains distinct: essence forever simply participates in that

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 122–23.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 127.

which alone realizes and fully determines it. Thus, ontological difference invites the possibility of likeness and proximity, whereas univocity of Being produces unmediable difference and distance.<sup>20</sup>

And so Scotus is forced into a postulation of the divine will with regard to transubstantiation. Moreover, this means transubstantiation can only be understood as a locative presence—i.e., presence as of an object in a place. St. Thomas had argued against such a flat-footed, unnuanced understanding of presence in his treatment of transubstantiation.<sup>21</sup> For Thomas, Christ is not in the sacrament as an object is in a place. But the result for Scotus, at least according to Pickstock,<sup>22</sup> is that Christ's soul is only partially present in the eucharistic elements and “. . . His Body is here effectively presented in the manner of a corpse. Here, therefore, in the very heart of piety, the cult of necrophilia is begun.”<sup>23</sup> There is, after all, something breathtaking about such a sweeping claim!

I have tried in the above paragraphs to make an exceedingly long story short. And the reader may be thinking that we have lost our way in the thickets of a very complex critique of Western philosophy. But I cannot agree with reviewers who advise skipping over the first part of Pickstock's *After Writing*, since the more “liturgical” part of her work very much rests on the case she builds in the more philosophical part. It is also important to have some sense of her philosophical position to be able to judge her assessment of the (“modernist”) foundations of the liturgical reform. The first part of the book, which we have just reviewed, is indeed very difficult—not only because of the complexity of the subject and of her logic, but also because she insists on being obscure and opaque (playfully like the postmodernists she opposes) when she could be much clearer.

At the end of the next section I shall argue that Pickstock has a rather abstract notion of liturgy, but we need to postpone that until we consider what she has to say about Christian worship. At this point it is important to understand that Pickstock is after rather large game in claiming that liturgy (or better, doxological language) is the true con-

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* IIIa, 76, a 5.

<sup>22</sup> I must disclaim direct knowledge of Scotus. See the critical remarks on Pickstock's reading of Scotus in Bryan Spinks, “Review of *After Writing*,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 (1998): 510; also the review by Regis Duffy, a Franciscan, in *TS* 60 (1999): 175.

<sup>23</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 134.

summation of philosophy. All thought, all language has praise as its true goal. One is reminded of Alexander Schmemmann's understanding of the human being as fundamentally *homo adorans*—the creature whose main goal is to adore<sup>24</sup>—or even the First Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "Human beings are created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this, to save their souls."<sup>25</sup> Pickstock has a dynamic understanding of being that is rooted in her reading of Plato. Not everyone will agree with that reading. For example, the contemporary French Roman Catholic sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet interprets Plato (in the *Timaeus*) as the beginning of a tradition that favors Being over Becoming.<sup>26</sup>

In any case, Pickstock has provided a philosophical construct that places liturgy at the center of life and thought. The second part of her book, titled "The Sacred Polis," is a good indication of the role she expects liturgy to play in society. It is to that role of liturgy—and specifically medieval liturgy—that we turn.

### *Medieval Liturgy as Model*

One of the aspects of her work that has made Pickstock well known and, in fact, something of a hero to those who question the wisdom of modern liturgical reform is her critique that appears as a commentary on "the impossibility of liturgy" in the second part of the book.<sup>27</sup> For Pickstock the post-Vatican II reform of the liturgy was fundamentally flawed because it did not adequately contextualize the liturgy in contemporary culture. As she puts it:

<sup>24</sup> *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 15.

<sup>25</sup> George E. Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 32.

<sup>26</sup> See Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Rereading of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 26–33.

<sup>27</sup> Classifying Pickstock as a conservative is much too simple. As becomes clear in her interview with Caldecott (see n. 6 above), she is enthusiastically in favor of women's ordination as well as a very active role for the laity in liturgical celebration. In addition to *After Writing*, her critique of the reform has appeared in a number of places. Catherine Pickstock, "A Sermon for St. Cecilia," *Theology* 100 (1997): 411–18; eadem, "Medieval Liturgy and Modern Reform," *Antiphon* 6 (2001): 19–25; eadem, "A Short Essay on the Reform of the Liturgy," in Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks, eds., *Liturgy in Dialogue* (London: SPCK, 1993).

. . . because the Vatican II reforms of the mediaeval Roman Rite failed to take into account the cultural assumptions which lay implicit within the text [of the pre-Vatican II Roman Rite], their reforms were themselves to a certain extent imbued with an entirely more sinister conservatism. For they failed to challenge those structures of the modern secular world which are wholly inimical to liturgical purpose: those structures, indeed, which perpetuate a separation of everyday life from liturgical enactment.<sup>28</sup>

Here we meet a claim that will appear fairly frequently among the critics: twentieth-century liturgical historians have a bent toward anti-quarianism. They have idealized the late Patristic period (4th–6th centuries) and refuse to appreciate the healthy aspects of development in the Middle Ages. The main villains of the piece are the usual suspects: Theodor Klauser and Josef Jungmann, the German and Austrian liturgical historians on whom the liturgical reformers relied so heavily.<sup>29</sup> Summing up several centuries of liturgical scholarship and nearly a century of advocacy for liturgical reform, these scholars both revealed how very accidental much of the development of the liturgy actually was. These efforts have been matched for the Christian East by scholars like Juan Mateos and Robert Taft, both of Rome’s Pontifical Oriental Institute.<sup>30</sup> On the basis of the research of these great historians, Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy made the following well-known prescription with regard to the reform of the liturgy:

The rites should be marked by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people’s powers of comprehension and as a rule not require much explanation.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Pickstock, “Short Essay on the Reform of the Liturgy,” 56.

<sup>29</sup> Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*, trans. John Halliburton (2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Josef Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia: The Mass of the Roman Rite*, trans. Francis Brunner. 2 vols. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1950).

<sup>30</sup> Juan Mateos, *La célébration de la parole dans la liturgie byzantine* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute Press, 1971); Robert Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*. 6 vols. (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute Press, 1975). See especially Taft’s apologia for the method of comparative liturgy in “Anton Baumstark’s Comparative Liturgy Revisited,” in Robert Taft and Gabriele Winkler, *Comparative Liturgy Fifty Years After Anton Baumstark (1872–1948)* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute Press, 2001), 191–232.

<sup>31</sup> Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, §34.

Much of the postconciliar reform of the Eucharist and other liturgical rites took its inspiration from this call for simplification. This is precisely what Pickstock wants to call into question. As I noted earlier, this means that Pickstock is critical not only of the reform but of its roots in the Liturgy Constitution. Far from the rationalized logic of the contemporary Mass of Paul VI, Pickstock finds the deepest meaning of the traditional Roman Rite (the so-called Tridentine Mass) in its very stops and starts, its hesitations and “impossible logic.” Moreover, she finds that the theological basis of the reform would have been more profound had it paid more attention to certain theologians: “. . . the reform of the liturgy instigated by Vatican II was itself not adequate to its theology, for example, the work of de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Yves Congar, and the influence of the restored Thomism of Etienne Gilson.”<sup>32</sup>

This is certainly an astute observation, and we shall have to return to it in the last chapter. Was adequate theological reflection incorporated in the reform of the liturgy in addition to the results of historical-critical analysis? Clearly Pickstock thinks it was not.

What, then, are the main lines of Pickstock’s appreciation of the Mass in the Middle Ages? First she analyzes the opening rites of the Mass as a series of recommencements and repetitions starting with the use of “impersonation” (assuming another’s name) at the very outset: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” There is ambiguity here, for “in the name” could be understood both as “within” and “taking the name.” This ambiguity is essential because it reveals the very impossibility of liturgy—the fact that it must be experienced both as gift and sacrifice and thereby overcome the dead ends of modern philosophy.<sup>33</sup> In other words, we are actors in the liturgy, but we can only be actors because we impersonate the one who gives us the ability to worship in the first place.

“I will go to the altar of God,” the psalm (43) recited at the foot of the altar is another example of this impossibility. Since the altar is by

<sup>32</sup> Pickstock, “Short Essay on the Reform of the Liturgy,” 63.

<sup>33</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 169–70; see also 208; the question of the possibility of true gift was raised by Derrida. Pickstock’s Radical Orthodoxy partner, John Milbank, has responded in *On Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003). For another view of the question see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), and John Caputo, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

definition the place of alteration (her word, not my pun), it is always “receding,” not within human grasp:

The altar is therefore a [sic] supplementary, and, in worldly terms, destination which is also a beginning, the place towards which we must travel in order to be able to offer our sacrifice of praise. It follows that the liturgy of our text is always about to begin, not in a “hollowed out” sense, but as a necessarily deferred anticipation of the heavenly worship towards which we strive. Our liturgy in time can only be the liturgy we render in order to be able to render liturgy. . . . And one can only ever have begun; there is no other way to be than to be on the way.<sup>34</sup>

In this way Pickstock argues for the eschatological nature of the liturgy so strongly emphasized by a number of contemporary theologians.<sup>35</sup> In her reading of the medieval Roman Mass the approach to the altar represents yet another beginning—the request for purification in the *Confiteor* to the incensation, and the *Kyrie eleison* chant that follows. At this point the liturgy impersonates the angelic voices in the singing of the hymn *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. Yet another request for purification comes with the priest’s prayer, *Munda cor meum* (Cleanse my heart), in preparation for the Gospel.<sup>36</sup> Here she perceives a play on the word *munda*—both “cleanse” (the meaning of the verb) and “worlded” from the Latin noun for the world, *mundum*, as in “mundane.” By the end of her treatment of what we now refer to as the Liturgy of the Word, Pickstock writes:

The same dialectic of exaltation and subsidence or self-abasement occurs throughout the Rite . . . the passage of the worshipper’s advance is not construed as unicursally progressive, nor as undertaken

<sup>34</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 183, 185. (Thus Pickstock proves herself a worthy sparring opponent for the likes of Derrida and Foucault. The number of times my word processing program has suggested spell check in the composition of this chapter is another pointed example!)

<sup>35</sup> E.g., Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), and especially in the work of Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), which we shall see in a later chapter. The notion of eschatology will be particularly relevant in the argument about the position of the presider at the altar.

<sup>36</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 189.

by one worshipping voice alone, but as stuttering, constantly retracing its syllables, and calling for aid by means of many voices.<sup>37</sup>

By the same token she finds that the contemporary liturgical criticism of the offertory prayers and repetition of offering in the Roman Canon is misdirected, for it fails to appreciate how we are constituted as liturgical subjects by the constant reentering into God and in the dialectic of giving and receiving.

Another important feature Pickstock finds in the language of the liturgy is “apostrophe”: “a rhetorical figure used to signify vocative address to an absent, dead, or wholly other person, idea or object.”<sup>38</sup> In this case, of course, we are speaking to one who is “wholly other.” For Pickstock, such apostrophizing language dispossesses the subject so that the worshiper receives himself or herself from God. The triumph of nouns over verbs so characteristic of the modern mania for mapping and categorizing is countered by this kind of praying. An example is provided in the address made to the incense in the initial incensation of the altar: *Ab illo benedicaris in cuius honorem cremaberis* (“May you be blessed by him in whose honor you will be burned”). The incense only becomes its true self when it goes up in smoke. Moreover, the absence of the one to whom prayers are addressed requires that the Mass be “rehearsed” again and again “in the hope that there might be worship.”<sup>39</sup>

One final comment on Pickstock’s treatment of the medieval Mass: The fact that a multiplicity of genres is employed in the Mass is crucial to her argument that the liturgy is no simple linear or rational progression. Rather, the Roman Rite is “polyphonal.” It uses “narrative, dialogue, antiphon, monologue, apostrophe, doxology, oration, invocation, citation, supplementation, and entreaty.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, it always keeps us on our toes and prevents us from becoming self-satisfied.

These are the main lines of Pickstock’s assessment of the medieval Mass of the Roman Rite. What to make of this analysis whose aim is to

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–90.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 200; see also the interpretation of *haec quotiescumque feceritis* (“as often as you do this”) from the words of institution as an example of the repetition inherent in the liturgy, 223.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

demonstrate that the contemporary Roman Rite (and its cousins in the Anglican communion, for example) is inadequate to the task of worship that can stand up to secular society? In the first place we need to note that the phrase “medieval liturgy,” while handy, is not terribly useful. One can begin treatment of the medieval Roman Rite in fifth-century Rome and follow it through an immense number of permutations and variations both temporally and geographically up to the end of the sixteenth century—perhaps even to the last third of the twentieth. As Bryan Spinks points out, the Sarum Rite did not begin the Mass with the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar that Pickstock cites as so significant.<sup>41</sup> A cursory glance at a synoptic chart of offertory prayers in the various medieval usages would demonstrate a good deal of variety, a point even Pickstock must concede.<sup>42</sup>

Second, Pickstock makes a plea for understanding the medieval liturgy in its context, but apparently that does not include taking a hard look at the development of the text or its surroundings—the church building, for example. There is some irony in the fact that while in the first part of the book she champions the spoken over the written, her argument in the second part of the book is tied to a text—the Ordinary of the Mass.

Third, although the Eucharist is clearly the high point of medieval worship, it is also part of an enormously complex system of services including the Divine Office, processions, and other sacramental rites. It will not do to isolate the Eucharist from other liturgical rites. This isolation has also been characteristic of many (though not all) of the contemporary critics of the reform.

In the fourth place, many of Pickstock’s textual analyses are playful, much in the same way that some postmodern theorists play with language. Take, for example, the priest’s prayer before the Gospel, *Mundacor meum*, cited above. In the context of this formula there is only one meaning that can be sustained by the word *munda*, and that is the verb “cleanse.” Pickstock’s notion that the use of the word could imply a “request to be *worlded*” is utterly fanciful, even if claiming that the Gospel makes us more citizens of the world is a wonderful idea. Many of Pickstock’s interpretations are a template imposed upon the rite, much like the medieval allegorical interpretations of Amalar of Metz

<sup>41</sup> “Review of *After Writing*,” (see n. 22 above): 510.

<sup>42</sup> See Craig Wright, *Music and Ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris 500–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 118; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 179.

(ninth century) or William Durandus (thirteenth century). They make for excellent material for meditation but do not really do justice to the rite or provide an adequate critique for its reform.

Fifth, Pickstock is fond of taking the plural “we” of the Roman Rite seriously. For example, she writes of the entrance rite: “But as soon as we arrive at this state of purity, sufficient to bless one another in this way (the dialogue ‘The Lord be with you . . .’) we must again repeat our request for purification.”<sup>43</sup> This is fine until one asks the question: just who exactly is this “we” she is speaking of? Being in touch with the text of the liturgy as a corporate exercise ended as soon as Latin was no longer the common language of the people. Many of the prayers of the Roman Rite that Pickstock finds so meaningful entered the liturgy after the people no longer understood, and in any case were recited *sotto voce*. The priest did indeed speak for the congregation, but the percentage of people who understood this (at least in terms of language) must have been very small.<sup>44</sup>

Sixth, Pickstock acknowledges the need for reforming a liturgy in which receiving holy communion had become infrequent, devotional practices individualistic, and the liturgy itself a kind of spectacle.<sup>45</sup> The latter two features did indeed arise rather late in the Middle Ages and flourished in the period of the Baroque right through the early twentieth century. But the decline in the reception of holy communion, which one can argue is the most important, is a problem that begins in the sixth century at the latest. All this is to say that Pickstock’s medieval Mass is a construct that seems to have little to do with the actual performance of the rite.<sup>46</sup> Just as the Middle Ages were romanticized in the novels of Sir Walter Scott, the Gothic Revival of architecture in the early nineteenth century, and Cambridge Ritualists like John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb, so too we have here a view of

<sup>43</sup> Pickstock, “Medieval Liturgy and Modern Reform,” 22.

<sup>44</sup> Chapter 4 below, on the sociological and anthropological critique, deals with the arguments of Eamon Duffy, John Bossy, and others that the liturgy was indeed understood by the people as a corporate activity.

<sup>45</sup> Pickstock, “Medieval Liturgy and Modern Reform,” 21. In fact, she is quite strong on the notion of participation in her interview with Caldecott. I repeat that it would be incorrect to think that she aims at restoring medieval liturgy; see n. 27 above.

<sup>46</sup> For further critique by liturgical historians see the excellent reviews by Kenneth Stevenson, *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 50 (1999): 452–54, and Bryan Spinks, cited above in n. 22.

medieval liturgy that is alluring but not quite the case.<sup>47</sup> There is a kind of sanitized medievalism at work here—a very romanticized notion that the Middle Ages represent an ideal of Christian society. One must ask if that kind of romanticism is really helpful in understanding how to reform and renew Catholic worship.

### *Liturgy, Theology, and Society*

All this is not to say that Pickstock is completely off the point. On the contrary, much of what she has to say is insightful, even brilliant. And there is no rule saying that the historical-critical interpretation of the liturgy is the only one allowed.<sup>48</sup> Just like the Scriptures, the liturgy is open to the historical triad of spiritual (allegorical), moral (tropological), and eschatological (anagogical) analysis. This does not mean, however, that each of these forms of analysis provides an adequate basis for reforming the liturgy.

Pickstock is also clearly on the right track in suggesting that a certain linear rationality has informed the contemporary liturgy of the Roman Rite Eucharist—a point made by sociologists and anthropologists, as we shall see in a later chapter. The model used by the post-Vatican II reformers in order to reconstruct the eucharistic liturgy was pretty clearly the late-seventh-century Roman Mass described in the *Ordo Romanus Primus*. Yet only the bare structure of the rite was taken, not the no-longer-relevant court etiquette that is so meticulously laid out.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps since she is not a liturgical scholar (nor does she claim to be), Pickstock can be forgiven for ignoring the wise observations of Anscar Chupungco and others that what we have in the books of the reformed Roman Rite is the basic script for the liturgy, not the liturgy

<sup>47</sup> Russell Reno, "Radical Orthodoxy Project," 41, may be correct in seeing the root of this romanticism in the writer's Anglo-Catholicism: "But monuments are not living institutions, and Gothic buildings are no substitute for enduring practices. Radical Orthodoxy cannot invent the flesh and blood of a Christian culture, and so must be satisfied with describing its theoretical *gestalt*, gesturing in post-modern fashion, toward that which was and might be."

<sup>48</sup> I have, nevertheless, tried to argue elsewhere that a rigorous historical-critical investigation of the liturgy is essential for liturgical theology and liturgical studies in general. See the appendix.

<sup>49</sup> See the superb 2007 Harvard dissertation by John Romano, *Ritual and Society in Early Medieval Rome*, an extremely thorough and convincing analysis of the text and context of *Ordo Romanus Primus*.

itself as it must be adapted in various cultures.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, Pickstock's notion of the liturgical stutter and stammer read off the medieval rite is an important reminder that putting the liturgy into understandable language does not make God understandable. Liturgical language still needs to point to the transcendent. Divine grace makes the impossible possible in our worship. One of the persistent problems with the liturgical reform (*any* liturgical reform) is going to be a kind of Pelagian attitude that we have constructed the liturgy, because reform is always and inevitably self-conscious.<sup>51</sup>

In this vein what Pickstock has to say about "asyndeton" is also useful. In an article contrasting the translation of the Nicene Creed in the 1980 *Alternative Service Book* (ASB) of the Church of England (the common ecumenical text developed by the International Consultation on English Texts [ICET] in the 1970s) with the previous translation in the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 she attempts to show how contemporary translators have bought into the modern use of asyndeton, the literary practice that tends to multiply and shorten sentences and especially to eliminate subordinate and relative clauses. Thus "it converts six sentences to become thirteen, twenty coordinating conjunctions into nine, and five subordinating conjunctions into one."<sup>52</sup> Her point, although worked out in twenty pages of extremely dense prose, is relatively straightforward. The Nicene Creed is not a list of true doctrinal statements about God but rather a doxological hymn that *enacts* or *performs* the Holy Trinity by its intricate conjunctions and references that leap over one another and entwine with one another. The modern translation smoothes these complications out—but it does so at the cost of losing the performativity of the Creed itself. It also (unwittingly) surrenders to a capitalist notion of desire as lack

<sup>50</sup> Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future: The Process and Methods of Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>51</sup> We shall return to this subject in the final chapter. For Chupungco on text and reform, see *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Pickstock, "Asyndeton" (see n. 15 above), 325. The ASB translation is in fact the ecumenical translation of the International Consultation on Common Texts (ICET) and is used as well in most contemporary English versions of the liturgy, including the Roman Catholic. With very few alterations the same version appears in the text of the Roman Catholic Eucharist employed in the United States. Pickstock's analysis corresponds to the connections and clauses not only in the BCP 1549 but also in the Greek and Latin versions of the Creed. See Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* §§54, 86.

rather than the Christian/Augustinian notion of desire as excess. In other words, desire is ultimately more about what God wants to give us than it is about what we do not have. This is a very fruitful trajectory for liturgical theology.

Pickstock is correct: the Nicene Creed employed at the Sunday Eucharist is not a “loyalty oath” or a series of doctrinal statements that ought to be recited instead of sung—if it is to be recited at all. To be sure, the Creed’s native home is the baptismal liturgy. The Nicene Creed<sup>53</sup> entered into the Eucharist in the Orthodox East as a reaction against its polemical use by the Monophysites (or better “Non-Chalcedonians”), who claimed the Creed as their own, refusing to accept the doctrinal conclusions about the two natures of Christ affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon. Be that as it may, the Sunday Eucharist is fundamentally the weekly renewal of Christian initiation begun at baptism. Moreover, the Creed has more to do with praise or doxology than information or a series of doctrines. Pickstock is right on the money—the value of the Creed is in the enacting of the Trinity as relation. The ICET translation does blur that enactment by its tendency to make the flow of doctrine seem more logical and rational. Moreover, her point that short sentences mimic the disorientation of modern society is an idea worth pondering, though I cannot go more deeply into it here.<sup>54</sup> As she puts it:

Since meaning resides in the connections between things, readers of asyndetic texts have much more work to do in supplying what is absent. The several elements of salvation history are related as isolated units, devoid of syntactic lexical indication of their purpose, or connection with the text as a whole. . . . This would-be ‘accelerated’ narrative is not one that is continuous, but one that starts and stops with every clause. It effects a reification of singular verbal units, a list of semelfactive actions, the arbitrary disjunctive components of a catalogue.<sup>55</sup>

In *After Writing* Pickstock goes on to analyze the asyndetic nature of the Institution Narrative of the Eucharist—coming to the opposite

<sup>53</sup> Technically the Creed affirmed by Nicea (325 CE) and supplemented by Constantinople I (381 CE).

<sup>54</sup> I am not as sure that I would agree with her argument about the replacement of the traditional Latin form of the Creed: “I believe” (Credo) with “We believe.” The latter reflects the Greek of the Creed handed down from Nicea and Constantinople I. See Pickstock, “Asyndeton,” 333. We shall deal further with questions of language in a later chapter.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 331–32.

conclusion, namely that it is useful in throwing the hearers off balance in their inability to control the words of Christ.<sup>56</sup>

Mention of the Institution Narrative leads us to a second aspect of Pickstock's interpretation of medieval liturgy and the theology that accompanies it. Here her interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas is extraordinarily insightful. She understands the difficulty that arises in a Counter-Reformation understanding of the Eucharist that "fetishizes" the elements—i.e., turns them into objects subject to the gaze of human beings. On the contrary, following Jean-Luc Marion and Henri de Lubac, she insists that Christ's body and blood are present in the passing of time as a gift as opposed to being objects under the gaze of human beings; thus she argues that transubstantiation is a certain kind of presence.<sup>57</sup> To stay with de Lubac for a moment, she also recognizes that the gift of the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ is at the same time the gift of the church to itself—an Augustinian notion that actually begins to fade from the picture in High Scholasticism.<sup>58</sup> Once again to make an extremely ingenious and complex argument short, the key to her interpretation is the idea of desire—desire for the Body and Blood of Christ, which are given and yet (eschatologically) reserved at the same time, so that there is no possibility (short of heaven) of a perfect Eucharist, one that need not be repeated.<sup>59</sup> Technically, she finds the rationale behind her interpretation in a Neoplatonic participationist understanding of the role of the accidents of bread and wine. In other words, St. Thomas cannot be tagged with the label "poor Aristotelian" because he argues something that Aristotle could not: that accidents exist without their own substance but only in virtue of the substance that is the Body and Blood of Christ. Thomas knows his Aristotle, but he uses Augustinian categories to recognize that the accidents after the consecration are miraculous because they can nourish without being substantive. Thus, says Pickstock, "the operation of matter in a *normal* fashion has been rendered miraculous."<sup>60</sup> Since they

<sup>56</sup> Pickstock, *After Writing*, 223–28.

<sup>57</sup> Pickstock, "Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist," *Modern Theology* 15 (1999): 159–80, at 164. This essay parallels her treatment of transubstantiation in the last chapter of *After Writing*, 253–66.

<sup>58</sup> Pickstock, "Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist," 178; also 171.

<sup>59</sup> As was the case with her analysis of the Mass, Pickstock follows St. Thomas here in his rather eisegetical treatment of the unfolding of the rite, *ibid.*, 169–71; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III:79, 81, 83.

<sup>60</sup> Pickstock, "Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist," 174. For the purposes of the present chapter we can leave aside the question of the relation

manifest the pure (and absurd) gift of Christ himself, these material elements become *more* of what they were before. In other words, transubstantiation represents the *telos* of all things. She puts it this way: "Rather, to exceed the contrast between substance and accident is to attain to createdness as pure transparency, as pure mediation of the divine."<sup>61</sup> She goes on to quote St. Thomas to the effect that it is not so much that this food is incorporated into us as that we are incorporated into this food.<sup>62</sup> In the end result, for Pickstock, the Eucharist becomes the ultimately trustworthy sign, one that confounds or "outwits" the conundrum of presence and absence and thereby transcends post-modernist skepticism. Finally, for her, the Eucharist *is* desire and transubstantiation represents the vocation of all reality. This, I believe, is excellent eucharistic theology since it contextualizes the transformation of bread and wine within the ultimate rationale of the Eucharist: the transformation of human beings, indeed of the whole world.

Finally I would like, by way of coming full circle, to discuss Pickstock's understanding of the relation between liturgy, art, and politics. After all, her project is not so much aimed directly at liturgical renewal or sacramental theology as it is an attempt to argue the necessarily doxological element in society. In several other essays she attempts to show how liturgy holds the worlds of art and politics together. She understands liturgy to fuse "the most realistic with the most ideal."<sup>63</sup> Liturgy stands as the foundation of society because "it relativises the everyday without denying its value." It can critique society from within and at the same time refer it to a transcendent dimension. It

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between the Institution Narrative and consecration. The recent decision by the Vatican allowing for the validity of the ancient eucharistic prayer of Addai and Mari (Anaphora of the Apostles) of the Assyrian Church raises the question whether one can point to a moment of consecration in the way that St. Thomas and the whole Western tradition after the twelfth century presumed. The Anaphora of Addai and Mari contains no institution narrative. In any case, liturgical scholars and sacramental theologians have been questioning the notion of a "moment of consecration" for some time. See Robert Taft, "Mass Without the Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001," *Worship* 77 (2003): 482–509.

<sup>61</sup> Pickstock, "Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist," 175.

<sup>62</sup> Citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III:73. a. 3. ad 2.

<sup>63</sup> Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy, Art and Politics," *Modern Theology* 16 (2000): 159–80, at 160; eadem, "Liturgy and Modernity," *Telos* 113 (1998): 19–41; eadem, "A Poetics of the Eucharist," *Telos* 131 (2005): 83–91.

enables the person to be himself or herself without ever resting complacently in that identity. It enables art and real life to be held together, which is something the modern cannot do.<sup>64</sup> A person becomes self-realized only by entering into his or her liturgical role, and so becoming a liturgical or doxological person has implications for the individual as well as communal dimension of human being. Finally, liturgy has direct consequences for economics, since the liturgical act is meant to deal with surplus wealth in public festival. No doubt she has the traditional cultural phenomenon of “potlatch” in mind.<sup>65</sup> She also points to a modern pseudo-liturgy that uses spectacle to induce order. One is reminded of Leni Riefenstahl’s horrifying portrayal of the Nazi Nuremberg rallies of the 1930s in her film, *Triumph of the Will*.<sup>66</sup>

In my opinion Pickstock’s work is of little use to those who want to know how to reform the liturgy. She offers no specific prescriptions, only critique. It is doubtful that we could simply return to a translated form of the medieval Roman Rite, and I do not think she can be read as simply advocating such a return. In fact, Pickstock is far more radical, since her critique goes to the very roots of capitalist economics, and the conservatives for whom she has become a hero might well want to rethink their position, just as they would have to do if they took the economic writings of Pope John Paul II seriously.

At the outset of this chapter I referred to Pickstock’s critique of the liturgy as intriguing. It is indeed intriguing as well as difficult. Although one should not accept her analysis of medieval liturgy without caution, she does raise some very important and fundamental philosophical questions about the nature of the post-Vatican II reform as well as its charter in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

<sup>64</sup> Pickstock, “Liturgy, Art and Politics,” 162. This is reminiscent of the categories “dramatic” and “political” that R. Taylor Scott pointed out in “The Likelihood of Liturgy: Reflections Upon Prayer Book Revision and Its Liturgical Implications,” *Anglican Theological Review* 62 (1980): 103–20. See also the tripod of Christian existence (sacrament-doctrine-ethics) analyzed by Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* (n. 26 above).

<sup>65</sup> Pickstock, “Liturgy, Art and Politics,” 166. For a similar approach to the relation between ritual and economics at the root of culture and society see Ernest Becker, *Escape from Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

<sup>66</sup> See the excellent essay by James Alison, “Worship in a Violent World,” *Studia Liturgica* 34 (2004): 133–46.

1. Do the Constitution and the subsequent reform too easily accept “modern” preconceptions about society?
2. Does the reform of the liturgy rationalize the Mass in a way that evades its “impossibility”?
3. Have the strategies of translation (in the 1970s) adequately captured the genius of the genres to which they were applied?

and perhaps most important:

4. Was there adequate dialogue among liturgical historians, pastoral specialists, and theologians in the construction of the reform?

#### THE MASS AND MODERNITY:

JONATHAN ROBINSON

Another major philosophical critique has been proposed by Jonathan Robinson, an Oratorian with an excellent background in modern philosophy. For Robinson it is not only the liturgy that is problematic but also the way contemporary Catholicism understands the truth of revelation and how it is communicated. The liturgy is a prime example of the crisis of contemporary Catholicism and serves as the focus of his work. The liturgical movement of the twentieth century relied on a number of (unspoken) presuppositions that stem from the Enlightenment, the philosophical reaction of Georg W. F. Hegel, the scientism of Auguste Comte, the romantic movement, and postmodern cynicism.<sup>67</sup> The end result is a liturgy in which the church no longer worships God, but rather itself. Liturgy is replaced by autocelebrations, the community turned in upon itself.<sup>68</sup> Of course, he is far too sophisticated to reject the legitimate gains wrought by the Enlightenment, like human rights and religious liberty,<sup>69</sup> but he does see the dark side in the threefold movement from rejection of revelation (Latitudinarianism) to dismissal of the church and the sacraments (Deism) to ultimate rejection of God altogether (Atheism).<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backwards* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. Robinson is referring to an article by Bishop Tena Garriga, “La sacra liturgia fonte e culmine della vita ecclesiale,” in Rino Fisichella, *Il concilio Vaticano II: Recezione e attualità alla luce del Giubileo* (Milan: San Paolo, 2000), 52.

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity*, 41.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

Each of these Enlightenment moves has a(n indirect) result in the reform of the liturgy. For example, with regard to the loss of belief that revelation actually has any content: "This sapping away of belief in revelation has created a climate of opinion in which liturgy as the celebration of the central mysteries of revelation is becoming less and less meaningful to most people."<sup>71</sup> Therefore Robinson rejects what he considers a one-sided reading of the axiom *lex orandi lex credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of belief), insisting that the correct reading of the original form of the axiom: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* should read "Let the rule of prayer *support* the rule of belief" instead of the more frequent translation ". . . *determine* the rule of belief."<sup>72</sup>

The dismissal of sacramental religion by Immanuel Kant in favor of a rational moral system has resulted in the weakening of Catholicism itself: "If we take the sacraments seriously, then we have to take the importance of the visible Church seriously. The Church is more than a society for the promotion of an ethics of duty; she is Christ's Mystical Body here on earth where the mercy of God is found in the sacraments."<sup>73</sup> I do not think that Robinson is so much dismissing the idea that ethics and liturgy have much to do with one another as he is commenting on the not infrequent case of Catholic churches in which ethical engagement seems to have swallowed the sacramental life completely—or where the sacraments are a convenient venue for the presentation of moral values.

The third Enlightenment challenge is Atheism. Here Robinson finds an outcome in the way Catholic funeral liturgy has replaced concern for the fate of the deceased with concern for mourners. I will quote him at some length:

Even though Hume's dismissal of the Resurrection of Christ and of eternal life have not often been taken up explicitly by Catholics, the atmosphere his work engendered has had a profound influence on Catholic worship, and this can be seen from the way the funeral Mass is often celebrated today.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.*, 233. To be fair, Robinson will allow a stronger translation of *statuere*, such as "buttress" or "firm up," but he would clearly not adhere to the use of the axiom by a contemporary liturgical theologian like Aidan Kavanagh. See the latter's *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).

<sup>73</sup> Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity*, 94.

What goes on at funerals shows what is really believed about the passage from this life. If the rite of Christian burial does not clearly show that funerals are in the first place intimately connected with the state of the person who has died, then it fails to be Catholic. What I am objecting to is the all too common conviction that funerals are a sort of instant canonization of the dead person in the interests of the community left behind; or, as the stronger version of this goes, "funerals have nothing to do with the dead person." . . . It seems to me obvious in the light of what I have written that wearing white vestments for funerals ought to be the exception, not the norm. Funerals are about, and for, the person who has died.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the threefold challenge represented by the Enlightenment, Robinson also finds that the philosophy of Georg W. F. Hegel has done significant damage to the church and to the liturgy. To make a rather long and complex story short, he argues that Hegel ultimately has the community swallow God or, as the chapter is subtitled: "God becomes the community."<sup>75</sup> Understanding Hegel is somewhat tricky since he uses the traditional vocabulary of Christian theology, but for his own purposes. In the end there is no transcendent object of Christian worship and there is "little room for adoration and contemplation."<sup>76</sup> One can see the same dynamic at work in Francis Mannion's critique of "the intimization of society," where the feelings of the assembly and individuals within it take precedence over the worship of a transcendent God.

Robinson discerns a third source of the destruction of modern Catholic liturgy in the program of Auguste Comte, the idiosyncratic nineteenth-century French inventor of sociology. For Robinson, Comte's empiricism and confidence in the rule of experts is mirrored in the triumph of the liturgical experts in the post-Vatican II reform.<sup>77</sup> This seems to me something of a stretch, but the disparagement of liturgical experts is certainly a theme that will recur.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 110, 115.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 142. As with Pickstock on Scotus, I must acknowledge that I am far from being an expert on Hegel's philosophy. There are clearly many approaches to his usefulness for Christian theology; see, e.g., Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>77</sup> Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity*, 159–63.

A final philosophical blow to Catholic liturgy (for Robinson) can be found in postmodernism's (cynical) objection to metanarratives, all encompassing grand schemes like religious belief systems: "everything is in flux, and this includes the person who experiences a world in which there are no stable centers or fixed meanings."<sup>78</sup> The result of accepting postmodernism, at least in its more radical guise, is clearly the evacuation of the Creed and of Christian liturgy of all meaning.<sup>79</sup> Robinson summarizes this way:

Religion has also been taught to deliver the same ambiguous and hidden message [of the indeterminacy of meaning]. Only the very naïve, we are assured, would imagine that statements in the Creed, for example, have anything to do with stating the way things are. What religious language shows us is a complicated structure of hidden meanings that are not open to ordinary believers. The hidden meanings are not, however, buried in total obscurity, because they are open to the inspection of experts who are trained to describe what lies behind the worship and religious language in general.<sup>80</sup>

To the extent that this is an accurate description of the current state of affairs it represents a devastating critique of the theological enterprise in general and the work of liturgical scholars in particular. I think it is fair to say that theologians and liturgists of all stripes do sometimes sound like experts who employ esoteric knowledge and methods to impose their will on others. This is why they never have the last word—the church's authority does.

Before we can begin to answer the questions raised by Robinson and Pickstock we need to consider other angles from which the contemporary Roman Rite has been criticized. Since liturgical history was such an important factor in understanding the need for reform, and since liturgical historians were so influential in its implementation, it is to their critique that we now turn.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 171 (see also 175, 234). There seems to be no end to the various meanings and analyses of postmodernism/postmodernity. Two good places to begin are: Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Paul Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>79</sup> For an argument in favor of "meeting" rather than "meaning," see Nathan Mitchell's recent *Meeting Mystery: Liturgy, Worship, Sacraments* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007).

<sup>80</sup> Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity*, 208.