

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

By H. A. REINHOLD

THERE are two prayers addressed to the Blessed Trinity in our Missal which betray their un-Roman origin: the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* after the *Lavabo*, and the *Placeat Sancta Trinitas* at the end of Mass. These, and similar accretions, indicate that our present Missal, modelled on the 1474 edition,¹ is the descendant of that famous Franco-Roman work ordered by Charlemagne and collected by Alcuin.² The Frankish or Gallican ingredients of Alcuin's missal are easily detected, even by the layman. Their most noticeable feature is a certain verbosity, repetitiousness, poetic mood and a tendency toward grandiose – often very beautiful – rhetorical style.³ That branch of the latin liturgies which we call Gallican – the Frankish varieties, the Visigothic or Toledan and, according to some scholars, the Ambrosian rites – has in common the mood which is found in the Blessing of the Palms (before the 1956 Reform), the Blessing of the Ashes and, above all, the rich and poetic Dedication of Churches. Edmund Bishop's precise characterization of the genius of the pure Roman rite as sober, matter of fact and theocentric, to quote loosely, has become a basic assumption with most liturgiologists and popular liturgist. With this handy tool, even the non-scholar can discover what was born of *Maiestas Romana* and of its grave mind, which detests the rule of overflowing sentiment and the cascade of grand words. The sobriety of the Canon and of most of the collects, and the clarity of the architectural structure of the Mass, even with its present admixtures, are easily accessible points for verification and private study. There is poetry in the bare Roman rite, one that has its corresponding climate in the early basilicas like Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill. Its mode is the present Spirit and Truth without deception, an austere purity –

¹ *Missale Romanum I*, Henry Bradshaw Society, Vol. XVII, London, 1899.

² Cf. H. A. Wilson, *The Gregorian Sacramentary under Charles the Great* (London, 1915).

³ The breviary was also affected; for a good sample cf. the chapter office of Prime, *Dirigere et sanctificare, regere et gubernare dignare, Domine, rex caeli et terrae*, in which Christ is addressed with the unique title of *Salvator Mundi*.

that *castigatio vocis* which is so audible and visible in the Benedictine office. It is symbolic and very conscious of the subtle dividing line between awkward familiarity and a chaste consciousness of the demands of the *analogia entis*:¹ the deeper the speculation the more we seem to know about God, the more we become aware that we dare claim to know his secret. Deeply religious people become less and less able to speak or to hear others speak about him and his love. The silent prostration before him becomes the best tongue in which to approach him whose only valid symbol and word is his incarnate Son.

When we proceed from the natural or philosophical theology of the one God to the greatest revealed mystery of the triune God, the demand for wordless adoration becomes even more imperative. The Roman liturgy stays well within the biblical terminology, at least its pre-Carolingian parts, and to this day shuns Hellenic Christian gnosis. The texts of the sacramentaries down to the most recent, the *Sacramentarium Gregorianum*, in the version of Pope Adrian I, never take a stance 'opposite' the most holy Trinity, as the Oriental and the Gallican types do. The feast of the blessed Trinity is so much an exception that, within the framework of the visible and audible celebration of the cult mystery, it is almost incongruous. In the Roman liturgy the Trinity is, so to speak, operative; a circle into which the redeemed enter. One with the Son through our incorporation into His Body, the Virgin-Mother *Ecclesia*, we take part in the Son's cult of His Father through the power of the Spirit, whom St. Paul calls the Spirit of Christ. There are, therefore, two images of the ineffable Mystery of the Trinity. One is a product of precise 'divine mathematics' and cogent formulae, mostly developed to ward off heresy; it sees the three Divine Persons working as a unit, not as three different agents 'ad extra', infinitely transcendent, an object of contemplation. But the liturgical and biblical version of this central mystery is not a fiery circle which excludes, but a vital and intimate relationship assuming the creation, man, into its begotten and 'spirited' operative oneness. Through the mystery of the Mass we enter into the relation of Father and Son and Holy Spirit and participate in the cult which the Son renders to His Father.

Here, perhaps, is an approach to an explanation why, in the

¹ The similarity in difference between the being of the Creator and the being of the creature.

Roman liturgy at its best and most consistent, all appeals to the blessed Trinity are carefully avoided. The exceptions are obviously in their context, secondary liturgy: the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* in the offertory and the *Placeat Sancta Trinitas* at the end of Mass. One glance at the Mass and the office of this feast leaves the impression of a series of tours-de-force, unfortunate repetitions and forced illfitted loans from the Old Testament. It reaches its climax in a few 'misappropriations' to the Persons of the Trinity; in short, it is *liturgie basse*. This was hardly avoidable because the Trinity cannot be fitted *en bloc*, so to speak, into the cult of the Son to the Father. Trinity Sunday is not the 'feast of the Blessed Trinity', even as Pentecost is not the 'feast of the Holy Spirit' in the way that All Saints is the 'feast of all saints'. There is no difficulty in understanding this difference. Liturgically, this and the host of similar feasts have their *raison d'être* in the fact that the second Person alone became man.

What we are to extract out of these considerations and critical observations is one factual thing: taught to pray in the sublime manner of the Roman and other liturgies, we are caught up in a worship that is trinitarian in a dynamic and 'intra-trinitarian' way. This is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity in its aspect of divine cult: the cult of the Son who, assuming a human nature, became the head of his mystical body to worship his Father. The indelible character given to baptized and confirmed Christians makes them capable of this priesthood.

In our efforts to give the pastoral aspect of the liturgy all our attention we should never overlook or treat lightly the 'cultural' side of the liturgy. The mysteries or sacraments can be so far removed from God's people that they never become conscious of their right and duty to assume their proper role in the celebration, and end up as passive spectators. For hundreds of years this had been the Christians' fate until the liturgical awakening of our generation. Now we are in danger of missing the central concern of the mysteries of cult. What we must realise now is that it is possible to follow the pastoral aspects of the liturgy and to engage more and more in participation yet never to advert to what it is in which we are sharing. By performing the sacred mysteries in close participation with the assembled Church, Christ's body in whom the Holy Spirit is present, we are part of divine Cult, rendered not only by us as his creatures and adopted sons, but by the incarnate Son himself to his Father. This seems to me to be the telling difference between

non-Catholic worship and the worship offered by the sacramental Church of ours.¹

The Mass is intrinsically a sacrifice of 'cultic' praise. This is best seen in the Preface (or *Eucharistia*), sung by the celebrant at the beginning of the canon of which it is an integral part.² Except for the Preface of the Apostles, it is always directed to the Father.³ The oldest prefaces extant, which are not too far removed from Judaism in time, cite all the benefits of the Creator and gradually rise to the climax which is the greatest gift of God, the Redemption. The following banquet is in its entirety the continued *Eucharistia*-Thanksgiving. Our own Roman canon makes it clear that under the guise of the meal the sacrifice is present, though hidden. One reason why some of the more daring proponents of a reform have suggested in earnest that the canon be not only sung or recited in a loud voice (in the language of the people), is the fact that the canon makes it indisputably clear that the mystery of the Mass is the sacrifice of the whole Christ, head and body, made present sacramentally or *in mysterio*.

In the warding off of heresy this or that detail of the rite of Mass has been over-emphasized. Its present silent form is by no means ideal. In the Roman and Ambrosian rite, since there is so little to see and hear for the people, pastoral concern has developed a kind of sacrificial rite in what is misnamed 'the Offertory'.⁴ But this concern, with all the additions originally extraneous to these rites, may well serve as a proof for the common acceptance of the

¹ This 'cultural' aspect is apparently dominant in the Byzantine rite, in spite of its less fortunate attitude of being, so to speak, outside the 'inner-trinitarian' processions. A comparative study of this theological difference between the Franco-Roman rite and the Byzantine liturgy has yet to be made. It is badly needed now that the hearts of all Christians are filled with the desire to unite us all.

The contemporary historians who examined the causes of the schism of 1059 have long ago noticed that the fault was by no means all on one side and that much more has yet to be done than acknowledging that both anathemata were invalid. Even if the Eastern Churches in their conservatism refuse to budge, the greater flexibility of those subject to Rome could well afford to develop the liturgical attitude which is the foundation of the reformed Roman missal. This would make it easy to see the profound kinship of East and West. By removing the medieval additions that contradict the mood and text of the original sacramentaries, a great deal of new insight will result.

² Notwithstanding the way in which it is separated in the post-tridentine missal printed after 1570.

³ The primitive text of the Preface of the Apostles was changed. In the Leonine Sacramentary, for instance, it is addressed to the Father 'per Christum Dominum nostrum'.

⁴ In the Byzantine liturgy, the elaborate rite of slaughter has been developed in the Proskomidy (the preparation of the offerings) and the Great Entrance, with its moving and beautiful hymn of Cherubim.

sacrificial character of the Mass, once the canon was shrouded in silence.

More evidence could easily be assembled from the Roman Missal to prove the latreutic character of the liturgy and the entry in the bosom of the Trinity through the Incarnation and our worship, in Christ, of the Father. But let this suffice for such a short essay as this. Our concern is the adoration in Spirit and Truth which our Lord predicted at the well of Sichar. The order he gave in these words are to be taken seriously. The human spirit thirsted for the truth and the vision of the mysteries, the great life-bearing symbols which the Bridegroom Saviour would bequeath to his Bride, the Church. It can never be satisfied with the mere performance of rites incomprehensible to those who are initiated into the mysteries. At least, the ceremonies should convey their meaning and not create the air of magic incantation. The Father must be worshipped by his incarnate Son without obscurantism; and therefore the members of Christ's Body have to strive after a grasp of the true meaning of sacrificial worship. The advantage of our essentially symbolic liturgy is that it admits degrees and levels of initiation, ranging from mere hint to the contemplation and penetration of the symbol. These symbols are, of course, *symbola practice* – reality as well as symbol. In other words, they are never a *nuda commemoratio*, mere things (deiknymena) that evoke memories, but a true non-physical reality which is unique. The limits of the symbol have been stretched to the breaking point, by the cerebration of mathematical minds and by the imagination of the 'pious'. Therefore a great deal of refocusing has to be done before the current reform strikes an echo in the breasts and minds of the clergy and the laity. As long as we fail to see the Father through his Son whom we know, we are like Philip, who asked our Lord to 'show us the Father'.¹ Who will tell the 'pious' that their worship which has as its object the Son in the tabernacle and monstrance, is secondary? Or that their understanding of this 'lesser' worship stems rather from a human imagination of a physical reality than a grasp, in faith, of supernatural truth? Should they ever be told in so many words? Perhaps it is better to lift up this secondary worship to a higher level through the right understanding of the liturgical prayers themselves, which speak clearly the true worship of the Father in Spirit and Truth.

¹ Jn 14, 8–13.

We have been baptized to perform the 'liturgy of a Christian life', as St. Thomas Aquinas says. Our whole life, in the state of grace, is worship. Baptism makes us die and rise with Christ whose priestly character is sealed onto us in Confirmation. We are then full participants with him. This participation is more intensified by the two sacraments which consecrate our earthly tasks as ordained priests or laymen. All this finds its profoundest expression in the Holy Eucharist; but less in that personal isolation which retreats from the congregation than in the attitude of the sacred Banquet, as the Father's family, one body in the Spirit. We must recapture the exhilaration and deep joy of common feasting in the Sacrament of the Altar. It does not only make us one on the communal and psychological level where we can feel it, but in the grace of the Body and the Spirit, where it may forever remain imperceptible, purely a matter of faith in things unseen, as long as we live as mortals.

Society is at this moment experiencing a resurgence of individualism. Men are striving after the personal in revulsion against the communal monster of state, class, industrial unit and the mass media of communication. The public sector seems to grow by devouring individuals, families, neighbourhoods and changing them into monster growths; and there seems to be no end to this phenomenon in sight. Is therefore liturgy to be disowned as one of the leveling forces destructive of the freedom of meeting God alone? Is silent worship a better answer to the needs of our era? Shall we look on 'participation' in a body as something diametrically opposed to our present needs? The answer to these questions is: No.

None of the individual commitment, none of the prayer of the heart, none of the decisions of conscience, none of three divine virtues are obliterated by the emphasis of common cult of the Father in the Son by virtue of the creative operation of the Spirit. Because without them our cult would become a hollow shell, a sounding brass and a tingling bell. On a deeper level the Christian worshipping with his brethren is alone with God. Spiritual promiscuity is an abomination and is certainly not a result of worship in common. When were the bonds that unite parents and children denounced as socialistic by sane men? What is a danger is this: the inarticulate, immature herd of dumb onlookers watching a rite they had never sensed as their own. Only persons made more personal by identifying themselves with the person of Christ, moved by the person of the Spirit, are true worshippers of the Father, whose name we hallow together in the mystery of bread and wine.