

## IT'S THE COUNCIL THAT'S THE PROBLEM

“Today what is happening on the surface of the Church will pass. For Christ, the Church is the same, today, yesterday and tomorrow.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta to Malcolm Muggeridge

Our contention is, and has been for many years now, that despite the utterances of popes and bishops over 50 years, despite the expressed intention of Pope John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council was NOT an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. The truth of this proposition is, we insist, demonstrable, both inductively and deductively ([www.superflumina.org/PDF files/dignitatis humanae 2.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/dignitatis_humanae_2.pdf)).

The happy-clappy religion of many—perhaps a majority of—Catholics in our time follows on the Council's endorsement of a rapprochement with Protestantism and the secular. Their religion is a sort of proto-Protestantism. “The Church,” G K Chesterton had said, “is the one thing that saves a man from the degrading servitude of being a child of his time.” The bishops of Vatican II and its popes did their best to change that. Today the body of the average Catholic church at the conclusion of Mass resembles nothing so much as a tea party after a public meeting. Loud talk and laughter, aided and abetted, *incited*, by the parish priest, drown the silent worship due to the presence of Christ in the tabernacle. The modern Catholic thinks it his duty to be a child of his time.

What is missing among Catholics who degrade the sacred place of their local church and dishonour its Sacred Inhabitant in this way is the Gift of the Holy Spirit called *Fear of the Lord*. They lack the perception that their familiarity with the Creator of the universe and Saviour of mankind is utterly improper. Moses removed his shoes when he found himself in the Presence of God. The modern Catholic treats that Presence with an indifference verging on contempt. The *Gifts* and the seven *Christian Virtues* are the faculties, or powers, of the life of Grace. They grow like the fingers on a hand. If one grows, they all grow. If one is stunted, all are stunted. If *Fear* is so stunted as to be non-existent among them, so too are the other *Gifts*. And if the *Gifts* are stunted, so too are the Christian Virtues, *Charity, Hope, Faith, Prudence, Fortitude, Justice* and *Temperance*. Whatever the members of these congregations may think in their proto-Protestant euphoria, the Life of Grace among them is hardly more than vestigial.

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In 1970 Robert Speight summarised the evils the Second Vatican Council had precipitated :

“We were concerned to sacralise the world, not to secularise the Church. We may have wished to simplify the altar, in so far as we bothered about such things at all ; we had no desire to displace it for a kitchen table. The Latin of the Mass was not only familiar but numinous, and we had no wish to barter it for a vernacular which has justified our worst fears. We did not wish priests to dress like parishioners, any more than we wished judges to dress like jurymen. We were anti-modernist and even, except in aesthetics, *anti-modernes* ; radical only in the sense that we wanted to get down to roots, not in the sense that we wanted to pull them up. We were more anxious to preserve the values of an ancient civilisation than to set about the construction of a new one.” (Quoted in Joseph

Pearce, *Literary Converts*, Ignatius Press, ch. 27)

According to the mind of the bishops of Vatican II, the Church was to enter a new, and radically different, phase of her existence in the process of being “brought up to date” (*aggiornamento*). This phase was marked by rupture with what had obtained in the past. A significant instance of this rupture was a recasting of the calendar of the Church's liturgical year.

It is vain, in our view, to assert that Vatican II did not authorise the abandonment of Latin in favour of the vernacular in the celebration of Mass and the Divine Office, or the turning of the priest towards the people, or various other of the aberrations in the sacred liturgy sanctioned by Paul VI. It is vain, also, to assert that Paul VI's claim in his address of 26 November 1969 that “our first obedience is to the Council” was disingenuous, that these changes were his own initiative. One cannot acquit the Council's bishops of the consequences of their radical actions. It was the mind of Vatican II, the drive to compromise with the Protestant and the secular, that led Paul VI to assert :

“It is Christ's will, it is the breath of the Holy Spirit which calls the Church to make this change. A prophetic moment is occurring in the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church. This moment is shaking the Church, arousing it, obliging it to renew the mysterious art of its prayer.”

The defects of Paul VI's *novus ordo* (hereafter, 'the *reinvented liturgy*') may be addressed under three heads which reflect the reformation precipitated by Vatican II.

#### *The Vernacular*

Replacing Latin with the vernacular diminished the universality of the Mass. It detracted from the catholic character of the Catholic sacrifice.

“The existence of a common liturgical language... is a sign of the Church's mission to reverse the curse of Babel and to create a bond of unity between the peoples.” (Christopher Dawson, quoted in Joseph Pearce, *Literary Converts*, Ignatius Press, ch. 27)

The (yet still Anglican) Ronald Knox understood the Catholic Church's insistence on its universal language. When he was asked to perform a baptism in the vernacular he said :

“The baby doesn't understand English, and the Devil knows Latin.” (Evelyn Waugh, *Ronald Knox*, London, 1959, p. 94).

Latin is not a dead language; it is fixed language. You can't fiddle with it. Vernacular languages are in flux and their mutability detracts from the liturgy's fixity. The vernacular also provides a vehicle for the priest who likes to hear the sound of his own voice. Adoption of the vernacular opened the door for serial abuses and the name of those abuses is 'legion'.

The liturgy is a formalised ritual of worship. It is not meant to be marked by personal input. In the *reinvented liturgy* the work of the minister is shared with lay participants who too often mistake their function for an opportunity for personal indulgence. This is impossible in the Latin tongue.

#### *Smorgasbord Options*

The *reinvented liturgy* delights in providing options which serve further to fracture its unity. Options are a secular preoccupation. The Divine Office, the prayer of the Church directed to be offered to God each day, always had as its unifying principle repetition at every hour of *the Collect* of the Mass to

mark its function as the embellishment of the Church's sacrifice. This rule has gone by the board.

The canon of the Mass was immutable. The version offered in the vernacular ('the Roman canon') is replete with options which permit of exclusions *ad libitum*. Priests, human and infected with the weakness to which man is heir, opt inevitably for shorter, or easier, courses. These provide those so inclined with further scope to focus on themselves rather than Christ. Most do not trouble even to do this, for the *reinvented liturgy* allows the substitution of one of three ersatz canons, forms which bow to the Protestant inclination to diminish the solemnity of the action which works the salvation of men. When coupled with other features listed below, the faithful Catholic can only wonder, after he has participated in a priest's gabled rendition of one or other of these defective canons, whether he has attended Mass at all.

The direction in the *reinvented liturgy* of readings of passages from Old and New Testaments in two year cycles (for week days) and three year cycles (for Sundays) defers to the Protestant preoccupation with the scriptures in lieu of the Church's traditional practice to offer the faithful a limited, and readily assimilable, edition of the scriptures' immensity. The new direction has, thus, served to exaggerate reliance on the scriptures at the expense of the Church's sacred tradition.

This mindset has rendered the liturgy dysfunctional as many orthodox priests of the *reinvented liturgy* freely admit. Its preoccupation with a shifting series of readings detracts from the unity and integrity of the liturgical year. It reduces the importance of the celebration of saints days, condemning many to obscurity and, by failing to insist on the use of readings appropriate to the feast over the readings of 'the two year plan', diminishes the importance the Church has ever placed on their heroic witness. Here is further deference to the spirit which abhors the Church's saints, her martyrs, confessors and virgins, her holy men and women, many of whom suffered and died at the hands of Protestants.

#### *Protestantising of the Liturgy*

A member of the faithful long immersed in the *reinvented ordo* who, of a sudden, finds himself at weekday Mass in the *tridentine* rite is immensely surprised. The priest offers no gratuitous remarks at the beginning, in the course of, or at the end of Mass. He preaches no homily. There are no normative 'prayers of the faithful', where mostly banal intercessions are matched by spontaneous and hardly controlled outpourings from one of the congregation. There is no 'offertory procession' ; no fumbling for the right 'acclamation' after the consecration ; no compulsory 'kiss of peace' ; no scope for the priest to adapt the words of the liturgy to some passing fancy of his own. The canon of the Mass with its appeal to the exclusive cadre of the canonical saints is unchanging, its process rigorous and circumscribed. All the elements of *material* participation imported in the *reinvented liturgy* are missing.

What matters is not material but *formal* participation. Evelyn Waugh's comment is apposite:

"Active participation" doesn't necessarily mean making a noise. Only God knows who are participating. People can pray loudly like the Pharisee and not be heard." (Quoted in Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*, London, 1994, p. 619)

There is, incidentally, congruity between Pope Paul's liturgy with its insistence on the material at the expense of the formal and the skewing towards the Protestant. Vaunting of the material aspects of

reality over the formal is one of the philosophical ills that flowed from the Protestant Revolt.

What our surprised Catholic hears is Mass *simpliciter*, unadulterated, the eternal sacrifice for the living and the dead in a form fixed from time immemorial. In twenty two or three minutes he is free to return to the obligations of his state with his religious duties complete. He would be forgiven for reflecting that in the *reinvented liturgy* to which he is accustomed the sacrifice of the Mass has been hijacked. He might find himself in sympathy with H J A Sire's remark that, by exalting its verbal dimension, Pope Paul reduced the Mass "to a religion of preaching at people." [*Phoenix from the Ashes*, Kettering, Ohio, Angelico Press, 2015, p. 262]

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How poorly the Catholic faithful have been served by the popes since 1960. And how extensively has Christ's Church suffered under their aegis ! Consider the one outstanding exercise of his office by John Paul II, the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, and balance against it his master stroke of incompetence in allowing the admission of females to the sanctuary. Just how much harm to the faithful and to the work of the Church this fiat has precipitated will only be known on the Day of Judgement.

Unmitigated admiration for his predecessors, has been a feature of each of the last five pontiffs, an admiration formalised now by papal pronouncement that certain of these limping successors of St Peter enjoy the vision of God in heaven.

Almost forty years have passed since English commentator, Michael Davies laid out the shortcomings of the Second Vatican Council in *Pope John's Council* (Kansas City [Angelus Press], 1977). "No rational person can deny," he wrote, "that up to the present Vatican II has produced no good fruits." (p. 4) Nothing has occurred in the interim to alter the accuracy of that judgement.

What must amaze an objective observer over those forty years is the systematic failure of the Catholic clergy, of bishops in particular, to grasp the nettle and condemn the Council for the evils for which it is responsible. There is not one, *not one*, of the 2,500 odd bishops of the Catholic Church, even the best of them, who will say that the Council was flawed ; none, that is, save the followers of the late Archbishop Lefebvre. It has been suggested—and who would disagree?—that it has been a master stroke on the part of Satan to achieve disobedience to Catholic principle on the part of the clergy through slavish obedience to papal and curial directives. At the heart of this longstanding ultramontanist mentality is an inability to distinguish between pope and Church. The pope is not the Church. He is her servant; he can, and does, err. The Church, in contrast, cannot err. A Catholic's allegiance is not to the pope but to the Church.

It would seem that Divine Providence has allowed the election, at last, of an incompetent pope so that the clergy might wake to the error of their ways and admit to themselves the systematic exercise in folly that was the Second Vatican Council.

Pope Francis is to travel to Lund, Sweden, on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2016 to "celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

the Reformation”, that is, of Martin Luther's apostasy from Christ's Church. This visit is entirely consistent with the rapprochement with Protestantism embraced by the bishops of Vatican II and disguised under the totem of ecumenism. It is consistent with the foolish, not to say blasphemous, conduct in which John Paul II engaged at Assisi in October 1986. The Pope's initiative diminishes, as Protestants desire, the heroism of the saints who suffered as a result of the Protestant Revolt, John Fisher, Thomas More, Edmund Campion, Robert Southwell and Margaret Clitheroe.

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On the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 1972, not seven years after the close of the Council, Pope Paul lamented publicly that what he called “the smoke of Satan” had somehow entered the Church of God. All the expectations of renewal, of a splendid future for the Church, had fallen to the ground.

The argument against Vatican II being an ecumenical council is grounded in metaphysical principle. It is simple : *formality follows finality*. The essence of a thing, *what something is*, is a function of the end it exists to serve. What was the end for which the Second Vatican Council was convoked ? If it was *not* to serve the good of the Church, then Vatican II was *not* an ecumenical council. And the Council was not convoked for the good of the Church. It was convoked “to bring the Church up to date”, *aggiornamento* ! That is, it was convoked to get the Church to conform itself with the world, and to come to terms with other religions. But the Church is not of the world as Christ Himself made clear—

“In the world you will have troubles but fear not, I have overcome the world.” [John 16: 33 ]

And, calling on His Heavenly Father,—

“I passed your word to them and the world hated them because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to removed them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.”

[John 17: 14-16]

Nor is there scope for the Church to come to terms with other religions, for there is only one true religion, the Catholic faith. As St Paul said, “What have you in common with the unbeliever ?”

Why should we be surprised, then, at the defeat of all Paul VI's hopes ? Isn't the chaos that followed the Council just what one might have expected if it was *not* an ecumenical council, only a pretence ? Who could disagree with Michael Davies judgement that “[i]t was the Council itself which provided the breach in the ramparts of the City of God through which the mysterious enemy of man wormed his way into the very bosom of the Church...” ? (*Pope John's Council*, op. cit., p. 9)

Nothing the Council decided which departed from the Church's constant teaching can bind the Church, or the faithful. All the rapprochement with the Protestant and the secular in which its bishops engaged served only to obscure adherence to Catholic truth, and Pope Paul's initiative to alter the sacred liturgy was not, as he thought, the fruit of Christ's will, or “the breath of the Holy Spirit”, but endorsement of the Council bishops' collective folly. Vatican II has produced immense harm to the Church and to the faithful. With Pope Francis that harm is coming, at last, to its crisis.

Michael Baker

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016—*St John Fisher & St Thomas More*