

SHORT HISTORY OF THE ROMAN MASS

by Michael Davies

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GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CEREMONIES

Although there was considerable liturgical uniformity in the first two centuries there was not absolute uniformity. Liturgical books were certainly being used by the middle of the 4th century, and possibly before the end of the third, but the earliest surviving texts date from the seventh century, and musical notation was not used in the west until the ninth century when the melodies of Gregorian chant were codified. The only book known with certainty to have been used until the fourth century was the Bible from which the lessons were read. Psalms and the Lord's Prayer were known by heart, otherwise the prayers were extempore. There was little that could be described as ceremonial in the sense that we use the term today. Things were done as they were done for some practical purpose. The lessons were read in a loud voice from a convenient place where they could be heard, and bread and wine were brought to the altar at the appropriate moment. Everything would evidently have been done with the greatest possible reverence, and gradually and naturally signs of respect emerged, and became established customs, in other words liturgical actions became ritualized.

The Lavabo or washing of hands is an evident example. In all rites the celebrant washes his hands before handling the offerings, an obvious precaution and sign of respect. St. Thomas Aquinas remarked: "We are not accustomed to handle any precious things save with clean hands; so it seems indecent that one should approach so great a sacrament with hands soiled." The washing of the hands almost inevitably came to be understood as a symbol of cleansing the soul, as is the case with all ritual washing in any religion. There were originally no particular prayers mandated for the washing of hands, but it was natural that the priests should say prayers for purity at that moment, and that eventually such prayers should find their way into the liturgical books. What prayer could be more appropriate than Psalm 25, *Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas*? All ritual grew naturally out of these purely practical actions, just as vestments evolved out of ordinary dress. The only really ritual actions we find in the first two centuries are certain postures, kneeling or standing for prayer, and such ceremonies as the kiss of peace, all of which were inherited from the Jews.

It is easy to understand that the order, the general outline of the service, would become constant almost unconsciously. People who do the same thing continually, naturally do it in much the same way. There was no reason for changing; to reverse the order suddenly would disturb and annoy people. The early Christians knew for instance at which moment to expect the lessons, when to receive Communion, when

to stand for prayer. The fact that the catechumens were present at some part of the service, but must not see other parts, involved a certain amount of uniform order. But the prayers too, although there was as yet no idea of fixed forms, would naturally tend towards uniformity, at least in outline. Here also habit and custom would soon fix their order. The people knew when to expect the prayer for the emperor, the thanksgiving, the petitions. The dialogue form of prayer, of which we have many traces in this first period, also involves uniformity, at least in the general idea of the prayers. The people made their responses, "Amen," "Lord have mercy," "Thanks be to God", and so on at certain points, because they knew more or less what the celebrant would say each time. In a dramatic dialogue each side must be prepared for the other. So the order and general arrangement of the prayers would remain constant. We find in many cases the very same words used; whole formulas sometimes long ones, recur. This can be easily understood.

In the first place there were many formulas that occur in the Old or New Testament, that were well known in Jewish services. These were used as liturgical formulas by Christians too. Examples of such forms are: "Amen," "Alleluia", "Lord have mercy", "Thanks be to God ", "For ever and ever", "Blessed are Thou O Lord our God." Moreover, it will be noticed that extempore prayer always tends to fall into stereotyped formulas. A man who prays for the same object will soon begin to repeat the same words. This may be noticed in extempore preaching. The fact that since all early Christian language was saturated with Biblical forms means that it would hardly be possible for the bishop to use different words and forms each time he prayed, even if he tried to do so. And why should he try? So the same expressions recurred over and over again in the public prayers. A formula constantly heard would soon be considered the right one, especially as in some cases (the psalms and Lord's prayer) the liturgy already contained examples of constant forms. A younger bishop when his turn came to celebrate, could do no better than continue to use the very words (as far as he remembered them) of the venerable predecessor whose prayers the people, and perhaps himself as deacon, had so often followed and answered with reverent devotion.

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THE END OF PERSECUTION

Historical factors played a crucial role in the manner in which the liturgy was celebrated. During times of persecution brevity and simplicity would be its principal characteristics for obvious reasons. The toleration of Christianity under Constantine I, and its adoption as the religion of the Empire under Theodosius I (379-95), had a dramatic effect on the development of ritual. Congregations increased in size; and benefactions for the building and furnishing of churches resulted in the enrichment of vessels and vestments. Those presenting such gifts would naturally want them to be of the richest and most beautiful nature possible. In a parallel and natural development, the liturgical rites became more elaborate, with solemn processions and stress upon the awesome nature of the rite. This elaboration of the liturgy proceeded faster and further in the East than in the West during the fourth century, but the universal change in style was initiated throughout the Christian world by the change from an illegal and private ritual into a state-supported public one.

From the fourth century onwards we have very detailed information about liturgical matters. The Fathers such as St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), St. Athanasius (d. 373), St Basil (d. 379), St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) give us elaborate descriptions of the rites they celebrated. It is unfortunate that we know less about the earliest history of the Roman rite than about any other. The freedom of the Church under Constantine and, roughly, the first general council in 325 (Nicea), mark the great turning point for liturgical study. From about the fourth century complete liturgical texts were compiled, the first Euchologion and Sacramentaries were drawn up for use in church. The Euchologion is the liturgical book of the Eastern Churches containing the Eucharistic rites, the invariable parts of the Divine Office, and the rites for the administration of the Sacraments and Sacramentals, thus combining the essential parts of the Missal, Pontifical, and Rituale in the Roman Rite). By this time, the old fluid uniform rite has crystallized into different liturgies in different places. These different liturgies all bear the marks of their common descent and follow the same general outline. Four parent rites can be discerned to which all existing ancient liturgies can be traced. Three of the parent rites are those of the three old patriarchal cities, Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. The general rule for liturgical usage is that rite followed patriarchate. The fourth parent rite, the Gallican, was an exception to this rule as, although celebrated within the Roman Patriarchate, it was not derived from the rite celebrated in Rome. As this study is concerned only with the evolution of the

Roman Rite the liturgies of Alexandria and Antioch will not be examined, but the Gallican Rite will as it had considerable influence upon the development of the finalized Roman Rite.

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The GALLICAN RITE

The fact that until the 8th century the West did not apply the general principle that rite follows patriarchate is both anomalous and unique. That the Bishop of Rome was Patriarch of all the West is a fact not disputed by anyone, and yet the Western Churches did not follow his rite. Until the 8th century, it was the local rite of the city of Rome only. It was not used in northern Italy, and even the southern dioceses of the peninsula had their own liturgical use. It usual to classify all these Western (Latin but not Roman) rites under the general name of Gallican. This practice is justified inasmuch as they all differ from the Roman and are closely related among themselves. We know most about the Gallican rite, in the strict sense, as it was used in Gaul. Variants are found in Spain, Britain, Italy and other countries. The generally accepted view is that the Gallican family of liturgies originated in the East, possibly in Antioch, and after being adopted in Milan during the 4th century spread throughout the West. Milan was, at that time, the Metropolitan See of northern Italy and the second most important see in the West.

From about the 8th century the local Roman rite gradually spread throughout the West, displacing the Gallican liturgies, but being modified by them in the process. There are two places in Western Europe where the old Gallican liturgies are still used. The first is Toledo in Spain, the Mozarabic rite. The word "Mozarabic" refers to the mozarabes, the Christian Arabs, and, strictly speaking, should only be applied to those parts of Spain which fell under Moorish rule after 711. In its present form it is the last remnant of the old Spanish rite. From the 11th century the Mozarabic rite was more and more driven back by that of Rome, and it seemed that it would disappear completely. In 1500 Cardinal Ximenes, the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo who died in 1517, revised its liturgical books, and founded chapters at Toledo, Salamanca, and Valladolid to preserve its use, but it is only in the Corpus Christi chapel in the cathedral at Toledo, founded by the Cardinal, that it is still celebrated today, but with Roman elements, in particular the Roman form of the words of institution. Cardinal Ximenes had a Mozarabic Missal printed in 1500, and a Breviary in 1502.

The city of Milan also has its own rite, commonly called Ambrosian, but there is no evidence to prove that St. Ambrose did more than compose the words of half a dozen of the hymns of the rite which is much more Romanized than that of Toledo, and includes the whole Roman Canon. The people of Milan took up arms on several occasions to resist attempts to impose the Roman Rite upon them. It was considerably modified after 1970 to bring it into line with the New Mass of Pope Paul VI.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE ROMAN RITE AND ITS LITURGICAL BOOKS

By about the middle of the 4th century there were certainly some liturgical books, how long before that anything was written one cannot say. The first part of the liturgy to have been written appears to have been the Diptychs. The word Diptych is derived from the Greek for twice-folded. A Diptych consisted of two tablets (covered with wax at the beginning) hinged and folded together like a book. On one the names of the living for whom prayers were to be said were written, on the other the names of the dead. These names were then read out by the deacon at the appointed place in the liturgy. Their use, in the East went on till far into the middle ages. Then the lessons were set down in a book. The old custom of reading from the Bible until the bishop made a sign to stop, soon gave way to a more orderly plan of reading a certain fixed amount at each liturgy. Marginal notes were added to the Bible showing this. Then an Index giving the first and last words of the amount to be read is drawn up. Other books were read besides the Bible (lives of Saints and homilies in the divine office); a complete Index giving references for the readings is the "Companion to the books"-comes, liber comitis or comicus. Lastly, to save trouble, the whole texts are written out as they are wanted, so we come to the (liturgical) Gospel-book (evangelarium), Epistle-book (epistolarium), and finally the complete Lectionary (lectionarium). St. Jerome (324-420) is widely believed to have been commissioned by the pope to select the Epistles and Gospels used for each Sunday of the liturgical year, which have been used since in the traditional Roman Missal. Meanwhile the prayers said by the celebrant and deacon are written out too.

Here we must notice an important difference between the older arrangement and the one we have now in the West. Our present books are arranged according to the service at which they are used; thus the Missal contains all that is wanted for Mass, the Breviary contains all the Divine Office, and so on. The older system, still kept in all

Eastern churches, considers not the service but the person who uses the book. One book contained all that the bishop or priest says at any service, the deacon has his book, the choir theirs, and so on. The bishop's book, from which the priest also used whatever he needed is the Sacramentary (Sacramentarium or liber sacramentorum). It contained only the celebrant's part of the Eucharistic liturgy, such prayers as the Canon, Collects, and Prefaces, but not the Epistles and Gospels or such sung parts as the Gradual. It also contained the bishop's part in many other services, ordinations, baptism, blessings and exorcisms, in short all sacerdotal functions. The deacon had his book too, the diakonikon; but as his function at Rome was reduced to singing the Gospel this book was confined to the Eastern liturgies. And then, later, the choir had the psalms and responses arranged together in the liber antiphonarius or gradualis, the liber responsalis, psalterium; later still the hymnarium, liber sequentialis, responsalis, and the psalterium⁶, later still the hymnarium, liber sequentialis, and so on, of which in the early middle ages there was a great variety.

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THE CANON OF THE MASS DATES FROM THE 4th CENTURY

Towards the end of the fourth century St. Ambrose of Milan, in a collection of instructions for the newly baptized entitled *De Sacramentis*, quotes the central part of the Canon which is substantially identical with, but somewhat shorter than, the respective prayers of the Roman Canon. This proves beyond doubt that the core of our Canon, from the *Quam oblationem* (the prayer before the Consecration), including the sacrificial prayer after the consecration, was in existence by the end of the fourth century.

The earliest Roman Sacramentaries are the first complete sources for the Roman Rite. These were written in the Latin language which had gradually replaced Greek as the language of the Roman liturgy. Scholars differ as to the precise time when the transition was complete, giving dates from the second half of the third century up to the end of the fourth. Both languages must have been used side by side during a fairly long period of transition. The genius of the Latin language certainly affected the ethos of the Roman Rite. Latin is naturally terse and austere when compared with the rhetorical abundance of Greek. (F127) It was a natural tendency of Latin to curtail redundant phrases, and this terseness and austerity are a noticeable mark of the Roman Mass.

Of the Sacramentaries, three stand out as the earliest, the most complete, the most important in every way. These are the so-called Leonine, Gelasian, and Gregorian Sacramentaries, named respectively after three popes St. Leo (440-61), Gelasius (492-6), and St. Gregory the Great (590-604). The names imply an authorship which cannot be substantiated even in the case of St. Gregory. There is no evidence that Pope Gelasius contributed anything to the Sacramentary attributed to him; St. Leo may have composed some of the prayers in the Leonine Sacramentary, but this is not certain; but the Gregorian Sacramentary almost certainly contains some material composed by St. Gregory. The Leonine Sacramentary, the Sacramentarium Leonianum, the oldest of the three, can be found in a seventh century manuscript preserved in the Chapter Library at Verona. The Sacramentary had been preceded by what were known as Libelli Missarum. They were small books containing the formularies for parts of the Mass for the Church in a particular diocese or locality, but not the Canon which was fixed, the readings, or the sung parts. They provided the intermediary between extempore celebrations and the fixed formularies of the Sacramentary. No actual examples are known to have survived, but the certainty of their existence is known through literary references, and above all through the Leonine Sacramentary which consists of a collection of Libelli. Unfortunately the collection is not complete, and lacks both the Order and the Canon of the Mass, but it contains many Mass propers which can still be found in the Roman Missal.

The Gelasian Sacramentary is the oldest Roman Massbook in the proper sense of the term. It is far more complete than the Leonine, and has the feasts arranged according to the Ecclesiastical Year. It also contains the Canon and several votive Masses. The most ancient extant manuscript dates from the 8th century and contains some Gallican material.

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THE REFORM OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

St. Gregory the Great became Pope in 590 and reigned until 604. His achievements during those fourteen years almost defy credibility. Prominent among the many important reforms that he undertook was that of the liturgy. His pontificate marks an epoch in the history of the Roman Mass, which, in every important respect he left in the state that we still have it. He collected the Sacramentary of Gelasius into one book, leaving out much but changing little. What we now refer to as The Gregorian

Sacramentary cannot be ascribed to the Pope himself as, apart from other evidence, it contains a Mass for his feast, but it is certainly based upon his reform of the liturgy and includes some material composed by him.

The keynote of the reform of St. Gregory was fidelity to the traditions that had been handed down (the root meaning of the Latin word *traditio* is to hand over or hand down). His reform consisted principally of the simplification and more orderly arrangement of the existing rite, the reduction of the variable prayers at each Mass to three (Collect, Secret, and Postcommunion), and a reduction of the variations occurring at that time within the Canon, prefaces and additional forms for the Communicantes and *Hanc Igitur*. These variations can still be found on a very few occasions such as Christmas and Easter. His principal work was certainly the definitive arrangement of the Roman Canon. The Lectionary was also given a definitive form, but was still to undergo considerable change subsequently. The Order of Mass as found in the 1570 Missal of St. Pius, apart from minor additions and amplifications, corresponds very closely with the order established by St. Gregory. It is also to this great Pope that we owe, to a large extent, the codification of the incomparable chant that bears his name.

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EASTERN AND GALLICAN ADDITIONS TO THE ROMAN RITE

The Roman Mass as reformed by St. Gregory gradually spread and became predominant not only in Italy, but also beyond the Alps. The prestige of the Roman Church, the sober nature of her liturgy, the fact that at Rome were the tombs of the Prince of the Apostles and many other martyrs, all combined to give the Roman liturgy a distinctive ethos of authenticity and authority. In addition, the absence of any great primatial see in Europe, but for Toledo in Spain, and the troubled nature of the times, favoured this rapid expansion. But during this expansion the Roman liturgy absorbed features of local, that is to say Gallican, traditions which, derived from an earlier period and with affinities to eastern usages. Some of these Gallican features were eventually to find their way to Rome and to be incorporated into the Roman Mass itself.

The Sacramentary that bears the name of St. Gregory is the term used for a family of Sacramentaries which emerged after his pontificate. The most important of the Gregorian Sacramentaries is the one referred to as The Adrianum. It was sent by Pope Adrian I (722-795) to Charlemagne at the request of the Emperor in 785 or 786. Charlemagne had asked for a Roman Massbook as he wished to standardize the liturgy in his Empire in accordance with the Roman usage. He was helped in this task by Alcuin, an English monk, who made up for deficiencies in the Roman Sacramentary by adding material from Gelasian sacramentaries current in Gaul, sacramentaries which contained Gallican material. Alcuin's mixed rite sacramentary found its way back to Rome and material from it found its way into the Roman Sacramentary. It is from this Gallicanized Roman Sacramentary that the finalized Roman Missal was eventually compiled. By the 11th century, and at the latest the latest the 12th century, this Gallicanized Roman rite had supplanted all the pure Gallican rites in the west with the exception of the survival of the Mozarabic rite at Toledo and a Romanized version of the Ambrosian rite in Milan. The principal that rite follows patriarchate had finally prevailed in the West as well as the East.

The additions to the Roman rite, some of which originated in Jerusalem and the East as well as from Gallican rites, or via Gallican rites, form its more elaborate, decorative, and symbolic parts. The pure Roman rite was exceedingly simple, austere, and plain; nothing was done except for some reason of practical utility. Its prayers were short and dignified, but almost too austere when compared with the exuberant rhetoric of the East. In our Missal we have from non-Roman sources much of the Holy Week ritual, and such decorative and symbolic processions and blessings as those of Candlemas and Palm Sunday. Doctor Fortescue writes:

If one may venture a criticism of these additions from an aesthetic point of view, it is that they are exceedingly happy. The old Roman rite, in spite of its dignity and archaic simplicity, had the disadvantage of being dull. The Eastern and Gallican rites are too florid for our taste and too long. The few non-Roman elements in our Mass take nothing from its dignity and yet give it enough variety and reticent emotion to make it most beautiful.

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A SACRED HERITAGE SINCE THE 6th CENTURY

We have now arrived at the early middle ages. From this time forward there is little to chronicle of the nature of change in the order of the Mass itself which had become a sacred and inviolable inheritance, its origin forgotten. It was popularly believed to have been handed down unchanged from the Apostles, or to have been written by St. Peter himself. Dr. Fortescue considers that the reign of St. Gregory the Great marks an epoch in the history of the Mass, having left the liturgy in its essentials just as we have it today. He writes:

There is, moreover, a constant tradition that St. Gregory was the last to touch the essential part of the Mass, namely the Canon. Benedict XIV (1740- 1758) says: "No pope has added to or changed the Canon since St. Gregory."

Whether this is totally accurate is not a matter of great importance, and even if some very minor additions did creep in afterwards, perhaps a few Amens, the important point is that a tradition of more than a millennium certainly existed in the Roman Church that the Canon should not be changed. According to Cardinal Gasquet:

This fact, that it has so remained unaltered during thirteen centuries, is the most speaking witness of the veneration with which it has always been regarded and of the scruple which has ever been felt at touching so sacred a heritage, coming to us from unknown antiquity."

Although the rite of Mass did continue to develop after the time of St. Gregory, Doctor Fortescue explains that:

All later modifications were fitted into the old arrangement, and the most important parts were not touched. From, roughly, the time of St. Gregory we have the text of the Mass, its order and arrangement, as a sacred tradition that no one has ventured to touch except in unimportant details.

Among the later additions:

The prayers said at the foot of the altar are in their present form the latest part of all. They developed out of medieval private preparations and were not formally appointed in their present state before the Missal of Pius V (1570)."

They were, however, widely used well before the Reformation and are found in the first printed edition of the Roman Missal (1474).

The Gloria was introduced gradually, at first only to be sung on feasts at bishop's Masses. It is probably Gallican. The Creed came to Rome in the 11th century. The Offertory prayers and the Lavabo were introduced from beyond the Alps hardly before the 14th century. The Placeat, Blessing and the Last Gospel were introduced gradually in the Middle Ages."

These prayers almost invariably have a liturgical use stretching back centuries before their official incorporation into the Roman rite. The *Suscipe sancte Pater* can be traced back to the prayer book of Charles the Bald (875-877).

The prayers which came into the Roman Mass after the time of Gregory the Great were among the first to be abolished by the Protestant Reformers. The included the prayers said at the foot of the altar, the *Judica me*, with its reference to the priest going to the altar of God, and the *Confiteor* with its request for the intercession of Our Lady and the saints were particularly unacceptable. The Offertory prayers, with their specifically sacrificial terminology, and the *Placeat tibi* which comes after the Communion, were totally incompatible with Protestant theology.

The fact that these prayers were incompatible with the Protestant heresy is hardly surprising as one of the reasons which must have prompted the Church to accept them, guided by the Holy Ghost, is the exceptional clarity of their doctrinal content. This tendency for a rite to express ever more clearly what it contains is in perfect accord with the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi*. This principle has been explained very clearly by Dom Fernand Cabrol, in the introduction to his edition of the Daily Missal:

A pope in the fifth century, in the course of a famous controversy, pronounced the following words which have been regarded, ever since, as an axiom of theology: *Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (let the law of prayer fix the law of faith)-in other words, the liturgy of the Church is a sure guide to her teaching.

Above all else the Church prizes the integrity of the faith of which she is the guardian: she could not therefore allow her official prayer and worship to be in contradiction with her doctrine. Thus, she has ever watched over the formulae of her liturgy with the utmost care, correcting or rejecting anything that seemed to be in any way tainted with error.

The liturgical books are, therefore, an authentic expression of the Catholic faith, and are, in fact, a source from which theologians may, in all security, draw their arguments in defense of the faith. The liturgy holds an important place among the loci theologici (theological sources), and in this respect its principal representative is the Missal. The latter is not, of course, a manual of Dogmatic Theology, and it is concerned with the worship of God and not with the controversial questions. It is nonetheless true that in the Missal we have a magnificent synthesis of Christian doctrine—the Holy Eucharist, Sacrifice, prayer Christian worship, the Incarnation, and Redemption, in fact, in it all dogmas of the Faith find expression.

In the authoritative exposition of Catholic doctrine edited by Canon George Smith it is stated that:

Throughout the history of the development of the sacramental liturgy, the tendency has always been towards growth, additions and accretions, the effort to obtain a fuller, more perfect, more clearly significant symbolism.

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THE REFORM OF ST. PIUS V

The Missal of St. Pius V was compiled and published in obedience to the Fathers of the Council of Trent. Their intentions were well expressed by Fr. Fortescue:

The Protestant Reformers naturally played havoc with the old liturgy. It was throughout the expression of the very ideas (the Real Presence, Eucharistic Sacrifice, and so on) they rejected. So they substituted for it new communion services that expressed their principles but, of course, broke away utterly from all historic liturgical evolution. The Council of Trent (1545 - 1563), in opposition to the anarchy of these new services, wished the Roman Mass to be celebrated uniformly everywhere. The medieval local uses had lasted long enough. They had become very florid and exuberant; and their variety caused confusion!

The first priority of the Council of Trent was to codify Catholic Eucharistic teaching. It did this in very great detail and in clear and inspiring terms. Anathema was pronounced upon anyone who rejected this teaching, and the Fathers insisted that what they had taught concerning the Eucharist must remain unmodified until the end of time:

And so this Council teaches the true and genuine doctrine about this venerable and divine sacrament of the Eucharist, the doctrine which the Catholic Church has always held and which She will hold until the end of the world, as She learned it from Christ Our Lord Himself, from His Apostles, and from the Holy Ghost, Who continually brings all truth to Her mind The Council forbids all the faithful of Christ henceforth to believe, teach or preach anything about the most Holy Eucharist that is different from what is explained and defined in the present decree.

In its eighteenth session, the Council appointed a commission to examine the Missal, to revise and restore it "according to the custom and rite of the Holy Fathers." Doctor Fortescue considers that the members of the Commission established to revise the Missal "accomplished their task very well":

It was not to make a new Missal, but to restore the existing one "according to the custom and rite of the holy Fathers," using for that purpose the best manuscripts and other documents.

He makes particular mention of the liturgical continuity which characterized the new Missal. The Missal promulgated by St. Pius V is not simply a personal decree of the Sovereign Pontiff, but an act of the Council of Trent, even though the Council closed on 4 December 1563, before the commission had completed its task. The matter was remitted to Pope Pius IV, but he died before the work was concluded so that it was his successor, St. Pius V, who promulgated the Missal resulting from the Council, with the Bull *Quo Primum Tempore*, 14 July 1570. Because the Missal is an act of the Council of Trent, its official title is *Missale Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum* ("The Roman Missal Restored According to the Decrees of the Holy Council of Trent"). This was the first time during the one thousand five hundred and seventy years of the Church's history that a council or pope had used legislation to specify and impose a complete rite of Mass.

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NOT A NEW MASS

It would be impossible to lay too much stress upon the fact that St. Pius V did not promulgate a new Order of Mass (Novus Ordo Missae). The very idea of composing a new order of Mass was and is totally alien to the whole Catholic ethos, both in the East and in the West. The Catholic tradition has been to hold fast to what has been handed down and look upon any novelty with the utmost suspicion. Cardinal Gasquet observed that:

Every Catholic must feel a personal love for those sacred rites when they come to him with all the authority of the centuries. Any rude handling of such forms must cause deep pain to those who know and use them. For they come to them from God through Christ and through the Church. But they would not have such an attraction were they not also sanctified by the piety of so many generations who have prayed in the same words and found in them steadiness in joy and consolation in sorrow.

The essence of the reform of St. Pius V was, like that of St. Gregory the Great, respect for tradition - there was no question of any "rude handling" of what had been handed down. In a letter to *The Tablet*, published on 24 July 1971, Father David Knowles, who was Britain's most distinguished Catholic scholar until his death in 1974, pointed out that:

The Missal of 1570 was indeed the result of instructions given at Trent, but it was, in fact, as regards the Ordinary, Canon, Proper of the time and much else a replica of the Roman Missal of 1474, which in its turn repeated in all essentials the practice of the Roman Church of the epoch of Innocent III, which itself derived from the usage of Gregory the Great and his successors in the seventh century. In short, the Missal of 1570 was, in all essentials, the usage of the mainstream of medieval European liturgy which included England and all its rites.

Writing in 1912 Father Fortescue was able to comment with satisfaction:

The Missal of Pius V is the one we still use. Later revisions are of slight importance. No doubt in every reform one may find something that one would have preferred not to change. Still, a just and reasonable criticism will admit that Pius V's restoration was on the whole eminently satisfactory. The standard of the commission was antiquity. They abolished later ornate features and made for simplicity, yet without destroying all those picturesque elements that add poetic beauty to the severe Roman Mass. They expelled the host of long sequences that crowded Mass continually, but

kept what are undoubtedly the five best; they reduced processions and elaborate, ceremonial, yet kept the really pregnant ceremonies, candles, ashes, palms and the beautiful Holy Week rites. Certainly we in the West may be very glad that we have the Roman rite in the form of Pius V's Missal.

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REVISIONS AFTER 1570

There have been revisions since the reform of St. Pius V, but until the changes which followed Vatican II these were never of any significance. In some cases what are now cited as "reforms" were mainly concerned with restoring the Missal to the form codified by St. Pius V when, largely due to the carelessness of printers, deviations had begun to appear. This is particularly true of the "reforms" of Popes Clement VIII set out in the Brief Cum sanctissimum of 7 July 1604, and of Urban VIII in the Brief Si quid est, 2 September 1634. The "reforms" of these two Popes have been used as a precedent for the reform of Pope Paul VI, but it is only necessary to glance through the Briefs of these popes, to see how utterly nonsensical such a comparison is. St. Pius X made a revision not of the text but of the music. The Vatican Gradual of 1906 contains new, or rather restored, forms of the chants sung by the celebrant, therefore to be printed in the Missal.

In 1955 Pope Pius XII authorized a rubrical revision, chiefly concerned with the calendar. In 1951 he restored the Easter Vigil from the morning to the evening of Holy Saturday, and, on 16 November 1955, he approved the Decree Maxima redemptionis, reforming the Holy Week ceremonies. These reforms were welcomed and have been highly praised by some of the traditionalists, who implacably opposed to the reform of Pope Paul VI. Pope John XXIII also made an extensive rubrical reform which was promulgated on 25 July 1960 and took effect from 1 January 1961. Once again this was concerned principally with the calendar. In none of these reforms was any significant change made to the Ordinary of the Mass. It is thus unscholarly, dishonest even, to attempt to refute traditionalist criticisms of the New Mass by citing changes made in the Missal by the popes just named.

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OUR ANCIENT LITURGICAL HERITAGE

Regarding the Traditional Mass of the Roman Rite, the "Tridentine" Mass, Father Fortescue concludes:

Since the Council of Trent the history of the Mass is hardly anything but the composition and approval of new Masses. The scheme and all the fundamental parts remain the same. No one has thought of touching the venerable liturgy of the Roman Mass, except by adding to it new propers.

His final assessment of the Missal of St. Pius V merits careful meditation:

There are many days still on which we say the Mass that has been said for centuries back to the days of the Gelasian and Leonine books. And when they do come, the new Masses only affect the Proper. Our Canon is untouched, and all the scheme of the Mass. Our Missal is still that of Pius V We may be very thankful that his Commission was so scrupulous to keep or restore the old Roman tradition. Essentially the Missal of Pius V. is the Gregorian Sacramentary; that again is formed from the Gelasian book, which depends on the Leonine collection. We find the prayers of our Canon in the treatise De Sacramentis and allusions to it in the IVth century. So our Mass goes back, without essential change, to the age when it first developed out of the oldest liturgy of all. It is still redolent of that liturgy, of the days when Caesar ruled the world and thought he could stamp out the faith of Christ, when our fathers met together before dawn and sang a hymn to Christ as to a God. The final result of our enquiry is that, in spite of unsolved problems, in spite of later changes there is not in Christendom another rite so venerable as ours.

Msgr. Klaus Gamber, one of the greatest liturgists of this century, asks in his book, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, a very pertinent question concerning the motivation of the reform which followed Vatican II, but was in no way mandated by the Council:

Was all this really done because of a pastoral concern about the souls of the faithful, or did it not rather represent a radical breach with the traditional rite, to prevent the further use of traditional liturgical texts and thus make the celebration of the "Tridentine Mass" impossible - because it no longer reflected the new spirit moving through the Church?

Thanks be to God, the Tridentine Mass is not simply "the most beautiful thing this side of heaven" but the Mass that will not die. Just as the faithful of Milan refused to allow the Ambrosian Mass to be replaced by the Roman Mass, so the faithful of the Roman Rite have refused to abandon the Mass that is redolent of the liturgy "of the days when Caesar ruled the world and thought he could stamp out the faith of Christ, when our fathers met together before dawn and sang a hymn to Christ as to a God." Its renewed use is spreading throughout the world with every day that passes, and each year more and more young priests are ordained who are resolved to celebrate Mass only according to the Missal of St. Pius which is as certain to be the Mass of our children as it was the Mass of our fathers.

Collect for the Feast of St. Pius V

O God, who for the overthrowing of the enemies of Thy Church, and for the restoring of the beauty of Thy worship, didst choose blessed Pius as supreme Pontiff: grant that we may so cleave unto Thy service, that overcoming all the snares of our enemies, we may rejoice in Thy eternal peace.