conditions, however, Newman's model of co-partnership in reconstructed (or revived) forms of association may be the only way in which, together, we can begin again to rediscover the reality of that native body—the local Church. This, like the first monasteries, 'has come down to us, not risen up among us, and is found rather than established'.

The Eucharist: Development or Deviation?—I [1]

by Geoffrey Preston, O.P.

In the first of a series of lectures under the general heading, 'Theology—Development or Deviation', Fergus Kerr considered shifts in the way people are accustomed to think of the Church. He suggested that the central insights which have been recovered in recent years, though the beginnings of this recovery can be traced back well into the nineteenth century, are those of brotherhood and eschatology; and he further suggested that this was not just a recovery of a long lost insight into the mystery of the Church but had been a real experience, though under a somewhat different guise and under very different names, in the English Catholicism of the inter-war years, in the 'loud and draughty' singing at benediction in a northern city parish for example. These two notions of brotherhood and eschatology are likely to recur constantly in discussing whether in any theological area there has been development or deviation, and certainly when the eucharist is in question.

It is probably in the area of the eucharist more than in any other that Catholics tend to suspect that there has been not so much development as deviation. That, no doubt, is because there has been a not insignificant change in eucharistic worship over these last ten years, a change altogether unlooked for by most Catholics, unlooked for, unexpected, and therefore viewed with some suspicion.

It might well be best to approach this subject of changes in perspective in the theology of the eucharist from the standpoint of the way in which Catholics make eucharist, celebrate the mass. The law of prayer is the law of belief; the law of celebration is the law of faith, as St Hilary puts it. You can usually tell what people believe about the eucharist by watching them celebrate it. That is not

[1]The substance of a lecture at Blackfriars, Oxford, 27th January, 1970. The lecture by Fergus Kerr, O.P., to which reference is made was delivered the previous week and subsequently published under the title 'Church: Brotherhood and Eschatology' in *New Blackfriars*, March 1970, pp. 144-154.

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exactly the case: people can continue to use a rite verbally and ceremonially unaltered and yet have a somewhat different understanding of what they are about from the people who first used that rite. This is especially the case when the people in question do not so much participate in the rite itself as be present at it and participate in devotions ancillary, marginal, to the rite. But at a time when a rite is changing, then you can estimate the theology of those engaged in reforming it by looking in some detail at the changes they make. This was so at the time of the Reform and is so again now. In neither case can this be done with absolute exactitude. In liturgy more than in most things there is a strong conservative tinge to anyone's work; the new order of service is seldom altogether simple and straightforward, a pure expression of the compiler's theology. Often the compiler himself might have preferred to have omitted some elements and included others, while the people who had to authorize the new rite—prince or pope—wanted otherwise, perhaps for nostalgic reasons, perhaps for reasons of Church politics. Just as you can look at the successive revisions of the Book of Common Prayer and distinguish the hand of the reformer and the hand of the conservative, so you can with recent reforms in the Roman rite. But this does not mean that questions cannot be asked as to whether a new rite represents a genuine development of older theologies or a radical departure from them, even a departure so radical as to constitute a deviation.

The reforms in the Roman rite these last ten years need to be situated historically. People have indeed been taken by surprise very often, but the historians of the present liturgical changes are not going to have much difficulty in presenting a coherent account of the background to the renewal. It did not appear suddenly in December 1963 with the Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Even in the eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century, a considerable amount of scholarly work was done on the editing and publishing of ancient and mediaeval liturgical texts, of liturgies eastern and western, work done by people (very often Benedictine monks) who never publicly drew the obvious conclusions from their work, but who surely must have guessed at the implications of what they were about. Then there was the effect of the Romantic movement which we experienced ecclesiastically in this country as the Oxford Movement, both Anglican and Roman Catholic: the restoration of the beauty of holiness and of the splendours of the mediaeval, in so far as they could be reconstructed. *Hierugia Anglicana* and Rock's *The Church of our Fathers* are perhaps the best representatives of this concern. Ordinary Christians, even and especially the very poor in the great slums of our industrial cities, were offered a vision of Christian worship in startling contrast to the Anglicanism of the eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries and to the quiet and hidden Roman Catholicism of the same period. And, at least at this period, in both churches belief and practice went together. The most important example of the full flowering of the Romantic revival in devotional literature was Dom Prosper Guéranger's *L'Année Liturgique*, which commented liturgically on all the feasts of the Christian year and all the parts of the mass and the divine office, giving numerous examples of liturgical texts from the whole of the Catholic tradition, eastern and western. This work, in its many volumes, sold extraordinarily well and made available to the intelligent middle class Catholic layman, especially in France, all the work of scholars over the previous century or so. The Martin family at Besançon and Lisieux used to read it together each week, and the surprisingly scriptural bent of St Thérèse's spirituality surely owed a great deal to a formation such as this. In the years immediately before the First World War, there came the encouragement by Pius X of communion of the young and of frequent communion for everyone; he it was who began the process of breaking the hitherto almost unbreakable link between confession and communion. By this encouragement he set in motion the restoration of the integrity of the eucharistic celebration, a restoration which the Council of Trent had hoped for but not succeeded in effecting. Pius X also encouraged the restoration of Gregorian chant, the revival of the Church's musical tradition against the operatic goings-on which then prevailed. Although it is clear now that this was too narrow a view of the sort of music appropriate in church, yet Gregorian chant is essentially available to all, *plain-song*, and this at least launched the idea that everyone should participate in singing the mass, even if little came of the idea at the time. During the First World War, attempts were made to popularize the kind of liturgical spirituality which Pius X had wanted. Pius Parsch was the most notable exponent of this: *The Church's Year of Grace* was destined to do for the twenties and thirties what Prosper Guéranger's work had done for the later nineteenth century. As part of the same movement came the widespread dissemination of bilingual missals, which in that particular form had not been around very much before. Mass books there had been, but the idea of a book which gave the full text of the Roman missal in both Latin and the vernacular was new. Many people tend to forget this, as well as forgetting that it applies only to the literate. These missals did much in producing a stronger sense of what the liturgy was, but they had certain unfortunate side-effects: for example, most people who had such a missal tried to read every single word that the priest was saying, either aloud or silently, and so lost any sense of the relative significance of different vocal gestures. In 1947 Pius XII summed up this stage of the liturgical revival in his encyclical letter *Mediator Dei* which, basically encouraged what had been happening, though not without some reservations. It was Pius XII too who

restored the liturgy of Holy Week and who permitted the introduction of evening mass. He also changed the very ancient rule about fasting before communion, and so made possible an extension of the popular participation which Pius X had urged in his support for frequent communion.

Despite all this, when the Council opened, the liturgy still seemed very different from what it is now. In university chaplaincies students felt very bold when they all replied *Kyrie eleison* with the server in answer to the priest's *Kyrie eleison*. The progressive young couple might ask their bishop's permission for everyone to recite the Lord's Prayer together in Latin at their nuptial mass—and be refused. Just before the Council, there was dialogue mass in Latin in some places, though it was not unusual for the people to say nothing but *Et cum spiritu tuo* repeatedly. Now and again a person might be found reading the scriptures aloud in English while the priest was reading them in Latin. After every low mass there were numerous prayers for Russia. Pius XII's insistence that communion should if at all possible not be given from the tabernacle was largely ignored. Almost all adult Catholics will still be able to remember some of this. And it is certainly the work of the Council and its subsequent commissions which have brought us to our present situation and which have made possible in such a comparatively short time a major change in the style in which we celebrate mass, a change in style which by giving people *a different experience* of the mass is bound to lead to a *different understanding* of the eucharist, and not only in the head. Is this change in understanding a development or a deviation?

I want to argue, no doubt predictably, that it is a development, in clear and definite continuity with what went before. Which is not to say that it is necessarily a smooth development; it does not mean that the ideas people had about the mass ten years ago can necessarily be fitted easily into the renewed ways of thinking of the mass which the new style of liturgy demands. The new style invites Catholics to take a close look at their old ideas and, where necessary, modify or even change them; it is not always the case that the ideas a person picked up as a child in school are the solemn teaching of the universal Church. But equally, no aspect of the faith of the Church itself has been challenged by any of the renewals in styles of celebrating the mystery of that faith, nor even been in practice put seriously at risk by them. That faith has acquired a somewhat different feel by coming to expression in a somewhat different context, but it simply is not possible to experience the same reality in the same way at different historical epochs. The immutability of the faith does not consist in that.

There is a development and not a deviation. In the first place, the liturgical texts and rubrics themselves have evolved, developed, from earlier forms. There are no texts in the new order of mass which are

purely and simply excogitations of the members of the liturgical commission. *But the real and underlying continuity is one of theology.* There has been basically a recovery of the insight that *sacramenta sunt in genere signi*—St Thomas' great principle in his sacramental theology and especially in his theology of the eucharist. *Sacramenta sunt in genere signi:* when you are talking about sacraments, then you have to talk about signs. The appropriate language for discussing the sacraments is the language of signs. And so, practically, there has been a return to the requirement that the signs of the sacraments be authentic: 'The rites are to be simplified; elements which with the passage of time came to be duplicated or were added with but little advantage are now to be discarded; other elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be restored to the vigour which they had in the days of the Fathers. The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by any useless repetitions; they should be within the people's power of comprehension.' The fact that the reformed Roman rite falls short of these requirements of Vatican II (in the fivefold repetition of words about 'peace' after the Lord's Prayer, for example) does not detract from the central thrust of this passage, its concern for the authenticity of signs.

It is here that the classical theology of the Church, insisting that sacraments are in the category of signs, meets with the modern concern for authenticity and our rediscovery of the meaning of the sign, a rediscovery which had underlying it a whole understanding of what it is to be human. It is precisely because it is a *human* activity that the Church's activity is in the order of signs, is sacramental. It is not God who needs signs, but us. Not artificial signs, out there, necessarily, but signs which are either natural or so embedded in our culture that for us they are well-nigh natural signs, certainly natural if we are talking of human nature. Signs, often, to which we have access only when we are actually engaged in performing them: we know what a smile means when we are smiling or someone is smiling at us; when I meet an old friend after many years, my hand-clasp and back-patting is not a sign in the this-means-that sense of what I feel, but *is* what I feel, what I feel inside (as they say) and the way I feel it. The sign is doing its own work; it is the way I am bodily in the world and the only way I have access to God and the things of God.

The eucharist, like all the other sacraments, is a sign. It is one of the ways we are given access to God and to the things of God, and it demands that we enter into it, give ourselves to its own internal rhythm. It is not a sign we have thought up for ourselves of *the* act of God, the giving over of his Christ to death for us men and for our salvation and the raising of him to life for us; it is a sign we have been given, which depends on the will of God as manifested through the human will of the historical Jesus; and so it is a sign which ties us

to the beginnings of our faith, to that event accomplished once and for all at a given time and a given place. At the risk of failing to be given access to the mystery of Christ, the mystery of faith, we must not go outside that sign. And that sign is one of those which we experience in being involved in it; we have access to the mystery of God in Christ when we *celebrate* the sign, when we activate it and actualize it. Which means, to repeat, that we have to allow its own internal rhythm to dominate us, to set the pace and the style, rather than to impose our own considerations on the once-and-for-all given. To some extent we must impose our own considerations like this: no such sign exists in the abstract, clinically pure, but only in a particular cultural setting, this one or that. But it could happen that we put into our celebration, our activation and actualization, of the sign too much of what does not properly belong to it, which then has the effect of obscuring the sign itself, rendering it hard and opaque and therefore less effective. The present renewal in the eucharistic liturgy can be seen as an attempt to remove some of the effects of such external intervention.

(*To be continued*)

'Generously as Bread': A Study of the Poetry of R. S. Thomas

by A. M. Allchin

The purpose of this article is to examine the poems of R. S. Thomas and to attempt some exegesis of them from a theological point of view. So far as I know, this has not been attempted before. Naturally enough, the poems of this writer have already received considerable attention from a literary viewpoint, and critics and reviewers have established certain of their more obvious characteristics: their spare diction, their rich imagery, their hardness to the touch, the quality of perfection in some of the lyrics, their frequent mood of anger or near despair. The fact that the writer is a priest with a small country parish in Wales is, of course, always registered. It accounts for his concern with the countryside, with the difficult relationship between the life of the mind and the life of the land, for his concern with the past, present and future of the people of Wales. Doubtless there is much more to be done here. In this article however we shall not be doing it. Our purpose is rather to enquire into some of the underlying structures of Christian thinking which the poems reveal, and what their significance may be for the Christian believer who is trying to think through the meaning of his faith. Whatever else may be uncertain about R. S. Thomas, it is clear that he does not reveal his

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