

Resacralising the Liturgy

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Archer has written a timely sociological analysis of the present state of Catholicism in the United Kingdom. It is a ruthless, honest, almost clinical account of the ironic and paradoxical effects of the flabby liberal rhetoric that has shaped the practice of the post-Conciliar Church in Britain. It is unevenly written; some of its liturgical conclusions are a bit odd; and many will find it cynical and unconstructive. Yet it is a book that deserves debate.

My interpretation of his text suggests he is arguing as follows. A slow process of ecclesiastical embourgeoisement has been the main product of the theological hopes of the seventies, an ironic result for a rhetoric of egalitarianism that reached its most ludicrous level of cant amongst radical theologians, whose slant sent many out of the Church. One fringe developed another, and a 'charismatic chicanery' (to use Archer's apt phrase) came to pass, apolitical and ecstatic, making natural friends with the house groups and other Evangelical sects beloved of sociological study. English Catholicism was caricatured, and the debates these fringes generated obscured the social conditions of religious practice of the silent majority. Archer's book gives a sociological expression to their existence, and for that reason is of immense theological value.

He presents an image of a liberal Catholic Church developing Anglican traits and increasingly hopeful of slipping into the Establishment, a denomination amongst others in a safe part of the political landscape. A 'safe' set of house theologians are allowed to roam out, some producing a liberation theology that has inadvertently become an instrument of recruitment to Protestant Fundamentalism. Some sociologists started to notice that the weak, the disadvantaged, and those in whose name these theologians spoke, were slipping away. Working-class Catholic communities that had withstood persecution and hostility were starting to fall apart. Somehow theologians had managed to accomplish what those hostile to the Church had never managed: a climate of despair and disenchantment that unchurched the less well educated, the less theologically sophisticated, and the simple but pious.

Urban renewal, poverty, unemployment, and competing forms of association have all contributed to Archer's embourgeoisement thesis. But the implications of his analysis go deeper. The rhetoric of Vatican II's document *Gaudium et Spes* acknowledged many sociological worries,

but somehow failed to stimulate a sociology of Catholicism that would pursue its hopes into the modern world. The failure to establish an adequate means of monitoring the sociological effects of a strategy of engagement with contemporary cultural beliefs accounts for many of the difficulties highlighted in Archer's book. The reasons for the present failure of the Church to keep the working classes in practice go deeper than the frantic follies of some theologians disturbing the minds of the faithful. The path of liturgical renewal since the Council has taken a wrong turning. Misunderstanding of the nature of community and a narrow criterion for evaluating active participation have meant that liturgy is increasingly sanctifying middle-class skills of joining, acting and proclaiming in public. This has led to the middle class gaining exclusive use of the term 'lay'. An indication of this trend was apparent in the study of the participants at the National Pastoral Congress, at Liverpool in 1980.

There had been sociological warnings that radical approaches to liturgical renewal, which played down devotionism and emphasised an external criterion of active participation, were destroying those supportive subcultures that gave the working class their sense of place in rite. This trend was first noticed in the United States,¹ where at the same time the rise of Conservative Churches was observed; a process that has been expressed in the numerous house groups, and the Fundamentalism that came to pass by the mid-seventies. Archer's thesis follows that of Hitchcock's account of the effects of radical Catholicism, and causes one to wonder why so little has been learnt from these great American liturgical disasters.² If Hebblethwaite is correct, and the recent Extraordinary Synod discarded the term 'the people of God' on the sound grounds, as Ratzinger suggests, that it was irredeemably vague, then Archer seems to have given a sociological justification for its disposal. The pseudo-populist overtones the phrase took on in the seventies disguised its theological origins, but also the sectional interests that imperialised the term to make it an instrument of bourgeois advance into ministerial ranks.

The evidence Archer uses for his conclusions is slight: a small survey in Newcastle, and a heavy use of social history, combined with the small amount of sociological material available on English Catholicism. One knows little sociological material that would refute his thesis. His views on liturgy are novel and interesting. The liturgical renewal movement never envisaged that the removal of hierarchical distinctions between clergy and laity within rites would stratify access outside them in a way that worked to proletarian disadvantage. By linking the demise of working-class participation in the Church to a collapse of a sense of the sacred in rites, Archer provides a novel suggestion that a concern with mystery and awe transcends class divisions. Formal rites dealing in a hallowed sacerdotal

manner with the sacred produce sensibilities of devotion that make all unequal before its effects, and therefore, in a paradoxical way, can be deemed egalitarian. Informal rites that lean heavily on middle-class skills of saying and doing in public are profoundly inegalitarian in the demands they make, despite their claim that all members of the laity are equal before the assembly. Problems of liturgical renewal cannot be resolved in an unchecked pursuit of a pluralism of form, for the recent papal warning should be borne in mind that 'the Eucharistic Liturgy must not be *an occasion for dividing Catholics and for threatening the unity of the Church*'. Liturgies should be public and accessible to all levels of belief and intelligence. They should not become private arrangements for the ideologically enlightened.

Archer's thesis, that egalitarianism and sacralisation are commensurable in the practice of rite, is timely in view of the conclusions of the Extraordinary Synod in its brief section on liturgy. The role of rites in illuminating a sense of the sacred, of nurturing 'the spirit of reverence, of giving worship and glory to God', was re-affirmed in the context of a worry that the hunger and thirst for the transcendent was being found outside the Church, in sects, or was being artificially satisfied by the competing demands of secularisation. There has been an admirable stress on the sacred in liturgy in *The Holy Eucharist*, but this emphasis, both in the papal letter and in the Extraordinary Synod, has not yet been expressed in new rules for the regulation of rite to achieve that end. There is good reason to agree with Ratzinger that the *Rituale* needs reform. A number of sociological critiques of the liturgical directions taken in the early seventies had warned that a sense of the sacred, of the awe and mystery of worship, was being diluted, and that the holy was being trivialised. Certainly there was no sociological mandate for many of those earlier adjustments that led to a fixation on flattening rites to current cultural practices. Indeed, it was argued that many liturgists had misunderstood the question they had set themselves on how to relate liturgical forms to cultural assumptions.

Progressive views of liturgy, of modernisation, of adaptation to secular demands, and adjustment of roles to maximise active participation, all have had a sociological price. A chilling indication of what has been lost was noted by Ratzinger. A study of nuns in Quebec, by two sociologists, showed that new vocations dropped by 98.5 per cent between 1961 and 1981. Many of the entrants in the later period were 'late vocations'. While the contemplative orders, who maintained a traditional habit and life-style, seem to have blossomed after the Council, many of the more active orders who modernised seem to have inadvertently sown the seeds of their own extinction. A similar process of demystification, that emptied some convents, seems to have occurred in the passage of liturgy since Vatican II. Many props to piety, sacramentals hallowed in use through custom and tradition, were ruthlessly set aside. As Archer

observes, 'hitherto essential features of Catholicism simply disappeared overnight in a wholly inexplicable fashion' (p. 132). The detail of rite was disturbed, and the rules of enactment became less clear, having an anomic relationship to their goals. The middle classes were the beneficiaries of such ritual uncertainties, being allowed a discretion to make their own judgement and rules of use. The ritual uncertainty so developed fitted with preconceptions that liturgical rules were barriers to autonomy and emancipation. The struggle to cope with rites, to disperse their restraining bonds, fitted easily into the prevailing ideological climate of the late sixties. But the main losers were the working classes, unused to the nuances of bourgeois principles of self-emancipation.³

The cult of opening rites out to the cultural, to the modern world, contained another ironic paradox. As the external relations of rites to the cultural were emphasised—in demands for indigenisation—the internal social relationships of the detail of liturgy, that also had a cultural characteristic, were neglected, if not ignored. This meant that the religious content that made rites distinctive and attractive to surrounding cultures became diluted and increasingly ignored. The detail of ritual enactment was deemed to be culturally incredible precisely at a time that a shift in anthropological approaches to the interpretation of ritual granted them a credibility.⁴

The new rites seem to have become the worst of all worlds, for, as Archer observes, 'the reformed mass, hovering uneasily between the old promise of simply making the sacred available, and the more recent one of generating it on a communal base, had not served as a new and satisfying rallying-point for Catholics' (p. 184). Attempts to use rites to mobilise communal sentiment carry an unintentional element of manufacture, a sense that if the social relationships within the liturgy are duly represented, God cannot but be pleased. Apart from the Pelagian overtones of such ventures, there is an added difficulty that as the bits of rite become subject to manipulation in their use, their place becomes a matter of opinion. Such manipulative interventions can have a reductionist effect, and might cause us to forget a warning of St Bernard that 'this sacrament is great; it must be venerated, not scrutinized'.

Over time, liturgical props to piety become discarded, or disused, deemed no longer to animate the spiritual. Vanishing into history, these crutches to holiness can be given a re-significance, a re-hallowing, and re-blessing, that makes them new and alive with spiritual promise as instruments of holy advancement. Many of these liturgical resources are sacramentals, elements that convey grace through the Church's blessing and intercession. Intrinsically useless, these sacramentals, such as vestments, can be marked for hallowed use. Properly used, they serve to edify, to build up habits of affiliation and holy sensibilities. These small instruments of re-sacralisation make up the mosaic of rite, and give its

enactment a sense of detail, one that secures against drift into a trivialisation of the holy. An excellent example of such a use of a sacramental is in the order of admission for choirboys at Liverpool Catholic Cathedral, where they are blessed and put into their surplices. The awe and wonder of an innocent reception of sacramentals edifies onlookers and refreshes and regenerates an awareness of the significance of the sacred. Rekindling a sense of the sacred lies at the centre of demands for liturgical renewal.

All this is not to suggest that class warfare has broken out on the sanctuaries of England, and that riots in the pews are weekly occurrences. Nor does one wish to endorse the slightly simplistic assumption of Archer that the working class are totally devout and the middle class are besotted with ministerial ambitions. Nor is one suggesting that liturgical anarchy has become the parish norm. In fact the opposite problem exists, of apathy, boredom, and a resignation to what is on offer, however imperfect. This liturgical drift reflects less a crisis of vision than one over the meaning and interpretation of what could be on offer from the Vatican documents on the liturgy. The present stalemate poses dangers of drifting into Anglican muddles and compromises. Anglican liturgy has much to offer. Its maintenance of a choral tradition in its cathedrals is a notable witness to the need to render aesthetic worth to God. But if, as Archer suggests, Anglicanism is being increasingly presented as the model of a public church Catholicism is emulating, one might hesitate to follow its present chaos of rite. The plurality of options exercised under the A.S.B., mixed with High and Low variations, and a lust to push feminism on to sanctuaries, generates wonder as to what to expect at an Anglican liturgy. The spiritually sensitive often feel the need for public health warnings for some products. The Anglican experience suggests that a plurality of rite represents an illusory choice, where the term 'public' is becoming fictitious, as privatized liturgical accommodations according to the whims of the vicar and his parish council are increasingly more common.

Archer argues most effectively that the Latin mass, with its timeless quality that embraced all, that generated a sense of interior belonging, might also transcend class differences now increasingly penetrating the practice of rites. Interior qualities are uncheckable in a solemn liturgy, and spirituality is not made a function of a capacity to express bourgeois tendencies in public places (pp. 137—141). A formal rite allows far more individual freedom in participation, for exterior communal bounds do not have to be sustained in a continual act of giving a performance of overt engagement to the group, or congregation. Face-to-face liturgies place a premium on social witness so that commitment moves too far into the realm of the exterior. But pursuit of an interior sensibility in active receptivity before the ritual unfolding of the sacred allows a regulated passage into holy implication, a growth into inward culture and biography

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constructed in a habitual mixture of engagement, one that is flexible and informal before the formal. The self is affirmed and the social is given a definite and authoritative use.

Ratzinger received public attention in a recent series of articles presented to the Bishops of England and Wales. With the exception of Fergus Kerr's excellent piece, these essays failed to confront adequately what Ratzinger was actually arguing.⁵ His recently published essays on liturgy reflect a quality of writing and insight unobtainable in the United Kingdom. Emerging from the traditions of debate on liturgical renewal in Germany, many brave and interesting points are presented, both in the essays and in the report, that are perfectly compatible with a sociological approach to rites, their performance, interpretation and meaning.⁶ For instance, many sociologists would agree with his point that 'the life of the liturgy does not consist in "pleasant" surprises and attractive "ideas" but in solemn repetitions. It cannot be an expression of what is current and transitory, for it expresses the mystery of the Holy'. Some of Archer's points are echoed in Ratzinger's plea that liturgy should present a distinctive witness. Few sociologists would disagree with his point that liturgy ought to convey a distinctive quality, outside the realms of human manufacture, something 'given' and 'constant' so that 'by means of the ritual, it manifests the holiness of God'.⁷ To some radical theologians, demands for gravity in ritual performance represent emphases of traditionalists disembodied from the spirit of the times. More accurate readings of the relationship between ritual and culture are likely to come from sociologists.

One of the most perceptive accounts of the price of a failure to stress the authoritative in the operation and performance of rite comes from a brilliant French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu,⁸ many of whose theoretical reflections are now being translated. Simply dropping names hardly proves a point. But sociologists are heavily influenced by positions of thinkers who change the shape of theoretical approaches to interpreting the cultural. Too often theologians have a misguided notion as to what it is possible to argue about the nature of religion and society, and what is likely to pass as credible or incredible in Catholic teaching and witness. Often they get their sociology entirely wrong. Many of their ideological positions are implicitly sociological. Failure to ground what are often secular philosophical prejudices in the sociological leads to many false assumptions and positions being given a theological endorsement. The positions of many liberal theologians are treated with a long-standing contempt by sociologists.⁹ Over the past few decades, liberal theological formulations have led to an impoverishment, a narrowing of the sense of the sacred, and a reductionist attitude to the means through which sensibilities of the holy might be serviced in advanced industrialised societies.

A widening of expectations of the term 'active participation' to an increased recognition of the engagement with the interior sensibilities good liturgy can nurture would greatly help the quest for spiritual renewal. As Ratzinger suggests, good church music points to an important form of active participation, a listening reception that moves the spirit into interior assent. One encouraging feature of Catholic liturgy in the United Kingdom is the increased use of men and boys in monastic foundations and cathedrals. A rediscovery of what has been arbitrarily disregarded, often on the basis of the peculiar prejudices of some liturgists, can cultivate a spiritual imagination and offer seeds of hope. There is a movement back to traditional interests in France.

The number of novices entering a religious order tells us much about its vigour, its demographic health, and its external image. There has been an extraordinary growth in vocations to monasticism in France that deserves further examination. These monastic houses, mainly Benedictine, have a traditional habit and discipline, yet many young men and women are entering. An enclosed life of contemplation and spiritual rigour might seem to have few attractions for young French women yet the figures suggest there is a marked interest in becoming a nun where the identity of the vocation is clear. In 1980, Switzerland had one novice entering a Benedictine convent, Great Britain had nine, but France had sixty three. One gathers numbers have increased further since then. If this pattern of growth occurred in a sect doubtless many sociologists would be flocking around to find out what had happened. Clearly such a rebirth of monasticism in France requires much further study. Perhaps it reflects a movement to the political right with a halo effect on traditional forms of religious practice. One can speculate that the other reasons are a disillusion with contemporary philosophical and sociological thought, combined with a contact with monasteries through retreats. But there is a deeper and perhaps more significant reason sometimes suggested, that the educated young are fed up with the trivialisation of liturgy by the secular clergy, and are escaping into monasteries. The point seems to have worried von Balthasar, for in an interview in 1985 he observed that French contemplative monasteries are full, whilst the seminaries are almost empty. Young people searching for a life for God, and men interested in the priesthood, do not seem to find it in the parishes, where in other circumstances they might happily follow a calling.¹⁰

It might be said that the Catholic Church in England is a long way removed from such trends, that the supply of secular clergy is improving, and that the majority of parish liturgies represent an honest attempt to muddle through a safe interpretation of the Vatican documents. There are dangers arising, however, from another quarter: the rapid expansion of lay ministries. It is inevitable that as these expand, the sacerdotal tasks and image of the ordained priest will contract. In the United States, where

ministerial programmes have been implemented with great enthusiasm, distinctions between the ordained ministry and the laity are becoming blurred, and the result has been a crisis in vocations to priestly orders. As these ministries of the laity are expanded, much to the benefit of the middle classes, working-class membership of the Church is likely to contract even further, which is surely not what is intended. In his novel, *Loss and Gain*, Newman has a character cite Jeremy Bentham's objection to anybody reading in Church. If a parish boy could read the liturgy, he wondered, why bother to send a person to University at enormous expense, to be taught Latin and Greek, to perform the same task?¹¹ A similar anomaly is likely to arise over the use of lay ministers to undertake some of the tasks a man is required to study six years for, to be ordained and to remain celibate.

Compared to what preceded the Second Vatican Council, the current writings on liturgy are as a whole very poor. Little original is being produced, and few debates of significance have arisen on the shape and future of liturgy. There is an interregnum at present, and a question is arising over what to do next. Of course, the Eucharist is extremely well celebrated in some places, and there are many pockets of hope, but overall there is a sense growing that something is missing and that we could do better. At present the young are drifting away, many at University, into the securing clutches of the Christian Union, always hungering for impressionable Catholic undergraduates. The more intelligent are leaving Christianity altogether for more spiritually challenging sects, and for Buddhism. Many difficulties now arising are due to a failure to understand the relationship between liturgical form and society, and also the use of misleading criteria to monitor the performance of rite.

Political threats and heresies posed clearcut dangers to the purity of past forms of rite. But these threats were so explicit as to make responses to corruption imperative. Contemporary dangers of liturgical corruption are more pernicious. Because the cultural has been sanctified as an arena for theological mission, it provides a backcloth to liturgical expectations that marks what it is to be deemed credible. Unfortunately, this cultural landscape is given an innocent theological reading. The cultural is seen as a passive recipient of a holy message. But as theologians engage in a dialogue with the cultural, it participates in shaping the expectations of what is deemed to 'work' and it invades the theological purity of what is being proclaimed. If the cultural has an active quality in the shaping of rite, its interventions can hardly be regarded as innocent, for these arise from within ideological and sociological debate, aspects of which are positively hostile to religious belief. Because liturgies are dealing with the intangible, they can be seen to succeed on the basis of their theological mandates, but also from within a sociological argument that refers to the capacity for beliefs to be real in their social consequences, to have a self-

fulfilling quality. Separating these elements poses immense difficulties, for theology is increasingly becoming implicated in the cultural elements it wishes to convert. This 'fusing' of the theological and the sociological can work to liturgical advantage, but also to disadvantage if the basis of the relationship is not adequately analysed. Misleading criteria for liturgical performance can slip in, with unfortunate consequences and unintended effects. These can be due to a failure to get the sociology right, despite a theological intention that suggests otherwise.

A case in point is the use of the term 'community' as a basis for marking liturgical performance. Theologians have latched on to this term to denote ties of faith and fellowship that arise in the commonality of worship. 'Community' is marked out as an instrument of edification. But sociologists find the term 'community' so elusive, and relating to so many contexts, that it is deemed to have a low theoretical rentability. Introductory texts in sociology usually note the vagueness of the term. Unfortunately, theologians often try to justify the use of 'community' as a basis for liturgical expectations by reference to sociological formulations that are often misleading and incorrect. For instance, Crichton refers to 'community' as characterising face-to-face interaction and hence uses it to characterise desirable liturgical relationships. He has misdefined the use of the term, confusing it with 'primary groups'.¹² This is an elementary mistake. Much more serious is the failure of theologians to realise the looseness of the term, and the degree to which 'community' can be applied to *any* form of rite, whether sacerdotal and formal, or participatory and informal. The issue is not whether one liturgical form is more productive of a 'community' than another, rather it is a question of the presuppositions used to define the term. It could be argued that the informal style liturgy is less productive of 'community' than the more formal type, simply because the former produces mere social relationships, whereas the latter strives to effect a distinctive meaningful element that offers a more clearcut criterion. A sacerdotal style gives depth and shape to the issue as to what is communal about a liturgical form, and, by adding a distinctive layer, makes it more than a mere social gathering. If the term 'community' is to be applied to any liturgical form of practice, how can its use be refined?

All liturgical practices and prayers have a communal dimension (Matt. 18:20). As the social basis to worship is increasingly taken into account, the added possibility of a sociological reading of its practice also arises, especially to monitor unintended consequences. Archer highlights some of the misuses of the term 'community' in contemporary liturgy. It can become exclusive, inward-looking and no longer a witness to the wider community, but rather a middle-class pocket of gentility and self-satisfaction (pp. 211—216). Part of the present impoverished use of the term relates to a failure to grasp how the term has evolved in the liturgy.

Persecution, and hostility in religious belief, can effect a strengthening of boundaries and an affirmation of communal solidarity. These adverse conditions can be powerful instruments for a re-grouping and a re-affirming of the essence of religious belief. War, prisons, and factories were unexpected settings for liturgy, and in such unfavourable conditions the notion of a liturgical 'community' became the model for parish development.¹³ But these unusual conditions of World War II were peculiar, and hardly an adequate basis for a contemporary parish strategy, dealing less with hostility than with affluence, secularization and indifference. The liturgical boundary is now being drawn against a non-existent cultural response.

The issue of the quest for community goes deeper, for the conditions that gave rise to its pursuit in the nineteenth century by liturgists were similar to those that formed sociology as an academic discipline. Both were a response to growing individualism, the break-up of rural communities, urbanisation, and industrialisation. But in the liturgical context, the aim of the nineteenth-century renewal movement was to bind and to strengthen a sense of affiliation, a 'community' identity that came from *within*, from a common response to the power of the rite as a social activity. An excessive concern with establishing liturgical relationships with the wider society has neglected the other strand of renewal—the affirmation of the authority of symbols and actions within the ritual. As Franklin notes, liturgical renewal in the nineteenth century was concerned with making symbols more objective, in order to express better interior religious states. Liturgical form was to operate through a tradition hallowed by time. This was to give it an objectified cast, so that 'through initiation into the significance of rite, parishes would come to learn the meaning of the whole of life in the light of the Church's sacred actions'. Franklin goes on to suggest that here, Guéranger saw the true meaning of 'community' emerging in the common work of worship.¹⁴ The nineteenth-century quest for religious renewal also affirmed a crucial element in rite: ritual. In the midst of its active worshipping use, 'ritual would overcome alienation if people understood what it meant'.¹⁵ This fact of liturgical renewal needs to be recovered, and its principles re-affirmed, if a sense of the sacred is to be found again and worshipping 'communities' are to find a holiness in a secularised culture, increasingly bleak and wasted.

Archer's thesis suggests that the working class have paid much of the price for progressive theological speculations and dissent in the past two decades. Their instruments of edification have been dispersed, or have been despised; the social bonds that gave comfort to the weak have been torn asunder; and a sense of the sacred amongst the simple has been eradicated. Academic theologians have responsibilities to authority, if for no other reason than to sustain the egalitarianism they affect to defend. Speculation without spiritual qualification can be irresponsible, and

theologians should be reminded that the weak and simple also have rights. As Paul asked, 'Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ' (1 Cor. 8:11—12). Moral theologians seem to have a rage to be persecuted by the Church, but if they sow seeds of confusion then authority has a duty to check their deliberations, if all the time the weak pay the price. A.N. Wilson's strictures on Anglican 'academic' theologians apply to their Catholic brethren, of becoming too detached from their spiritual roots, of excessively seeking intellectual respectability whose main effect seems to be to generate an anti-intellectualism amongst the weak.¹⁶ Too often, those who fail to believe, or who dissent, grab the headlines, while the faithful priest, affirmed in his celibacy and successful in his ministry, is kept out of the mass media, a paradox Wilde noted when he observed that 'in the English Church a man succeeds, not through his capacity for belief, but through his capacity for disbelief'. Shifts in post-Conciliar theological and clerical fashions have visited many unwanted doubts and difficulties on to the laity and it is to them that von Balthasar looks for a return to the true sources of Christianity. He notes that 'a number of the radiant preconiliar figures of theology, spirituality and pastoral care have disappeared' and that the generation formed in the storms and confusions after the Council now dominate the theological landscape. Young people seeking an authentic vision need new forms of theology to lead them on to home.¹⁷

The quest for stability and for spiritual nourishment under way in France involves a pilgrimage back to Benedictine monasticism, to the roots of the liturgical movement. It is to return to what Jungmann sought in liturgical instruments, the cultivation of a spirit of adoration, and the achievement of the authentic task of real worship, 'the leading of life towards God'. Pursuit of this task means that the liturgy cannot be always freshly created, 'it requires not only adaptation but also, as far as possible, pious conservation and faithful tradition'.¹⁸ Re-setting liturgy to fulfil its true purpose can be aided by sociology.

A basis for re-thinking holy thoughts about the future of rite lies in von Balthasar. In his reflections on his work, he indicates that an unqualified opening of the Church to the world could be exceedingly dangerous if an awareness of its own distinctive counterpoise and balance was not maintained.¹⁹ As 'God acts for man; man responds through decision and deed', aesthetics has to be related to the issue of Christian meaning and representation (p. 217). Such a view is carried forward in his untranslated work on *Theodramatics*. This shift in his approach to aesthetics has profound implications for a theologically authentic sociological contribution to the interpretation of liturgical practice. His interests in drama and in play are in two areas gaining increasing

importance in sociology as hermeneutics is being used to interpret action. As von Balthasar indicates, this is an area requiring much further exploration (p. 225). If undertaken, it will supply us with a much deeper understanding of liturgy, one grounded in principles of action that are both theologically authentic *and* available to all classes. It would be to connect the issue of liturgy back to Guardini's point that rite is not about thoughts, but about past actualities re-presented in human activities that have to be re-performed. Such a shift would re-emphasise the point that liturgy involves a capacity to read in the outward form the inner state, so that the most important things to grasp 'are those living acts by which the believer grasps, receives and performs, the sacred "visible signs of invisible grace"'.²⁰ Archer's thesis, in so far as it bears on the liturgy, suggests that this point has become obscured and needs to be re-emphasised.

- 1 Garry Wills, *Bare Ruined Choirs: Doubt, Prophecy and Radical Religion*, New York, Delta Books, 1972. See also my essay 'Competitive Assemblies of God: Lies and Mistakes in Liturgy' in *Research Bulletin*, University of Birmingham, Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture, 1981, pp 20–69.
- 2 See James Hitchcock, *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism*, New York, Image Books, 1972.
- 3 *ibid.*, especially Chapter 7, pp. 151–186.
- 4 See my essay, 'Ritual Form: Liturgy's Sociological Dimension', *Modern Theology*, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1986, pp. 341–361.
- 5 'Ratzinger on the Faith: A British Theological Response', *New Blackfriars*, Vol 66. No. 780, June 1985.
- 6 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1986, especially Part 1.
- 7 Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report, Leominster*, Fowler Wright, 1985, p. 126.
- 8 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le langage autorisé. Note sur les conditions sociales de l'efficacité du discours rituel'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Vol. 5, November, 1975, pp. 183–190.
- 9 This hostility is especially noticeable in the writings of Peter Berger, possibly the most influential and important contemporary writer on sociology of religion.
- 10 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *L'heure de l'Eglise*, Paris, Fayard, 1986, pp. 36–37. I am indebted to Michael Robertson for bringing this work to my attention and for also translating the relevant passages.
- 11 John Henry Newman, *Loss and Gain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 73. First published 1848.
- 12 J.D. Crichton, 'A Theology of Worship', in Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy*, London, SPCK, 1978, p. 20.
- 13 Ernest Benjamin Koenker, *The Liturgical Renaissance in the Roman Catholic Church*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954, pp. 132–135.
- 14 R.W. Franklin, 'Guéranger and Pastoral Liturgy: a Nineteenth Century Context', *Worship*, Vol. 50, March 1976, pp. 154–155.
- 15 R.W. Franklin, 'Guéranger: A view on the Centenary of His Death', *Worship*, Vol. 49, June 1975, p. 323. See also his article: 'The Nineteenth Century Liturgical Movement', *Worship*, Vol. 53, June 1979, pp. 12–39.
- 16 A.N. Wilson, 'The Clergy', in Charles Moore, A.N. Wilson, and Gavin Stamp, eds., *The Church in Crisis*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1986, pp. 128–129.
- 17 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Short Primer for Unsettled Laymen*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1985, p.18.
- 18 J.A. Jungmann, *Pastoral Liturgy*, London, Challoner Publications, 1962, p. 338 and p. 372.
- 19 John Riches, ed., *The Analogy of Beauty. The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1986, p. 197.
- 20 Romano Guardini, *Sacred Signs*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1930, p. x.