

race was entrusted to our Lady. In both passages she is called 'Woman', perhaps rather starkly, not entirely explicable as a semitic phrase, but certainly a recall of the 'Woman of Genesis', 3, 15. This 'beginning of miracles' at Cana was a foundation of our faith. The Sacrifice of Calvary is the basis of our redemption.

Our Lady was present at Cana, and at the *consummation est*, a rounding off and perfecting of all God's purposes. And so too, to the end of time, she is present and effectively interceding for our spiritual regeneration, and for our ultimate salvation. 'Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.'



## OUR LADY AS PATRONESS OF THE DYING According to the Liturgists of Eighteenth-Century France\*

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THE ancient cry that there is nothing new under the sun seems often justified in the mind of the student pondering on the history of the devotional spirit. Perhaps nowhere, however, is the truth which underlies the apparently hyperbolic character of this dictum less understood than in the minds of those zealous for this or that movement or cause which powerfully appeals to them.

In our own day we have seen many Catholics become increasingly interested in the movement called the 'Liturgical Revival'. This movement, praiseworthy in its aims and aspirations, has won the approval and the aid of the highest authority in the Church. Sometimes, nevertheless, one senses in those who are striving to make better known the work of the revival, exaggerated and erroneous expressions and opinions. It was because of this spirit of exaggeration that an English observer mordantly remarked that some of the 'antics' of the revival's less judicious spokesmen justify

\* A documented study of this theme, in which will be found reproduced the Latin text of the *Missa de Beata Maria Virgine pro defunctis* (presented here in an English version), has been attempted by the present writer in his essay, 'Our Lady as intercessor for the departed; a glance at liturgical life in France under the *ancien régime*', published in *Theological Studies* (September, 1954).

the belief that they think our Lord had become incarnate for the sole purpose of establishing a liturgical cycle, neatly circumscribed with detailed rubrical prescriptions, which they might thenceforth celebrate and follow.

Inspired by a similar spirit, some of the erroneous claims made by enthusiasts for the work of the revival who are anxious to mark it with a character wholly unique, give the impression that they consider a realization of the spiritual riches of the liturgy to be something peculiar to modern times. Of course, nothing could be less true: our own is, in fact, far from being the first age to enjoy such a *revival*. Nor need we journey back to the time of the Apostles or to the medieval period to become aware of the concern of Christians for their liturgy. A very interesting movement of similar nature and scope to that which nowadays stirs many a dismal valley of dry bones (as our liturgical enthusiast is apt to describe places in which his particular devotional compulsions are not seriously regarded) took place in eighteenth-century France. This is so true that one may say, without fear of reasonable contradiction, that many of the claims and projects of eighteenth-century France liturgiologists have received their justification in several recent acts of the Holy See.

The history of liturgical life during the final hundred years of the *ancien régime* was much obscured by polemical writings in the spirit fashionable among the Romanticist neo-Catholics of the nineteenth century. Fortunately, the tradition of thought which this kind of interpretation of the eighteenth century fostered had scarcely begun to solidify when it was very successfully challenged in favour of a truer picture of the religious spirit which flourished in France prior to the cataclysmic events of the Revolution. This truer picture is to be found in volumes nine and ten of the great *Literary History of Religious Thought in France*, a monumental undertaking to which the Abbé Henri Bremond (1865-1933) devoted the last twenty years of his life.

M. Bremond's pages point the way to a sure means of learning what was the devotional spirit of the *ancien régime*: we learn from him to find it, not in the furious diatribes of those who sought in the following century to decry and to denigrate what was then out of fashion, but rather in the spiritual writings of the age itself, particularly in the many editions of the liturgical books and in the commentaries upon them published between 1700 and 1789, and

again during the Restoration (1815-1830); but, especially, in the events and in the general character of the counterpart to the present liturgical revival as it flourished in the eighteenth century.

It is a characteristic of a Catholic liturgy that it is a living and growing thing. It is true that the essentials of our worship do not change. The definitive note of the Mass—the Eucharistic offering of prayer and praise, the Oblation of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ—which is at the very heart of the liturgy, is and has been *essentially* the same from the Last Supper and the Sacrifice consummated on Calvary's Hill to the Mass at which we assisted this morning. But the outward seeming, the vesture as it were, of the great and unchanging Action, has ever been differing, growing, and changing. It is so that, today, not only throughout the Christian world but in a single great metropolis, that Action is accomplished in many rites and languages to the accompaniment of ceremonies strange to those unaccustomed to them but familiar gestures of worshipful love to those who frequently employ them.

Many of these rites go back to distant ages, and their precise origin is often lost in the mists which enshroud aspects of the early history of the devotional life. Historians of worship are constantly investigating these mysterious phases: they have gradually succeeded in unveiling some of the obscurities of the past as they show us changing stages in the development of the prayers and ceremonies of the Mass and other liturgical functions in the varying rites of Christendom.

The Church in this or that province, or (as is nowadays more usual and more in accord with presently-received Canon Law) the Holy See acting in the name of the Universal Church and exercising supreme authority, has found it necessary to institute changes or *reforms* in liturgical worship. The title pages of any of the official books of the liturgy give instant evidence of these permutations with their clauses identifying the sponsors of revision or promulgation. We have seen some of these changes in our own time, as in 1911, when Pius X authorized a new arrangement of the Breviary Psalter; or as when, more recently, the reigning Pontiff, Pius XII, ordered the publication in 1945 of a newly translated Latin version of that psalter.

In the eighteenth century deep concern was felt throughout the Church in the admitted need for a *liturgical reformation*; and it was hoped then to make the liturgy more suited to the needs of the

time and more perfect from the point of view of current scholarship. The Holy See, during the reign of Benedict XIV (1740-1758), had under consideration a number of plans for the revision of the liturgy and particularly of the Roman Breviary. Students and writers of the day had put forward projects of their own, and plans of private scholars like Jean Grancolas, Doctor of the Sorbonne, and Frédéric-Marie Foinard, Curé of Calais, were destined to have great influence in France. Many of the bishops of that kingdom were vitally interested in aiding the liturgical revival of their time, and finally, wearied of waiting for Rome to act, they took it upon themselves to issue revised breviaries and missals for the dioceses they governed.

Some of these breviaries and missals were revisions of rites which had been peculiar to one or another of the ancient churches of France which, instead of adopting the Tridentine-Pian recension of the Roman liturgy in 1568, had clung to local customs harking back to the time of Charlemagne, and which, in some measure, recalled the ancient Gallican Uses in vogue prior to that monarch's reign. Some books embodied what were actually old Roman usages which Rome herself had forgotten, like the processions at Vespers during the Easter Octave, or the response 'Amen' by which the communicant interrupted the minister of the Holy Eucharist after he had pronounced the first five words of the formula 'Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi. . .'. Others were newly composed selections of Sacred Scripture; that is to say, they were *new* in the sense that the texts selected for appropriation to various parts of the Mass propers differed from those contemporaneously in use in Italy; but in construction and in framework—in just those points most truly distinctive of a rite as such—all these diocesan uses adhered to the characteristically Roman form of the liturgy.

It thus transpired that, as one after another of the French bishops took up an interest in liturgical renovation, a wondrously rich variety of diverse rituals grew up in French worship. In consequence, many dioceses had not only their own calendars of feasts (as is a commonplace even in our present supposedly 'tightly regulated' century) but complete sets of their own liturgical books. So we find the *Missale Parisiense* at Paris, the *Missale sanctae Lugdunensis ecclesiae* at Lyon, the *Missale Pictaviense* at Poitiers, the *Missale Forojuliense* at Fréjus, each exhibiting striking points of

differentiation from each other and from books employed in other parts of France.

During the course of the nineteenth century, as the result of a polemic initiated by enthusiasts who thought that unity in belief should—rather, as they put it, *must necessarily*—find expression in a rigidly uniform ritual of worship, the dioceses which had distinctive liturgies were largely induced to abandon them; and between 1839 and 1875 the magnificent liturgies drawn up by the bishops and scholars of the *ancien régime* were generally discarded in favour of the current recension of the Curial Liturgy which had come, since about the fourteenth century, to be looked on as the Rite of the Roman Church. Opinions differ on the disappearance of these liturgical variants. Some students, especially those who have adhered more or less rigidly to the principles which governed D. Guéranger, have felt that it represented no real loss. Others, like the present writer (who follows the line of thought expressed not only by M. Bremond but also by Abbé Julien Loth, by Abbé Léonce Couture, and, among Benedictine liturgiologists, by D. Laporte of Saint-Wandrille), consider that the work of the eighteenth-century liturgists ought to have been preserved. And this contention is based upon an opinion which sees the work of these liturgists as being distinguished by the wide variety and the devotional tone of the prayers selected from both ancient and modern sources, by a high degree of literary beauty, by an extraordinarily apt employment of Sacred Scripture, by a lectionary free of many of the blemishes which disfigure that currently employed, by varied dispositions of the psalter, by an hymnary which includes some of the supreme examples of later Latin verse, and by a sense of the organization of the material employed which is unsurpassed by other liturgical recensions.

However, apart from this difference of opinion, there is to be recorded the fact that most historians of worship have dealt unjustly with these liturgical variants of the Roman Rite. To one who knows the liturgical books of the *ancien régime* themselves, it is evident that many who write of them slightly have little real knowledge of the books they condemn, and are simply repeating the exaggerations current during the *liturgical war* of the nineteenth century, a war fostered with the unwise idea of encouraging and enforcing an unhistorical kind of uniformity in liturgical practice.

One of the favourite charges which superficial commentators copy from the works of the writers of the Romantic period is the accusation that the bishops and scholars of old France who revised the liturgy were seeking to diminish the place of our Lady in Christian worship.

As a result of a careful examination of certain examples of the work of the liturgiologists of the *ancien régime*, the present writer has reached the conclusion that these scholars, far from seeking to diminish the cult of our Lady, succeeded rather in increasing and adorning it. The basis of this conclusion is set forth in a documented dissertation of some length which will shortly be ready for publication under the title, 'The French liturgical reform of the eighteenth century in its relation to Marian theology'. Here the author wishes merely to call attention to *one* manifestation of devotion to the Holy Virgin as practised by the liturgists of the *ancien régime*.

This manifestation is found in the Missal of Fréjus. Fréjus is a suffragan of Aix-en-Provence. A small town, north of the mouth of the Argens in the eastern part of Provence, it was, prior to the Revolution, the most richly endowed of the five suffragan sees. About a quarter of a century after the promulgation, in 1568, of the Bull *Quod a nobis* (by which Pius V enforced the use of the recension of the Roman Rite which he had published according to the recommendation of Trent), the diocese of Fréjus conformed to the Tridentine-Pian liturgy. This step was taken during the vacancy of the episcopal see, and the Chapter of the diocese thus abandoned the former distinctive Use of Fréjus, although that Use might have claimed the privilege of the exception allowed by the terms of the Bull. However, some two hundred years later, under the influence of notions of liturgical renovation prevalent in his time, the then Ordinary of Fréjus, Monseigneur Emmanuel-François de Bausset-Roquefort, gave to his diocese a new liturgy, his breviary being published in 1781 and again in 1787; his Missal in 1782 and in 1786. This liturgy remained in use until about 1852, when the books of Pius V were once again adopted.

Mgr de Bausset-Roquefort aimed at expressing not only the refined scholarship of his day but also at recalling from the past some distinctive notes of liturgical usage as anciently observed in his diocese. There are to be remarked in this latter connection two features of his Missal which recall usages in the liturgy of the

Order of Preachers, itself a rite, as Fr W. R. Bonniwell, O.P., in his *History of the Dominican Liturgy* (New York, 1945) has recently shown, basically Roman. In the prefatory *Mandatum* authorizing the use of the new Missal throughout his diocese, the Bishop of Fréjus points out that divergences in the text of the Canon of his book from that of the contemporary Tridentine-Pian recension are slight, actually occurring in only two formularies, both of which are in accordance with ancient custom at Fréjus.

Among the Masses for the dead which we find in the Fréjus Missal printed in 1786 there is an interesting and beautiful formulary in honour of our Lady. This proper is called *The Mass of Blessed Mary, the Virgin, for the departed*. As an example of the devotional spirit which flourished at Fréjus during the *ancien régime*, this Mass formulary offers an arresting rebuttal to those who claim that the liturgists of the eighteenth century wished to diminish the cult of our Lady.

It had been customary according to the old rite of the Church of Paris for a Mass in honour of the Holy Spirit, for the dead, and a Mass in honour of our Lady, for the dead, to form part of the complete funeral service. They were celebrated ordinarily before the singing of the Office of the Dead, as may be seen in the old Paris Mass Books and Rituals, although they do not appear in the eighteenth-century reformed Missal of that Church. However, as we are informed by the distinguished historian of the liturgical uses of the Church of Paris, M. l'Abbé Augustin-Pierre-Paul Caron, the dioceses of Sens, Rouen, and Beauvais, kept or revived this beautiful usage in their books, and maintained it until the mid-nineteenth century. M. Caron, writing in 1846, tells us that he had actually been present at an Anniversary Service at which the complete rite (including Office, Commendatory prayers, and the three Masses) was fully carried out; a service, incidentally, which began at eight in the morning and was not concluded until an hour after noon.

At Fréjus, the two Masses, that of the Holy Spirit and that of the holy Virgin, are included among the nine Mass formularies for the dead which are to be encountered in Mgr de Bausset-Roquefort's reformed Missal. They may have been intended principally for votive use (in the less exact sense of that term), although there may be rubrics concerning their use at funerals in the Fréjus *Rituale*, of which I have not, as yet, been able to consult a copy. From the

rubrics in the Missal one might be justified in assuming their use to have been votive in the loose sense of the term, i.e., Masses for the dead said merely out of devotion. On the other hand, these formularies are placed *first* among the Masses for the dead; and this may indicate that here too, as at Sens, Rouen, and Beauvais, their employment may have survived at funerals, at least occasionally.

The *Missa de B. Maria Virgine pro defuncto vel defuncta* which, according to the Fréjus rubrics, ought to be said in white vestments, is made up of a pertinently selected group of Scriptural texts and has a proper Preface which magnificently expresses the confident trust of those who die relying on the prayerful aid of the Mother who stood by the Cross of her Son and whom her clients daily invoke to aid them 'in the hour of death'. The proper sums up with such precision and exactitude the comforting doctrine of our Lady's unique role as Intercessor and Mediatrix at the final moment of her children's lives that few who realize the deep significance of this doctrine will hesitate to join in the wish that there were, in the liturgy we use today, some formulary comparable to this Mass proper.

The text of the formulary itself best bespeaks the fine qualities which characterize it. The following translation and a brief attempt at some suggestions toward a commentary (more fully sketched out in the essay in *Theological Studies*, to which reference is made above) reveal ideas and concepts which are of interest in themselves as well as in respect of the light they cast upon the view held by the French liturgiologists of the eighteenth century about the place of our Lady in Catholic liturgical worship.

*Mass of Our Lady, for the departed*  
(From the Missal of Fréjus, 1786)

*Introit* (Ps. 44).

The King shall have pleasure in thy beauty: for he is thy Lord God and worship belongs to him. The noblest of the people shall make supplication before thee. *Psalm.* My heart is inditing of a good matter: I speak of my work unto the King. Glory be. The King.

*Collect.*

May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin aid thy servant, N., we beseech thee, O Lord; and may it effect that he whom she did bear as Saviour of the world, will be to thy servant a merciful judge, Jesus Christ, our Lord, thy Son, who with thee . . .



*A Lesson from the Book of Judith* (Judith 13).

Blessed art thou, O Lady, by the Lord the most high God, above all other women. And blessed is the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, who hath guided thee to wound the chief of our enemies; for today he hath so magnified thy name that thy praise shall not cease in the mouths of men who are mindful of the might of the Lord, which is for ever. For the sake of men, thou hast not had regard unto thyself; but, remembering the sorrow and the suffering of thy people, thou hast come to the aid of what was broken in the sight of our God.

*Gradual* (Esther 5; Luke 1).

Call upon the Lord, and speak to the King for us, and save us from death. *Verses.* Blessed art thou among women: thou hast found favour with God.

*Tract* (Ps. 115).

O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds, and I will offer thee the sacrifice of praise, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will make my vows unto the Lord in the sight of all his people, in the very courts of the Lord's temple, in thy midst, O Jerusalem.

*The Gospel* (Luke 2).

The father and the mother of Jesus were pondering over what had been said of him, and Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary: Behold, this Child is risen up for the ruin of many, and for the glory of many in Israel, a sign to be contradicted. And thine own heart a sword shall pierce that the thoughts of many hearts be made manifest.

*Offertory anthem* (I Kings, 7).

We have sinned against the Lord: O cease thou not to make supplication unto the Lord our God for us that he would save us.

*Secret prayer.*

O God of mercy, may the Blessed Virgin Mary intercede for us; and grant at her prayers that the soul of thy servant, N., be cleansed in the blood of Christ, and thus be delivered from all sin, find eternal salvation; through the same . . .

*Preface of Blessed Mary the Virgin, for the departed.*

It is truly meet and just . . . through Christ our Lord, who dying upon the Cross for our salvation, did in loving kindness give his own Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to be our Mother also; that she might strengthen those labouring in this vale of tears; that she might comfort them dying; and that she might present unto thee to be crowned those who have passed over in thy love. And therefore . . .

*Communion verse* (Judith 13).

By the hand of a woman the Lord our God hath struck down the

enemy of his people; let us sing praise unto him, for he is good, and his mercy is forever.

*Postcommunion.*

Through this sacrament, we beseech thee, O Lord, may that enemy be cast back whom the Blessed Mary by her virginal bearing of thee did crush; and grant that the soul of thy servant, N., being delivered out of the hand of darkness, may be received into the Kingdom of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee . . .

This fine proper expresses the election of Mary (*Introit*: 'The King shall have pleasure in thy beauty . . .'), her acceptance of God's will in her regard (*Verse*: 'My heart is inditing of a good matter: I speak of my work unto the King'), her unique place among created beings (*Lesson*: 'He hath so magnified thy name . . .'), the all-embracing nature of her mediation (*Gospel*: ' . . . that the thoughts of many hearts be made manifest'), and the child-like confidence we place in our Mother's intercession, so powerful with God and hence terrible to our enemy (*Communion verse*: 'By the hand of a woman the Lord our God hath struck down the enemy of his people').

Considered as a whole, this Mass proper must certainly be given high rank among liturgical formularies for beauty of form and expression, as well as for exactitude of dogmatic content. It offers magnificent testimony to a spirit of veneration of the holy Virgin at once devout, enlightened, and solidly based upon sound doctrinal concepts. Clients of our Lady and lovers of liturgical worship alike may readily meet in the common wish that a Mass formulary of this kind were in use today. Doubtless, too, there must be many among them who would be willing to say that were one to be granted at this time, the grant would constitute a most fitting memorial of the Marian Year we have been celebrating.



## ADAPTATION IN FRANCE: II

J. M. DUBOIS, O.P.

SINCE the religious life consists essentially in seeking the perfection of charity, by following the evangelical counsels, through the practice of the three great vows, and of certain observances, it is clear that vows and observances provide a convenient framework for assembling the facts and experiences