

LITURGICAL THINKING*
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LITURGICAL THINKING(I)

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The liturgical movement is intimately connected with an upheaval against modern thought. It reflects this change and is embedded in it. How else could it be? Man, healthy man, as he is called into life as the image of the one and indivisible Trinity, cannot move in any one field without moving at the same time in all others. If our mode of prayer changes, our modes of thinking cannot help changing also.

It seems to me that a wider look around may help us to understand the liturgical movement within a larger context. Modern secular man begins to doubt the fruitfulness of the modern mind's logic, science, method of analysis. Perhaps the liturgy itself has revealed and represents a truer way of dealing with life reasonably and truthfully. I therefore have called this essay "Liturgical Thinking." May we perhaps learn from the liturgy how to think on all problems of the mind?

I am inclined to think so. In six decades, I have been led to slough off the standard procedures of so-called scientific logic as harmful. The modern mind of the Renaissance is obsolete. The era of the Reformation and of the Counter Reformation has made too many concessions to this Renaissance mentality. The liturgical movement of the last decades already has eliminated many plaster casts, accretions and trimmings by which, after the Church was rent by the Reformers, both parties of religion tried to reconcile the Renaissance mind to the liturgical tradition. That this elimination is hailed, goes to show that we no longer need to make the concessions deemed necessary after 1500.

Hence, I shall proceed in the following manner. I shall single out, in a first article, some outstanding features of Renaissance, Reformation and Counter Reformation. In a second, I would like to tell what I have learned from the liturgy for a revolution of my own thinking.

Person and Community

"Postmodern" man differs widely from the men of the Renaissance. We are analyzed as bundles of nerves. Schizophrenia is rampant. We are torn and often we break down. In 1500, every layman claimed to be a "person." Before, "person" in canon law meant a dignitary, a bishop perhaps, or an abbot, or a princely person. Persons had status and authority. They had something to say, to administer, to answer for. A person was always responsible for a functioning part of the whole community, he held an office of some kind. The smallest "office holders" were the fathers and mothers who presided over households. We forget too readily that not everybody or anybody was free to marry, but that to establish a home was itself a privilege.

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"Person"

We wage-earning masses are all too often without any responsibilities in the community. The marriage of two wage-earning youngsters does not alter much. How can anyone who is left irresponsible call himself a person? Officially, we still give him this title. But it is a purely honorary title. At the conveyor belt, in commuting, in punching the time clock, man is not a person, for he is uprooted and insecure; in his leisure, his alternatives are too multiple to be called responsible. Wherever a community celebrates a real holiday, the members of that community act as responsible agents. But when a night-shift worker spends the afternoon in a movie or a pub, at the racetrack or at the zoo or in his garden or guessing a crossword puzzle, when we dial the radio for one of a dozen programs, we do as we please. The choices are so numerous, so indifferent, that it would be the abuse of a glorious term to call these choices personal.

The dignitary who was called a person by canon law had received this tremendous name in the image of the triune God, one in three Persons! The connection between God's Persons and our faith in being persons should forbid us to call ourselves persons by nature. If the social order does not reflect the personal life of God, it is useless to bandy around the concept of a person as though it existed in some realm of nature. "Person" participates in the bond between God and Man. In ourselves, we find everything but "personal" features. Stripped to the bone, postmodern man finds atavistic fears, childish dreams, senile deficiencies, animal instincts: to be a person, then, is nothing natural, but it is the process by which we have been so loved that we remain connected with God's powers of impersonation.

Now, from the Reformation to the two World Wars, the general trend was to expand the status of "person" from dignitaries to an ever vaster number of people. Renaissance artists and scientists claimed "personality" in rivalry to the clergy and the princes. "Everybody is by nature a person," was the battle cry of the world for 400 years.

Some of us who live under the conditions of modern mass production may begin to wonder how this mere extension of the benefits of personality was ever held plausible. The majority, however, still lives under the spell of this dogma: we are persons by nature! Thus a temporary trend of extending privileges was exalted to "naturalness."

"Nature"

This led to a second fallacy. For, the term "nature" now included the presence of the highest spirit in us. If we were persons by nature, "natura" became something infinitely bigger and better than it had been in the times of the living Christian faith. Modern man wanted to base his political claims on the tenet that "nature" contained the "person."

In pagan times, people had written on the nature of the Gods, de natura deorum. But the early Christians wanted none of it. God's

mysteries were not to be treated in a "natural" discussion. In pagan Corinth, people had mistaken the natural psyche for the personal life of a living soul in the Spirit. But St. Paul's letter rebuked these psychologists.

The Renaissance immersed man again in nature. Today, at its end, man is academically equated with his psyche. And God may be said to have a nature.

Against this, the Counter Reformation mobilized all its intellectual ammunition. The "supernatural" was apologetically defended. But our enemies would us nearly always in their own image. In fighting them we ourselves become like them. Fighting a police state, we might establish one ourselves. Something like this happened to the Counter Reformation. The supernatural was defended with a certain success. But the "natural," in the textbooks of theology, became a copy of Renaissance "nature."

Now, this Renaissance "nature" not only extended its claims over "persons"; it also changed its quality from anything which physis, natura, had meant in antiquity. Physis meant "plantation" in Greek; Plato called God a planter or physis! The word comes from a verb which means "living growth": Physics, however, in the Renaissance, became what it is today: the science of dead matter. For the first time in the history of thought, dead matter was held to have preceded living growth. In a living universe, too, we may have to cope with corpses. But the mechanical "natural science" after 1500 tried to explain life out of its corpses by making nature primarily a concept of dead mass in space!

Only recently have we discovered that the term "nature" between 1500 and 1900 was used in a sense or with an accent unheard in any other epoch: mass, quantity, space, i.e., dead things, filled the foreground of scientific thought. Physics was held to "explain" chemistry, chemistry biology, biology psychology, psychology theology! Dead things were to explain the living. This new horrid degradation of the term "nature" itself made all personality values appear as the result of some drop of adrenalin in some glands.

Together the expansion of the term "nature" over "person" and "community" and the change in quality from living nature to dead nature made all apologetics of the Counter Reformation sterile. For they had surrendered to the enemy insofar as they shared with him the fallacious two Metabaseis eis allo genos, the two denaturalizations of the fundamental term "nature." A "human nature" once looked upon as primarily mechanical could not be restored to its splendor by any halo of the supernatural. The dichotomy was becoming too fallacious in its first half, "nature." If there was mechanically a "human nature" and if it was explicable within the nature of "physics" like any quantitative mass, it could then be handled by an ethics more geometrico.

This Spinoza-istic ideal of a mathematics for human conduct influenced the casuistry of the Counter Reformation for two reasons: the mind itself could be thought out in advance, and the world could too. This means that when geometry is the proper approach to knowledge, God's creature "time" is murdered!

"Time"

Good Catholics today think nothing of repeating the formula that time is a fourth dimension of space. This is a perversion by the Renaissance, as unwarranted as the perversion of "physis" meaning "growing life" into the "physical world" as meaning dead masses in space. With the pious pagans of antiquity, all time was rhythmical. When the Church in her hymn praises God "qui temporum das tempora" (Gode die Zeiten), or when the liturgy prays "et in saecula saeculorum," this rhythmical pre-Christian experience of living time is being shared. Before 1500, time is rhythm and cycle, musical interval and seasonal recurrence. Never before the Renaissance was time conceived as rectilinear, as "natural," or mechanical or geometrical. All the temples of paganism expressed the living quality of time by their architecture. Solomon's temple was no exception. The 365 days of the year were depicted by its measurements. Time was harmonious movement, not a quantitative accretion.

But with the Renaissance, this changed. Time was degraded to a concomitant of dead masses in space, it was no creature, had neither rhyme nor reason. It became a mere quantity. Descartes himself was frightened by this result of his own principles. So he said: God seems to create time in every instant anew!

Again the Counter Reformation fought this enemy: by insisting on the "eternal." "Eternity" was set up against this dead "natural" time. But it was with "eternity" as it was with the "supernatural" against a wrong conception of "nature." Time once falsely conceived is not cured by eternity. All our traditions of time, pagan, biblical, ecclesiastical, had contrasted the eternal with the eons of eons, the saecula saeculorum, the succession of human generations, the tempora tempora. In other words, we lose our access to the eternal if we contrast it to that fallacy of classical physics, a non-rhythmical, dead time.

Several misunderstandings arose. The calendar of the Church, e.g., depicted in its one year the thirty years of Jesus' life and the millennia of the Church. Fifty-two thousand Sundays before God are as one day. Therefore God's six days of Creation in Genesis had never been analyzed as to their length. Now, the six days were taken literally. Man's own long life of seventy years lost biographical significance. The fear of the wrong time of physics drove the theologians to desperate attempts either to mechanize "eternity" as though it were a mere idea, or to persuade the faithful that the one-year calendar of the Church really gave in itself sufficient room to the miraculous birth of their souls. Alas, our souls do not unfold in one year.

Miracles themselves were apt to be thought of as exceptional invasions into the mechanical entropy of space by the Eternal. But God

is no exception; He is the ruler. We are His miracles either always or never.

"Modesty"

The degradation of miracles into exceptions was not yet the worst. The worst consequence of our "killing time" concerns our sense of modesty. During the last centuries we nearly forgot what shame was given us for. Shame is the soul's garment against arbitrary and untimely knowledge; because timing is the condition in which alone the Eternal may be revealed. It takes time for a bride to know her love. It takes time for a nation to find her destiny. It takes time for the heart to know itself. The mind of modern man whispered instead: it takes no time to know anything.

The Counter Reformation tried to save our chastity. It was felt that our secrets must not be unveiled too early. But the men of the Counter Reformation shared too often the prejudices of rationalism that the mind's knowledge was timeless; hence they changed the quality of our power to blush: The Counter Reformation cannot escape the reproach of having become prudish.

For instance. It was said by the promoters of Aloysius Gonzaga's canonization that he never looked at his own mother for fear that he might see the woman in her. In such a statement the secure faith between children and parents is destroyed. It is replaced by an onion-like scarecrow of a female body dressed up as your mother but remaining a female to you just the same. But my mother is my mother. How can she be anything else? The method with which the young prince is credited, which was not to look at his mother at all, makes the healing impossible! This then is the prudishness of the Counter Reformation. I do not judge the young Gonzaga, but I do criticize the proceedings of his canonization. Prudishness enhances the fear of obscenity instead of making it totally disappear. Prudishness never regains Paradise but makes it lost forever.

In Gonzaga's case, the recommendation runs that by not looking at his empress' and his mother's face, he rejected the flesh and became an angel on this earth. But the angels play before God's countenance! And the countenance of my mother is my first yardstick for chastity and shame! The faces of those who love us are as inextricably tied to our sense of shame as eternity is to true rhythmical time or as the supernatural to the living garden of "natura" in the Greek sense!

The Counter Reformation, by separating our mutual beholding, our countenances from our modesty, destroyed the "biological" time for shame. If shame is not the expression of growth, it turns into a loveless, asocial, hard and fast thing. Shame is our rootedness inside the gardenbed formed by human countenances; it circumscribes our real life. And though it may come to some readers as a shock, our real life requires the experience of loving faces fastening on us. God's countenance cannot fasten on us unless His delegates, loving faces, are recognized as gateways to His face. Through them, we become unashamed mem-

bers of that family which depicts the living God. It is easy to say that we are made in His image. When it comes to believing this stupendous truth, we must proceed in mutual convergence, or all our sayings are eyewash.

We may pause and take stock.

We have taken the term "nature" out of its context in physics because dead things are corpses; but nature is alive.

We had to take "time" out of its context in physics. For, in physics it is a dead preconceived quantity. Time is alive, rhythmical, cyclical.

And now we are talking "shame" out of its context in human zoology (called "psychology"). For in human zoology, shame is a guilt complex around sex. Shame is, in truth, the mortar of our edification into one living temple. The living stones of this temple must look at each other, must face, comfort, countenance, illuminate, view, regard, respect, perceive each other in perfect freedom.

We must therefore liberate the words "nature," "time," "shame," from their dungeon in "physics," and we can do this only by polarizing their light again. Time as opposed to eternity is the living eon, the cycle of our times. Nature as opposed to supernatural is living, sprouting growth. Shame, modesty, as opposed to self-revelation, is the custodian of the threshold of the time when we are to lift our countenance to a wider or deeper view.

The apologetics of the Counter Reformation defended eternity, supernaturalness, revelation; but it is astounding how far they conceded to their humanistic opponents the definitions of nature, time and shame.

We must repudiate these definitions and thereby emerge from the fall of the last centuries. This strange relapse into preChristian modes of thought occurred (I trust) for this very purpose, that this time we all, believers and unbelievers, might emerge from this fall, together.

Certainly no Christian can mentally remain in the abyss opened between physics and apologetics. Ideally such a man clings to revealed truth; materially, he rejects the experiences corollary to revelation: rhythmical, organic time, the creativity of shame as a gradual dropping of one veil after another, a living universe.

Was ever any Prometheus more cruelly tortured than these Christians were tortured mentally during the last 400 years by the spirit of the Counter Reformation?

Let us leave this Caucasian rock. Since every mind gave in to the death by "physics," the liturgy's healing power may also heal every mind, if only we will let its virtue flood our minds outside the sanctuary, too.

Individuum and Experience

Lest the reader shrug off this breaking apart of our ideal and our material world, the treatment of two more terms as used in our day will amplify the contention that nothing but liturgical thinking can regenerate our basic concepts. For by the decay of these two terms, the present geopolitical crisis has occurred. The terms "nature," "time," "shame," may still be rated as purely intellectual terms. Not that they are; but few people are alive to the fact that their usage is of public significance. However, the terms "individual" and "experiment" dominate secular American thinking. A mistake in their articulation alters the public life of the people. Exactly this has happened! From good liturgical terms, individual and experiment have descended to the rubbish heap of the world of physics. Who even is aware that experiment and individuum are Christian terms?

"Experiment"

The "holy experiment" of the Puritans was not "an experiment in living." But life was a holy experiment. Hence the term is still bandied around. Modern man uses experimentation in education, marriage, friendship--ie., everywhere where it does not belong. World Wars I and II were nearly lost because the people in the U.S. insisted on treating the event as a mere experiment..

When we hear of experiments, the modern mind thinks: this is a free choice, a situation of take it or leave it. If life were in this sense experimental, the necessary things, e.g., the Cross, Revelation, could have no place in it. As most people today are imbued by this spirit of pseudo-experimentation, religion becomes either an opiate or a luxury. For if we play around with everything, it sounds impossible that man's salvation should consist in his daily discovery of the "one thing necessary":

Here again, apologetics may "recommend" religion as a good thing, but it must remain sterile in an environment which does not see that our inspirations as well as our sensations are sanctified when they cease to be experimental! We are God's Holy Experiment. For we are in His crucible! God is creating us. The term "experiment" as used in physics is a poor second, a mere loan made to the laboratory by the language of the Church. The scientific term is a loan from God's proceedings with His children; and in these, the experiment is not arranged according to the theory of the physicist, but it is offered us by the love of our Maker who proposes to us and tests our degree of loving response.

In the laboratory, any experiment means the isolation of some elements for the special testing of a mental theory. God, since He is no theoretician, does not isolate us in His experiment. Quite the contrary. Whenever His experiment succeeds, a human soul gives up her isolation! When God experiments, He exposes us to danger (ex-periculum)

lest our heart never wake up. When we experiment, we imitate His serious, unique acts of creation by our playful acts of research. Certainly, we too expose the materials in the crucible of our tests to danger. But we do it in mental pride: the guinea pig may die! God does not want the death of the sinner.

"Individual"

"Individualism" is the second term stultified by modern secularism. Even good Christians can be heard to start with "the individuum" as a given fact. The individuum, however, in St. Thomas Aquinas, has not at all a purely factual meaning. Individuum is a good Christian term as long as it means two qualities in one:

1. That which cannot be divided into smaller fractions by us: the atom.

2. That which we may not subdivide, i.e., the Trinity. The Trinity is indivisible. Peace is indivisible. "In nomine individuae Trinitatis," peace treaties were concluded from 800 to 1815. The Treaty of Paris between the new U.S. and the British Crown began "In nomine individuae Trinitatis." Individuum, since 1100, is a blend of the Greek "indivisible" and the Christian "indivisibility." And thus, enemies could make peace because their uppermost unity could not be torn to pieces by any war. God was indivisible. Today, when the indivisible Trinity is lost to view, Russia, Germany, the United States cannot conclude a peace. For they feel basically divided. How can they unite if nobody is being recognized as bigger than themselves? If no eternal God is capable of unity and at the same time demands our support of His indivisibility?

The fission of the atom, the schizophrenia of individuums, the twilight of the peace, go to show that anything can always be subdivided. The lack of peace, on the other hand, the horror of atomic bombs, the state of our mental health, prove that not everything may be subdivided.

"Individuum" has veered away from its polar meaning. Man, between 1500 and 1900, could be called an individuum because he participated both in God's qualities and in the world's qualities as well. In the middle between the atom and the Trinity, he boasted of "individuality." This individuum of the Renaissance boasted loudly in the face of the whole world: "I am unbreakable! I am impregnable!" And Renaissance Man intimidated the powers that be so that they honored his divine triune likeness to the Individua Trinitas! Genius has been given his berth, through patents, copyrights and many other individualistic laws.

But when today Catholics and Protestants and Jews connive in the latest modern usage of individuum, they degrade the term individuum from a polaric and so to speak three-dimensional meaning. The latest usage of individuum omits the condition: that which should not be divided. It is impossible ever to form a community out of certified atoms. The sociology or history or economy of our Christian scholars very often is indistinguishable from the doctrines of the modern mind. The wrong acceptance of "individuum" as a given data makes it useless

to patch up such chaos afterwards by recommending "social" measures, social welfare and charities. Man never, never, could live, breathe, speak, write or think, unless he is the image of the Individua Trinitas.

Thus, we have seen that in the terms "nature, shame, person, experiment, time, individuum," the apologetics of the Counter Reformation has made too many concessions. The antitheses of the supernatural, the social, the decent, the holy, the eternal, must all be misunderstood, once the theses against which they stood have changed their meaning.

To the artillery duel of such depraved theses and impotent antitheses our mind is exposed year in and year out. My own mind at least was. The theses I always knew to be wrong. The antitheses I always knew to be useless. This of course was purely negative. How my mind learned to become one, whole, indivisible again in its manners of thought and speech is a different story. And this story is the story of how the liturgy can become clear as the thread of Ariadne which leads out of the modern labyrinth, and makes the human mind again the temple of the living God.

LITURGICAL THINKING (II)

"O Creature Man"

When a child hears its name, it is irresistibly forced to move. I can't hear my name without being moved in one way or another. Any potent love gives the beloved a new name, and by virtue of this name, he begins to move. Children, the overflow of their parents' love, move in their first appointed grooves because the name by which they are called creates their conduct, their movements, their walk through life.

When we grow up, the source of this creative procession through the first twelve or fifteen years of our life diminishes in power. We then must be loved again lest we cease to move in the right direction. Hence, a new name will enter our ear and fall upon our heart, the name by which God calls us to love Him with our whole heart, our whole mind and with all we have.

But we could not enter upon this new love had not old love foreshadowed it. This time, the parents who acted in God's stead when we were infants are not calling. The new call comes from outside this world. It reminds us that we enter a new home, the wide home of God's creation, into which He now sends us to represent His holy temple. All ancient temples depicted the heavens. But man depicts the Creator of the heavens. Among the other creatures around us we are to be created into His image.

It is at this point, when we are starved for our new name, fearful of the immensity of our new home, that the reprocessing of the creature man usually is retarded or interrupted.

For it is all very well to say that the love of our parents now has to be regenerated, that someone must love us now with a fresh and unheard-of name. In real life, there intervenes a long time of doubt and misery, of affamished despondency, between our breaking away from our mother's apron strings to the certain and elegant movements of our definite procession and progress. After puberty, the mind begins to tear the old home of ours to pieces and our body timidly tries to fall in love. After puberty, man prepares for the new love in two compensatory movements. He must make room for the new love; this is the mental process called doubt. He must admit that he has to find the bridegroom of his soul. This bodily process is his Wanderjahre. By doubt, we assert our independence from the old; by restlessness, our dependence on the new.

Mental Independence, Bodily Dependence

This is a protracted period during which the old home is not yet completely relinquished nor has the new one entered visible reality. Two movements overlap: the mental one tears down the visible old hull; the bodily prepares for the yet invisible new one.

This overlapping of the mind's tearing to shreds by doubt and the body's getting ready for a new foundation usually is misinterpreted as the mental and bodily processes of the natural man. By looking at them as a mere juxtaposition, logic makes its gravest mistake. The negative task of the mind and the positive task of the body are not seen in their mutuality! The growth of mental independence and that of bodily dependence are not seen as two aspects of the same growth! Mind and body appear as two fiery horses, instead of as a process to regain the next equilibrium through a wonderful balance between the opposite direction of mind (critical against his past) and body (desirous of his future).

The strange fall of Western man consists in the illusion that mind and body are not two compensatory and strictly time-directed processes of Me, but that they have being and that they tend in the same direction! The ridiculous parallelism of the physical and psychic processes was one of the many faith-less theories of the Renaissance.

A Transient Phase

Any one of the theories on mind and body arbitrarily assumes that the student between, let us say, 14 and 21 is the model case of a so-called natural man. A transient phase was singled out as the norm of man's nature. However, the two outstanding proofs of its transient character are, 1) that the mind is our critical faculty to shred the past and to make room, 2) that the body in the meantime storms forward to our final destiny. The doubling of the mind by doubt and the halving of the body by sex are two sides of the same process. And this process is to make a child, a listener to old love, gradually into a speaker of new love.

Instead, Reason abstracted from this functional role of "doubt times sex" and postulated a free mind and a free body. This only goes to show the embarrassment of man. He tried to speak in public only of his mind's grandeur, and suppressed the miseries of the body. But what is wrong when we split inside ourselves into the listener and critic, the previous child and the future man--lest we remain attached to old shells of life--and at the same time shrink to one half of our bodily self so as to become worthy of our new attachment in life?

The man who hears this new and next attachment called out over him may speak with Romeo: It is my soul who calls upon my name. And at the same time, this same Romeo will excel in every form of sophisticated soliloquy inside himself, and by becoming two people inside his inner debate, he will break all the ties with a dead past. The experience of our mental double and of our bodily "better half" is one and the same experience through which our anchorage in past and future remains guaranteed, although, on the surface, we appear in this period as thinking individuals.

But before we can think, we owe thanks. Before we ourselves may reason, we have reasons to believe. When thanking and thinking, reasons and Reason, cease to be recognized as modalities of our life, we get stuck.

Natural reason is a very special reason sprouting in the unfulfilled mentality between 14 and 25. It is the Reason of the classroom student. Greek philosophy, eighteenth century enlightenment, American common sense or pragmatism, are gigantic superstructures of these uprooted minds and unloved bodies in their in-between age, when one set of names has faded and the new call of love is slow to resound.

The tricks of all these doubting minds and fallen bodies is to call their transient state the natural one! The nature of man, they claim, is vested in their mental and bodily processes. "Psychology is the science of the mental processes," the most famous textbook of American psychology begins!. A textbook on physiology might echo this desperate division in mind and body by saying that physiology is the science of the bodily processes. This division poses as "scientific." Most good Christians and nearly all theologians repeat this residuum of preliturgical thinking daily by quoting approvingly the pagan adage "Mens sana in corpore sano"--the mind in the Platonic prison of the body!

In all these analyses of the "natural" man, the soul is at best allowed in as an afterthought! But the soul is incarnate. There is no body and there is no mind per se. The soul alternately uses either mental or bodily expressions to become incarnate in her earthly role. From soul to role via mental and bodily expressions, we shall "take place" and take our place.

If and whenever the loved soul is not directing mind and body, these two divided horses pull apart and simply "take place." But we shall not simply take place as a detonation. We are to take our place

This distinction psychology and physiology, sociology and medicine, all have ignored.

The only place in which this process has never ceased to flow is the liturgy. From the liturgy, I have learned to think rightly.

"Thou" Man!

The first step was the discovery that we are and remain nobodies --massa perditionis--unless we are called by our names. In 1916 I wrote "A Doctrine of Higher Grammar" (printed in 1923) on the fact that we must move through every experience as figures of grammar lest the experience never be made. The soul must be called "Thou" before she can ever reply "I," before she can ever speak of "us" and finally analyze "it"! Through the four figures, Thou, I, We, It, the Word walks through us. The Word must call our name first. We must have listened and obeyed before we can think or command. This, then, is the health principle of the soul. When addressed by the Spirit we are the liturgical "Thou!" This takes precedence over our other liturgical shapes such as the Ego, Us or It.

In the liturgy, this sequence is revealed. The first figure in our liturgical treatment is "Thou." The priest then only is allowed to respond "I" after he has been called out, in his ordination, by his full name and has made the sacrifice of his will. The congregation led by him is able to receive its historical religious role as "We." And at the end of the service, the objective statement may come: "In the beginning was the Word."

"Thou" Creature!

"Thou," our first liturgical shape, although called the second person in grammar, is by no means restricted to us humans alone. Creatures which never may say "I" or "We," may yet reach the first phase of liturgical life, the phase of "Thou." But we, too, must all our life long stay in this phase. Even the whole Church must remain God's creature. Creatura hominis means "O Thou yet to be created child of man." Strange as it may sound, there is no salvation unless we return into creation. Thinking man is only redeemed by thanking God again as a creature. The recently deceased Joseph Wittig taught me this. Two decades back, he edited a quarterly, Die Kreatur, (The Creature). For its second volume, he translated the rites for blessing salt and water:

I adjure thee, thou creature of salt, by God who commanded thee to be thrown into the water by Eliseus the prophet in order that the sterility of the water be healed: that thou become consecrated salt for the salvation of the faithful; that thou be for all who drink thee health of soul and body; that thou put to flight and drive from every place in which thou art sprinkled all fallacy and wickedness and cunning of seductive illusion and all impure spirit; thou art adjured by Him who will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world with fire. Amen.

Wittig added:

In the same manner, the Church also speaks to the creature of water, and it certainly is no accident that she does not speak to salt and water but to the creature of salt and the creature of water. Salt and water cannot hear what we say. They can only react chemically. Once taken out of Creation, they are dead and deaf and don't react to Word and Spirit. And they are immediately taken out of Creation when they no longer are spoken to as creature. When they are spoken to, they stand in the realm of the "Thou," where there is life and listening; otherwise they are in the realm of the "It," into which neither speaking nor harkening can reach.

When they are spoken to as creatures, they are spoken to in the faith, therefore in "virtu," and are sought and met in the living hand of God in which nothing can be dead or finished, but only living and becoming, where, for this reason, everything still is miraculous. "When the Church says: 'Thou creature of salt,' perhaps she says so in order that she may address the salt at a moment in which it still is in the miracle-working hand of God as much as is the Church herself."

Cor ad cor loquitur, Cardinal Newman's motto runs. Under which conditions heart speaks to heart. Wittig tries to ascertain. Not when we worship a teacher or adore a woman or are spellbound by a spell-binder or enamored with art or are crushed by venerable authority does the heart speak to the heart. When Creature speaks to Creature, then cor ad cor loquitur. Only then have we been cleansed of our mental idols. For God has given us a heart of flesh; and no raging against the flesh may prevail against this fact. Few people understand this as the law of our intellectual life; the liturgy lives this law.

Process of Creation

Some years ago, I attended the blessing of the wine on St. John's day, at St. Paul's Priory in Keyport, N.J., with Dom Thomas Michels officiating. In those unforgettable days of Christmas, I was struck with the formula "Benedico te, o creatura potus.--I bless thee, thou creature drink." This pushed my understanding beyond the rather simple act of substituting the word "creatura" for "natura." It dawned on me that there were before me not two interchangeable words but two completely separate tongues. "Natures of things" abstract from the historical hour of revealing speech. "Creatura potus" demands a definite renouncement of abstractions. Why? This drink has passed through many stages; some of them common sense assigns to "nature," like planting the vine, pruning, fertilizing, spraying with sulphur, etc., etc. Some others common sense classifies with social action, like the harvesting, barreling, bottling, etc.

But in the light of "creatura potus," our academic distinction between natural and social collapses. In the sight of God, we His faithful--when we have done right by the wine--lead this creature wine as much to its destination as does the soil, the rain, the air, the sun. We are not God, but one of the creatures in that meadow of God on which all creatures here below praise Him, since they can't go about their business without fostering at the same time everybody else's business.

In other words, whenever mortal man leads the other creatures to their destination, we do not prevent, rather, we complete their "proceedings" into that Creature which is in process of being created.

History, social processes, human mores of the vintner or the salt miner, or the pump builder's techniques are not to be thought of as arbitrary, wilful acts. They may be steps in the continuation of creation itself. To call any element "natural" is not a description but an act of decision. What you call natural, you exile to its own beginnings. No wonder that after 400 years of natural science, the analysts trace us to our mother's womb. This last outcome of the Renaissance is not fantastic. Only that this is called "science" is fantastic. When I take a sledgehammer to crush a tin can, I am not being scientific. But the term "natural" is precisely a mental sledgehammer which reduces this glass of water, "O creatura aquae," to the Hades of H²O.

"Creature" and "Nature"

Now the Counter Reformation, though not altering the liturgy, has confined it to its narrowest place at Mass. The greatest recent commentary on the liturgy of the Mass has not even room for "creatura" in the index. Instead, the objects of the Benedictions are called "naturalien." This German term is hard to translate. But to be called "Naturalien" gives the blessed gifts the poorest possible rating. They seem to be taken out of the palms of their Maker, they are dead on the ground.

I do not think that the incarceration of wine, salt, bread, fire into mere "nature" makes sense. Why should we ever call them, in theological or philosophical or historical books, natural things? I have given up thinking so unliturgically of the universe around me. If the so-called scientists must do this, well, in Armour's stockyards in Chicago the cattle are killed by a blow against the skull. But for the fire in the living oxen (Ezekiel 1:13) the stockyards don't care. To naturalize is a second-rate function and a mere afterthought.

In a narrower area, the term "naturalia" for the creatures which we may "Thee" and "Thou," blinds the liturgist to the fact that the catechumen, the "echoing" beginner, is on the same level as the creatures who only may hear but not speak. Each Mass recognizes that there are four degrees of "speech": There is one who only speaks. One who speaks and listens. One who listens and responds. And one who only listens. These degrees of the Word are held by God, Clergy, people, cate-

chumens; they occupy these four levels of speech. And in every Mass, the Word who was in the beginning unfolds again His four-terraced character.

Thou Creature Man

If wine, if a drink, harvested, fermented, bottled, may be "creatura," then we may trust that man, despite the protracted phases of his social climb in the midst of his social groupings, has not necessarily lost his power of being a creature in the process of creation. Such a man walks according to God's word unto his own final "creatura," as do salt, water, fish, wine. He need not get lost in the concepts of natura et supra naturam, times or eternity, person and community, shame and countenance. But in this walk he is no longer the homo sapiens of zoology or "psychology"! For "homo" may signify the man who has no throne of love, no appointed groove, but is dethroned and disappointed.

Through the genitive in "creatura hominis" a direction is given to the dead term homo. It is mysterious enough. Creatura is a form of the verb which points to our final appointment, to the vital form "venturi Saeculi." The phrase creatura hominis puts man, so to speak, into his teleological genitive. As creatura hominis I am addressed as that part of me which is yet to come! Creatura hominis is an act of faith, as it places you on the side of destiny. Natura hominis is an act of destruction. It changes man's status and does not even admit that it does anything. The refinement of the devil seems to be just this, that he pretends to do "nothing." In fact, he annuls. If this wine, now blessed, after so much honest toil and sweat of its growers, is still "mere" nature, then part of creation is annulled. Natural science annuls! The time of God spent on His beloved creatures is annulled.

Time is regained for your future whenever creatura hominis is called out over you. You are now not "natura," because you are not who you are but you are told who you are going to be. You are not determined by the clocks of earthly and commonplace time, because a new era opens with this next step into creation. You are not a responsible person but the responsive plasma in the hand of your Maker, and your bashfulness, your shame is overcome by the veil-removing power of a new birth.

Creatura hominis--it will take another article, yes, and a whole long book, to show how the Mass expresses this transubstantiation from natura hominis to creatura hominis in its whole formation, action and sequence, how the steps taken in the Mass to lead the faithful through their grammatical modes unfold the only valid logic of reasoning.

Enough has perhaps been said to justify our claim that the liturgical rebirth signals the birth of liturgical thinking for the creature man, the creatura hominis, the child of man yet to be created.