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Inner Dynamics of Divine Worship : Joseph Ratzinger on Liturgical Development

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INNER DYNAMICS OF DIVINE WORSHIP. JOSEPH RATZINGER ON LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENT¹

When I first heard the announcement of this conference and received the invitation to offer a contribution to it on the topic of the liturgy, I rejoiced for two reasons. The first one emerged from the fact that this scholarly discussion about the theology of Joseph Ratzinger would include the topic of the liturgy. Anyone who came across the works of Ratzinger is probably aware that liturgy occupies a very important place in his life; a life which, as we know, has had many different dimensions. Ratzinger was a pope, a bishop, a priest, a theologian, and simply a Christian who, like us all, was trying to live the life of a follower of Christ as best as he could in given circumstances. In all these different aspects of his life, those academic and non-academic, he was always committed to the liturgy which, to paraphrase the famous expression taken from Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, could be called the 'source and summit' of his theology. From the earliest times of his childhood years spent in rural Bavaria, until his recent retirement as a Supreme Pontiff, his life was always 'entangled' with the liturgy.² Any attempt to understand this man and his theology, without reference to the theme of the liturgy, could never be

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¹ Lecture given at International Symposium 'Dynamism of Theology of Joseph Ratzinger' in Maynooth, Ireland, 21–22 June 2013

² See N.J. ROY and J.E. RUTHERFORD, 'Preface' in N.J. ROY and J.E. RUTHERFORD, eds. *Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy. Proceedings of the First Fota International Liturgy Conference, 2008* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), p. 7.

successful. Ratzinger is, as Alcuin Reid stated, *homo liturgicus*³ and he himself noted on many occasions that the liturgy has always been a central point of his life and his theology.⁴ Thus, it is only right that the theme of divine worship is present at a gathering such as this.

The second reason for my rejoicing was the fact that the formulation of the main theme of this symposium, ‘The Dynamism of Theology of Joseph Ratzinger’, reflects very well some of Ratzinger’s main ideas and concerns about the liturgy. While he might not use the exact word ‘dynamism’ very often in relation to the liturgy, the main message behind this word certainly corresponds very well to what he has to say.

As you can imagine, the topic of Ratzinger’s liturgical vision is vast and cannot be discussed here in detail.⁵ For the purpose of this presentation, I have decided to choose the topic of his vision of *development* of the liturgy not only because it seems to correspond well to the main theme of this conference, but also because it is one of the most important and most widely discussed issues in his liturgical theology.

1. The theological context for Ratzinger’s understanding of liturgical development

Before presenting Ratzinger’s vision of liturgical development we need to look briefly at some main highlights of his liturgical theology in general in order to have a better idea regarding the context in which his understanding of the development of the liturgy occurs.

The main and the most important pillar of his liturgical thought in all matters, also in this particular one, is this: the liturgy is an *opus Dei*, an act of

³ A. REID, ‘The liturgical reform of Pope Benedict XVI’ in *Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 156–180, at 157–8. Also D.V. TWOMEY, ‘Benedict XVI, Pope and leiturgos’ in *Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy*, p. 13–16.

⁴ BENEDICT XVI, ‘Zum Eröffnungsband meiner Schriften’. In *Gesammelte Schriften*. Band 11 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder GmbH, 2008), p. 5–8, at p. 6.

⁵ A detailed analysis of his liturgical vision can be found in my published doctoral dissertation, see M. BILINIEWICZ, *The Liturgical Vision of Pope Benedict XVI. A Theological Inquiry* (Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2013). Among other most important works are: J. MURPHY, ‘Joseph Ratzinger and the liturgy: a theological approach’ in *Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy*, p. 132–55; A. GRIBBIN, *Pope Benedict XVI and the Liturgy. Understanding recent liturgical developments* (Harefordshire: Gracewing, 2011); N. BUX, *Benedict XVI’s Reform: The Liturgy Between Innovation and Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012); E. DUFFY, ‘Benedict XVI and the Eucharist’, *New Blackfriars* 88/1014 (March 2007), p. 195–212. For a longer list of other works on the topic see p. 7, n. 1 in my book.

God. Ratzinger often uses the expression ‘the work of Christ’, taken from the Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 5). In his theology, which betrays an important Trinitarian dimension here, the liturgy is an act of Christ, the Son of God, the Incarnate Logos, who offers himself to his Father in the act of his unconditional love and self-giving. This act, which reached its climax in Jesus’ sacrifice on Calvary (the unique, unrepeatable historical event by which we are redeemed) is taken up by his Church which, following her Master’s command, celebrates this event until He comes (1 Cor 11:26). The liturgy is the realization of this sacrificial act of Christ and, thus, it is primarily not the act of the Church, but the act of God.⁶

Such an understanding of the liturgy leads Ratzinger to a conclusion which is very important for our topic, i.e. that the liturgy is a divine reality which has to be accepted, received and assimilated in the form in which it is given to us. The main, indeed the only possible attitude of the human being towards such a great mystery is that of reception. Ratzinger places great emphasis on the fact that when it comes to the liturgy, any kind of creativity introduced in order to make it more ‘attractive’ is totally misplaced: the liturgy derives its greatness from what it is, not from what we make of it; ‘it is God’s work or it does not exist at all.’⁷ Liturgy is an act of the Triune God into which we can only be drawn by his grace, never through our own efforts, no matter how clever and well-intended. In fact, the liturgy, as an act of God in which he draws everything to himself (J 12:32), extends beyond the human world and involves the whole of creation, the cosmos. Through the celebration of Christ’s Paschal Mystery the coming of the Kingdom of God is anticipated and the divinization of the whole of Creation (‘God all in all’, see 1 Cor 15:28) is progressing.

Keeping all these emphases in mind will be helpful in understanding the emphases which Ratzinger chooses to make in his remarks about development in the liturgy.

2. How is development in the liturgy possible?

Some say that by the constant emphasizing of the fact that the liturgy is a divine reality which has to be humbly received, treasured and freed from all arbitrariness, Ratzinger’s vision might seem quite static: always the same, never changing, with not much room for development and accommodation. And they ask a legitimate question: what about history? While it is obvious that the liturgy has a vertical, divine dimension, which underlines its immutability and non-ar-

⁶ For more see M. BILINIEWICZ, *The Liturgical Vision of Pope Benedict XVI*, p. 21–56.

⁷ J. RATZINGER, *A New Song for the Lord. Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), p. 170.

bitrariness, it needs to be remembered that it also has a horizontal, human dimension, in which *some* interventions and changes are made and occur in time.

Ratzinger, however, anticipates these objections. He notices that in Christianity there are two major traditions in which the principle of the unchangeable character of the liturgy is approached in two different manners. ‘The Eastern approach’ puts a greater emphasis on the fact that liturgy is ‘a divine gift that one should not alter: we enter into it; we do not make it.’⁸ Such an approach is reflected in the fact that the liturgies of St Basil and St John Chrysostom, which the Eastern Churches celebrate, remained basically unchanged since the fourth and fifth century, when they were shaped and codified. Apart from a few ‘minor fluctuations’ they are preserved unchanged as a sign of the constancy and stability of God: his truth and love revealed in Jesus Christ in the face of the constantly changing world.

The other tradition, ‘the Western approach’, in which Ratzinger places himself,

always had a far stronger sense of history. Here, too, the liturgy was understood in its essentials as a gift, but also as something that is set within the living Church and that grows with her.⁹

Liturgy in the Western view, thus, is not something that simply came to us from eternity in some mysterious, magical way, given once for all in some certain, unchangeable form. Liturgy is a gift indeed, but a gift which is like a plant that grows and develops in the course of time. It is a work of God, but of God who talks and acts also through history. Certain elements of liturgy flourish, other disappear. Just as God’s revelation needs to be contextualized and translated for people of every epoch and place, so the liturgy is also open to certain changes and modifications and can be a subject of reform and growth.¹⁰

Ratzinger compares this balance between the unchangeable and the changeable character of liturgy to Sacred Scripture which also does not simply drop down vertically from above, but is read and understood more and more deeply in the concrete historical and cultural circumstances in which the Church finds herself in different times and places. It remains the same but, at the same time, it is being actualized and applied differently in different contexts. It is God’s reality, but also a human reality subjected to the process of historical development.¹¹ In the area of the liturgy Ratzinger refers here to the

⁸ J. RATZINGER, *God and the World. Believing and Living in Our Time. A conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), p. 413. See also his *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 164–5.

⁹ J. RATZINGER, *God and the World*, p. 413.

¹⁰ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 165–6.

¹¹ J. RATZINGER, *God and the World*, p. 413.

indisputable fact of development and growth in the Western rites. In the course of history these rites were subject to changes and, at the same time, remained the same in essence. Into the discussion about the extent to which the liturgy can change, Ratzinger introduces an important idea for his theology: the notion of 'organic growth'.

Ratzinger borrows the expression 'organic growth' from the world of gardening. He compares the development of liturgy to the growth of a plant. It is something that cannot be controlled from the outside but has to take place without any artificial intervention. It has to happen naturally, 'organically'. This means that the authority which is responsible for taking care of the development of the liturgy has to act as a careful gardener who allows the plant to grow according to its own rules, in its own time. Such a 'gardener' can only carefully trim the 'plant' (liturgy) to allow it to grow better, but can neither speed the process of growing nor give it a certain direction and shape according to his own wishes. Liturgy, therefore, is not a space for individual creativity and private ideas but a living organism which has its own, uninterrupted rhythm of life and growth.¹² To use the vocabulary adopted as the topic of this conference, it is equipped in 'inner dynamism' which stimulates its development.

This comparison, in which the gardener stands for those in authority in the Church, gives us an interesting insight into Ratzinger's understanding of the role of the authority and hierarchy in the Church not only in the area of the liturgy, but in general. Eamon Duffy finds it 'salutary, and ironic' that Ratzinger, who by many is considered 'an apologist for central authority and papal power' here,

in the central prayer and sacramental life of the Church, recognises a more fundamental dimension of Catholicism, which takes precedence over mere authority, and demands our deeper loyalty.¹³

Ratzinger himself, recalling the dogmatic declarations of the First and Second Vatican Councils and the present Catechism of the Catholic Church about the pope's authority, states that

The pope is not an absolute monarch whose will is law; rather, he is the guardian of the authentic Tradition and, thereby, the premier guarantor of obedience. He cannot do as he likes, and he is thereby able to oppose those people who, for their part, want to do whatever comes into their head. His rule is not that of arbitrary power, but that of obedience in faith. That is why, with re-

¹² Cf. J. RATZINGER, Foreword to *The Organic Development of the Liturgy. The Principles of Liturgical Reform and their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council. Second Edition* by A. Reid, O.S.B., (San Francisco, Ignatius Press: 2005), p. 9; J. RATZINGER, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 165–6.

¹³ E. DUFFY, 'Benedict XVI and the Eucharist', p. 212.

spect to the Liturgy, he has the task of a gardener, not that of a technician who builds new machines and throws the old ones on the junk-pile.¹⁴

Liturgy, thus, reveals itself again as something given, a 'rite' which is not a product of a human mind or effort, even if it comes from the highest hierarchical positions in the Church, but something that comes down to us 'from the depths of the millennia and, ultimately, of eternity.'¹⁵

This rite, of course, is subject to some minor changes and corrections in the course of time. These changes, however, do not touch the essence of it but only modify certain forms which occur in the course of the 'organic growth'. Changes occur in details but the core remains unchangeable. It can be said that, according to Ratzinger, Catholic liturgy changes in time, but only in order to remain the same. His principle of looking at history through the lenses of underlying continuity and his preference for the universal over the particular are very evident here.

Ratzinger gives some examples of certain liturgical changes which occurred in the course of the centuries, but does not consider them very meaningful in terms of handing down the rite of the Mass itself. He mentions the transformation from the Jewish Temple to a distinctive, Christian liturgy which occurred in the first century of Christianity, when the separation between the synagogue and the Church slowly developed and finally occurred.¹⁶ He speaks about the language of the liturgy which was changed from Greek to Latin when Greek was no longer understandable for participants whose everyday language in the Roman Empire was Latin.¹⁷ He recalls the evolution which the Roman Rite went through in the first millennium and the various influences on it which came from different European regions.¹⁸ He remembers the fact that certain devotional practices did not develop until the Middle Ages and recalls the pluralism (or, as some would say, chaos) which was present in the pre-Tridentine era in the Church.¹⁹ Finally,

¹⁴ J. RATZINGER, Foreword to *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 10–11; see also his 'Assessment and Future Prospects' in A. Reid, O.S.B., ed., *Looking Again at the Question of Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger. Proceedings of the July 2001 Fontgombault Liturgical Conference* (Farnborough: Saint Michael's Abbey Press, 2003), p. 145–53, at 146; Also see J. RATZINGER, *God and the World*, p. 414–15; J. RATZINGER, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 165–6.

¹⁵ J. RATZINGER, *Salt of the Earth. Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium. An Interview with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), p. 174–5.

¹⁶ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Feast of Faith. Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 80–82; see also his 'Eucharist-Communion-Solidarity: Christ Present and Active in the Blessed Sacrament' in *On the Way to Jesus Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 109–11; also his *God Is Near Us. The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), p. 58–61.

¹⁷ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *God Is Near Us*, p. 71.

¹⁸ J. RATZINGER, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 160–64.

¹⁹ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Milestones. Memoirs 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p. 147.

he acknowledges the newness which came with the Liturgical Movement and changes in liturgy that were inspired by it (conducted by Pope St Pius X and Pius XII). All this, however, does not appear to him to breach the rule of continuity which he sees in the history of the Church and in the history of her liturgy. All changes which appeared in the form of Catholic worship he understands as 'organic' and as fruits of natural development rather than arbitrary decisions of individuals. The Second Vatican Council and its order of revision of the liturgical books are, for him, nothing more than another step on this path of continuity and uninterrupted, one-way, natural development. Never was there or could there be any fractions, breaches and leaps in this history of moving forward toward the consummation of history.²⁰

Keeping all this in mind is helpful in understanding why and what kind of problems Ratzinger has with the post-Vatican II liturgical reform. He is of the opinion that the image of a gardener who carefully oversees the growth of a plant was replaced with a rather harsh image of a construction site where one building is being demolished and another one is being put up in its place, although using mainly the same materials.²¹ On one occasion, he also used another version of the construction site image and compared the climate in which the post-conciliar reform was introduced to a site where building plans were lost and everyone built according to their own taste!²² In his, I think, most severe passage about the post-conciliar reform, he stated that

After the Council (...) in the place of the liturgy as a fruit of organic development came fabricated liturgy. We abandoned the organic, living process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it – as in a manufacturing process – with a fabrication, a banal on-the-spot product.²³

It is an issue open to discussion whether Ratzinger has such a harsh opinion only about the manner of implementing the reform, or perhaps about the official product of the reform itself (Missal of Paul VI).²⁴ It is enough to say here that in his opinion, at least on the level of people's reception of the new Missal, i.e. on the way the reform was perceived, the law of organic growth was broken. It is no wonder, then, that having been elected Successor of Peter, he devoted a lot of his attention and efforts as Pope to fix it.

²⁰ Cf. J. RATZINGER and V. MESSORI, *The Ratzinger Report. An Exclusive interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), p. 37–8; J. RATZINGER, *God and the World*, p. 414–15; J. RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, p. 83–4; J. RATZINGER, *Milestones*, p. 149; J. RATZINGER, *A New Song for the Lord*, p. 166–9.

²¹ J. RATZINGER, *Milestones*, p. 148.

²² J. RATZINGER, *The Ratzinger Report*, p. 30.

²³ J. RATZINGER, Foreword to Klaus Gamber, *La Reforme liturgique en question* (Le Barroux: Editions Sainte-Madeleine, 1992), p. 7.

²⁴ For more on this see M. BILINIEWICZ, *The Liturgical Vision of Pope Benedict XVI*, p. 77–79.

3. Organic growth in Benedict's pontificate

Many writers, such as Alcuin Reid, Anselm Gribbin or Nicola Bux, refer to actions taken by Benedict in his eight-years pontificate as 'liturgical reform'. For the sake of clarity, I must admit that I distance myself from this expression and do not see enough reasons to call his actions a liturgical reform, at least in the strict sense. Ratzinger-Benedict himself often spoke about the 'reform of the reform', but always did so in inverted commas: the so called 'reform of the reform'.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that in those eight years of Benedict's era a lot has changed in the way the papal liturgy is celebrated. One could point to numerous examples of visible changes of style which Benedict introduced in the papal liturgies: occasional celebrations *ad orientem* (not facing the congregation, but facing the same direction as them), a tall, visible crucifix at the centre of the altar while celebrating *versus populum* (facing the congregation), Holy Communion distributed kneeling and on the tongue, use of Gregorian Chant and polyphony as *the* regular musical setting for the papal liturgy, Eucharistic Prayer said in Latin rather than in the vernacular, using of old liturgical vestments and objects (such as papal throne, Mithras, papal staff, shoes, hats) from previous centuries, reintroducing cardinal deacons in papal Masses, releasing the pre-conciliar Missal from nearly all juridical constraints in *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, promoting liturgical pluralism through accepting Anglicans willing to join the Catholic Church with their liturgical heritage (*Anglicanorum Coetibus*) or introducing new translations of the Missal of Paul VI into the English language. All these changes were significant and had symbolical meaning: Benedict wanted to show the Church and the world the underlying continuity between the past and the present. He wanted to emphasize that the contemporary Catholic Church is the same Church which there existed before the Second Vatican Council, before the First Vatican Council, before the Council of Trent and so on. The liturgy which this Church celebrates is also, basically, the same liturgy which our ancestors celebrated and cherished.

However, as important as the changes themselves is the manner in which they were introduced. Benedict remained faithful to his theological principles, here to the principle of organic development. He acted slowly, quietly, prudently, even unnoticeably, and tried to avoid the impression of legal liturgical positivism, imposition and top-down arbitrary decision-making. Despite seeing the need to act as urgent, he limited himself to showing a good example and inviting the Church to follow it. In his theology, Ratzinger often emphasizes that it is not so much the liturgy that should change, but rather our attitude to it. This principle was respected by Benedict, who saw the need for perceiving the liturgy as a divine gift which should be free from arbitrariness as superior to the need for external changes, however important they might seem.

The area of the liturgy in Benedict's pontificate was marked by the same feature as in other areas, i.e. his reluctance for introducing disciplinary, external changes and his emphasis on the need for internal change, conversion. Driven by his deeply rooted conviction that in things divine and ecclesial haste is not a good counselor and that in the Church everything needs to happen naturally, organically, in its own time, Benedict's pontificate was characterized by self-discipline and self-restraint. This is why I disagree with those who claim that Benedict, in his pontificate, was imposing his own views on the whole Church. There are many external changes which he thought would be beneficial for the liturgy, but which he did not introduce for the sake of respecting the principle of organic development and out of respect for the people's sensibility. In fact, apart from the case of the new translations of the Missal into English (which was a task begun by his predecessor and only completed by him) he did not impose anything on anyone in the matter of liturgy. No one is obliged by law to put a crucifix on the altar, to reintroduce kneelers for Communion, to say the Mass in Latin, dress up in baroque vestments, replace popular hymns with Gregorian Chant or celebrate according to the pre-conciliar Missal. Benedict himself, being of the opinion that the Eucharistic Prayer should be, at least *sometimes* said in low voice, never did it; as Pope, he never celebrated the Old Mass or even participated in it; he did not move the Sign of Peace to before the Presentation of the Gifts (as he thought would be more appropriate in the context of abusing this gesture in parishes), he allowed the Italian episcopate to retain the translation 'for all' ('per tutti') in the words of consecration, despite the norms issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in 2006. Although he devoted a lot of his attention as a theologian to argue that the Eucharist should be celebrated *ad orientem*, not *versus populum*, it was only in the Sistine Chapel and occasionally in the Pauline Chapel that he celebrated the Mass publicly in this way (and that began only in 2008, three years after election!). One can be critical of Benedict's liturgical vision or of some particular aspects of it, but one certainly cannot accuse him of imposing it on the Church.

In fact, it would not be far from the truth to say that Benedict's liturgical vision was *not* picked up and adopted by the large majority of the Church. I do not know what your experience of the liturgy is in your parishes, but mine is that nothing has changed. Depending on where you stand theologically, it was a strength and at the same time a weakness of Benedict's pontificate to often step back and not to act, both in the area of liturgy and in other areas (such as the famous, or infamous, reform of the Roman Curia). While his supporters defend him by repeating his arguments about the need for internal change of attitude that should precede external changes and structural reforms, his critics argue that certain reforms in the Church are needed, feasible and are more urgent than he appeared to allow. They argue that while internal conversion

of individuals and group is indeed essential and a *sine-qua-non* condition for any change, external structures can either help and stimulate this conversion or discourage and interrupt it. While acknowledging the divine element in the Church, so much emphasized by Benedict, they remind us that there is also a human element in it, and that this human element always needs to be open for revision and, if needed, for correction.

Leaving the evaluation of Benedict's pontificate as a whole for further studies and discussions, it needs to be said that it was, as was his whole theological and ecclesial career, marked by an overwhelming consistency with his theological principles. Here, in the case of liturgical development, Ratzinger 'practiced what he preached' and in his pontificate proved that his belief in the priority of *inner* dynamism of divine worship over *outer* changes and human interventions was indeed his *modus operandi*.

4. Evaluation of the importance of Ratzinger's vision today

The final question which needs to be answered here is: leaving aside the evaluation of Benedict's pontificate as a whole, what can be said about his vision of liturgical development and what importance does it have for us today?

Ratzinger's vision of development in the liturgy is similar to his vision of the development of the Church's history in general, especially its recent history (Second Vatican Council). In a careful and dispassionate analysis he does not fail to recognize that there were some changes, discontinuities and corrections of course; he is too good a scholar to deny it!²⁵ However, he plays them all down in favour of underlying continuities. In a very clever and nuanced manner (typical for him) he gives something to the other side, however still maintaining that it is his side that got it right. Of course the liturgy was changing, just as the Church and the world were and still are changing! However, the change does not occur on the level of what is essential, substantial, but on the level of what is temporal, determined by changing circumstances, accidental, to use St Thomas' vocabulary. The liturgy did grow and is growing, but it is growing organically. It does change, but only in order to remain the same.

This stance of Ratzinger is certainly very attractive due to its nuanced (astute, as James Corkery says)²⁶ attempt to acknowledge discontinuities and

²⁵ See his (famous now) remarks in Christmas Address to the Roman Curia from 22 December 2005 in *L'Osservatore Romano*. Weekly Edition in English 1(4 January 2006), p. 4–6. It needs to be said, however, that not always in his career his stance regarding continuity and rupture in interpreting Vatican II was as nuanced and balanced as in that address. See for example *The Ratzinger Report*, 35, where he said that 'there are *no* leaps in this history, there are *no* fractures, and there is *no* break in continuity' (emphasis mine).

²⁶ J. CORKERY, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas. Wise Cautions and Legitimate Hopes* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2009), p. 131.

combine them with continuities in the idea of an organic, natural reform which does not abandon unchangeable principles but updates the changeable forms of expression of these principles. To its advantage, it is in line with the teaching of the Magisterium: with regard to the liturgy Pius XII in his *Mediator Dei*, Vatican II in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and even the current *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, also emphasize this unbroken unity in the history of liturgical development.²⁷ However, various theologians and liturgists still question Ratzinger's stance from different angles.

Authors such as Pierre-Marie Gy, John Baldovin, Nathan Mitchell or Rembert Weakland attempt to prove that Ratzinger's vision of history is still too smooth, too un-interrupted and that it fails to recognize the significance of certain changes which occurred in the past. They say that Ratzinger *over-emphasizes* continuities and *under-emphasizes* discontinuities in order to suit his theological preferences, and that history of the liturgy is much more complex and full of leaps and ruptures than Ratzinger would like it to be. They argue that Ratzinger's negative evaluation of the implementation of the post-Vatican II reform is influenced by this failure to recognize that, to use Baldovin's words, it 'had plenty of precedent' in history and was 'badly needed.'²⁸ Keith Pecklers states that 'Roman Rite evolved and changed over the centuries often for pastoral reasons, accommodating and adapting the cultural and practical needs of the Church'²⁹ and Nathan Mitchell claims that a great example of a radical liturgical reform in the Catholic Church was the

²⁷ PIUS XII, *Mediator Dei*, nos. 50-56, and especially 59: 'The Church is without question a living organism, and as an organism, in respect of the Sacred Liturgy also, she grows, matures, develops, adapts and accommodates herself to temporal needs and circumstances, provided only that the integrity of her doctrine be safeguarded.' The Pope goes on then in reprimanding those who 'introduce novel liturgical practices, or call for the revival of obsolete rites out of harmony with prevailing laws and rubrics' (no. 59) and criticizes liturgical antiquarism, stating that 'the more recent liturgical rites likewise deserve reverence and respect. They, too, owe their inspiration to the Holy Spirit, who assists the Church in every age even to the consummation of the world. They are equally the resources used by the majestic Spouse of Jesus Christ to promote and procure the sanctity of man' (no. 61). The Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 23 states: 'there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.' See also *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Dublin: Irish Liturgical Publications, 2005), no. 397, where there is talk about 'apostolic and unbroken tradition' and a 'deep, organic, and harmonious' way of incorporating new elements into the liturgy in the course of history; see also no. 398. Nos. 6-9 are even entitled 'A Witness to Unbroken Tradition'.

²⁸ J.F. BALDOVIN, 'Sacrosanctum Concilium and the Reform of the Liturgy: Forty Five Years Later' in *Studia Liturgica* 39(2009), p. 145-157, at p. 151.

²⁹ K.F. PECKLERS, *The Genius of the Roman Rite. On the Reception and Implementation of the New Missal* (New York/London: Burns & Oates, 2009), p. 20.

post-Tridentine reforms which, according to him, were ‘far more unprecedented and untraditional than those which followed Vatican II.’³⁰

What can be said about this dispute? Certainly, there is no room for conducting a detailed analysis here, especially since the matter is far from settling among the scholars. In my own analysis,³¹ I come to the conclusion that Ratzinger’s critics failed to prove in their works that the Roman Catholic liturgy in the course of history was changing in a similar way to that after Vatican II: dramatically, radically, universally in the whole Church, in a short period of time, at a request of central authority. What they did prove was that in time the liturgy indeed *did* change, even significantly. However, Ratzinger and other proponents of ‘organic development’ never disputed that. John Baldovin’s assertion that the word ‘organic’ is a ‘code word for insignificant’³² is simply incorrect: ‘organic development’ does not mean that changes in liturgy did not happen or were only superficial, but it means that even those most momentous ones were introduced prudently, gradually, in a relatively long period of time, growing from forms already existing forms in substantial and visible continuity.

However, not all criticisms of Ratzinger’s stance are without merit. The argument which I find most interesting and constructive comes from the liturgist and former Archbishop of Milwaukee, Rembert Weakland, who asks: ‘What are the precise criteria by which one can judge which elements of the past must be retained and their growth fostered?’ He argues that ‘without such criteria, continuity becomes a vague and subjective process’ and that their lack will lead to ‘fostering only subjective pick-and-choose liturgies.’³³ Ratzinger seems to be aware of the problem and, basing himself on Alcuin Reid’s conclusions,³⁴ he lists his criteria: the main two are: (1) ‘openness to development and continuity with Tradition in a proper balance’ and (2) ‘awareness of an objective liturgical tradition with ensuring a substantial continuity.’ The two subsidiary ones are: (3) ‘the legitimacy of local traditions’ and (4) ‘the concern for pastoral effectiveness.’³⁵ Now, these principles for any liturgical reform are sound and cannot easily be disagreed with in their general thrust. However, they are still quite general and vague and more detailed, precise norms might be necessary

³⁰ N.D. MITCHELL, ‘The Amen Corner: Rereading Reform’, *Worship* 80(2006), p. 453–66, at p. 465.

³¹ M. BILINIEWICZ, *The Liturgical Vision of Pope Benedict XVI*, p. 292–4.

³² J. BALDOVIN, ‘Reflections on *Summorum Pontificum*’ in *Worship* 83(2009), p. 98–112, at p. 100.

³³ R.G. WEAKLAND, ‘The Liturgy as Battlefield. What Do “Restorationists” Want?’ in *Commonweal* 129(11 January 2002), available at <http://commonwealmagazine.org/liturgy-battlefield-0> (accessed on 20.05.2013).

³⁴ A. REID, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 308–9.

³⁵ J. RATZINGER, Foreword to *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 10.

for determining which elements of the reformed rites exhibit a proper balance between Tradition and development and which do not; what belongs to ‘objective liturgical tradition’ and what is a disposable human element determined by changing historical circumstances; which local traditions are to be retained and which pruned away; finally, how to determine what will be pastorally effective and what will not, and who decides about all these things (the pope, who, as Ratzinger reminds us, is not an absolute monarch in the area of the liturgy? A Council, which can only issue general directives and does not get involved in detailed discussions about particular matters? Liturgical experts, about whose overgrown authority in the post-Vatican II era Ratzinger complained so much?)³⁶

In my recently published study about Pope Benedict’s liturgical vision I make an attempt to provide such sub-criteria for ‘organic development’ in the form of ‘leading questions’ which could serve as a help to define whether a given liturgical development is organic or not. These questions are:

- Is a given, particular development a logical consequence of the practice hitherto and can it be homogeneously arrived at from the previous form, or does it introduce regression and ‘turning back’? Liturgical regress, or self-contradiction, takes place when an ancient practice is being re-introduced in the contemporary liturgy without sufficient recognition of the validity and legitimacy of the post-ancient developments.

- Does a given liturgical development shine more light on the particular liturgical and theological reality at stake and make it clearer and more obvious, or does it obscure it and contribute to confusion regarding it?

- Does a given liturgical development bring reconciliation in the Church through assimilating elements of different perspectives, or does it bring (or deepen) divisions and disagreements?³⁷ Is it accepted without major difficulties, or does it introduce a long-term disunity?

- Does a given liturgical development contribute to the genuine good of the Church and of the liturgy, i.e. better glorification of God and sanctification of men and women?³⁸ Does it make our liturgy more uplifting and transcendent and lead us to greater holiness?

- Finally, since no established law should change unless there is a ‘very great and very evident benefit conferred by the new enactment’ or there is an ‘extreme urgency of the case, due to the fact that either the existing law

³⁶ Ratzinger seems to be aware of these problems, especially with regard to ‘pastoral effectiveness’, see his Foreword to *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 12.

³⁷ Cf. J.H. Newman’s ‘Third Note’ regarding a genuine development of doctrine: ‘Power of Assimilation’ in J.H. NEWMAN, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), p. 185–9.

³⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 23.

is clearly unjust, or its observance extremely harmful³⁹, the question must be asked: is introducing a given liturgical innovation genuinely and certainly necessary?⁴⁰

Apart from these, there might exist also other criteria which Ratzinger does *not* name and which for other scholars can be at least as important as the ones listed above. Those scholars would, perhaps, emphasize not so much the importance of liturgical development being *organic* (as this notion is not unproblematic for them), but rather the importance of development being *genuine, legitimate*. The leading questions here could be:

– Does a given liturgical development stimulate active participation (spiritual and physical) of all the faithful, or does it contribute to their internal passiveness and indifference?

– Does it make the liturgy more intelligible and accessible, according to the Second Vatican Council's wishes?⁴¹ Is the liturgy as a result to it more coherent?

– Does it stimulate the communal character of the liturgy, or does it promote individualism?

– Does it help to understand the importance of the liturgy as the source and summit of the Christian life and to see it in the right proportion in the context of other areas of the life of the Church?

Criteria such as these (which are only a proposal, subject to further reflection) should be used in assessing not only the liturgical reform following Vatican II but also Benedict XVI's 'reform of the reform'.

The final question of this reflection remains: what importance, if any, does Ratzinger's vision of liturgical development have today, after the conclusion of

³⁹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 97, a. 2. Although Aquinas does not speak here in a liturgical context, his insights can be applied to liturgical regulations which, at least to some extent, are subject to human intervention. Regarding the problems caused by implementing dramatic, 'un-organic' liturgical reforms see also J. HITCHCOCK, 'Continuity and disruption in the liturgy: a cultural approach' in *Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy*, p. 88–97, especially p. 91–2. Also J.H. Newman warned about the dangers of introducing changes into the liturgy, even with regard to those elements which are not divinely instituted: 'Granting that the forms are not immediately from God, still long use has made them divine *to us*; for the spirit of religion has so penetrated and quickened them, that to destroy them is, in respect to the multitude of men, to unsettle and dislodge the religious principle itself. In most minds usage has so identified them with the notion of religion, that the one cannot be extirpated without the other. Their faith will not bear transplanting (...). Rites which the Church has appointed, (...) being long used, cannot be disused without harm to our souls.' See J.H. NEWMAN, 'Ceremonies of the Church (The Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord)', in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), p. 274–5.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Sancrosanctum Concilium*, no. 23.

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 21 and 34.

his pontificate? Is the 'reform of the reform' all over with the unfolding pontificate of Pope Francis?

It needs to be said that the first days, even hours of the Bergoglio pontificate, seemed to suggest precisely that. Francis' 'ascetic' appearance at the balcony with absolutely minimal papal decorum and splendour and his active refusal to wear some elements of the papal dress, the memory of the style of some of his Episcopal Masses in Buenos Aires, re-introducing the altar-table to the Sistine Chapel the next day after his election for his first papal Mass with the cardinals, giving up the medieval vestments, papal throne, ancient mitres etc. and general return to 'noble simplicity' in the setting for papal Masses, breaking the current liturgical laws by washing the feet of a young Muslim girl on Holy Thursday: these and other events caused many of those who supported Benedict's liturgical agenda to sigh with dismay: 'it's all over, we're back to square one.' However, as Francis' pontificate develops, it seems that certain elements of Benedict's 'reforms' are retained: the Eucharistic Prayer at papal Masses is still being said in Latin, Communion is still distributed kneeling and on the tongue, the altar cross remains where it was, which is the centre of the altar as the point of reference for the celebrant and the faithful. So, perhaps not all is lost!

Pope Francis certainly has his own style and this style is different to that of Benedict. He also has his own concerns and priorities which are also different to that of Benedict. Restoration of the sacred liturgy, in the spirit of continuity with the pre-conciliar Church, is certainly not one of them. And perhaps it is good for the Church to have shorter pontificates with popes who have different styles and concerns: perhaps as a result, more things will be accomplished? It is a legitimate hope that Francis will carry out tasks which Benedict was certainly not able to carry out. And, consistently, Francis' successor might complete what Francis himself could not complete (continuation of liturgical renewal, for example!).

While, as said, it is quite unrealistic to expect Pope Francis to continue Pope Benedict's reforms, it is reasonable to expect that he will not undo them any further and that he will, at least, leave freedom for those who want to continue them. Also, what needs to be remembered, by those who lament Benedict's departure, is what Benedict himself used to say about the 'new liturgical movement' which he supported and promoted. He compared it to the original Liturgical Movement from the beginning of the twentieth century and stated that in as much as the original Liturgical Movement 'was something that grew slowly, and that then very quickly became a flood',⁴² the New Liturgical Movement will also slowly emerge from 'exemplary centers where the liturgy really is celebrated in the right way, where people can experience what liturgy truly is.'⁴³ And that in as much

⁴² J. RATZINGER, *God and the World*, p. 416.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 416.

as the first Liturgical Movement was not something that was pastorally planned from above, but emerged from within the community of the Church, ‘from below’, the New Liturgical Movement also cannot be unnaturally imposed on the People of God, but must be the effect of the inner dynamism of the faith.⁴⁴

Benedict, with his pontificate, laid strong foundations for the development of this New Liturgical Movement. While one can wonder whether Benedict’s reluctance to introduce major changes in the Church (both in the liturgy and in general) will not cast some shadow on his pontificate, it is certain that, at least when it comes to the liturgy, the first step towards the necessary renewal was taken. It will be up to the Church, i.e. all of us, what we will do with his heritage.

Key Words: Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, liturgy, liturgical development, liturgical reform, theology of liturgy, history of liturgy, „reform of the reform”, organic growth, Second Vatican Council, „new liturgical movement”, pope Francis

Wewnętrzny dynamizm kultu Bożego. Joseph Ratzinger o rozwoju liturgii

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia ideę rozwoju liturgii w teologii Józefa Ratzingera w kontekście działań podejmowanych podczas jego ośmioletniego pontyfikatu wraz z uwzględnieniem innych opinii teologicznych. W pierwszej części artykułu przedstawiony zostaje kontekst teologiczny dla ratzingerowskiej idei rozwoju liturgii poprzez zarys pewnych głównych idei obecnych w jego teologii liturgii. Następnie omówiona jest kwestia faktu istnienia oraz sposobu rozwoju liturgii. W kolejnym punkcie dokonana jest analiza pontyfikatu Benedykta XVI z punktu widzenia jego rozumienia rozwoju chrześcijańskiego kultu. Artykuł kończy się próbą oceny wizji Ratzingera/Benedykta i jego wartości dla współczesnego Kościoła w świetle opinii innych teologów oraz w świetle liturgicznych działań jego następcy na Stolicy Piotrowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Józef Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, liturgia, rozwój liturgii, reforma liturgiczna, teologia liturgii, historia liturgii, „reforma reformy”, ograniczony rozwój, Sobór Watykański II, „nowy ruch liturgiczny”, papież Franciszek

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 416.