

think it depends on why the president thinks he needs to do that.” (One blogger summarized Yoo’s philosophy of government: “All Your Balls Belong to Us!”) Yoo has yet to specify appropriate presidential pretexts for juvenile testicular demolition.

While curtsying to the prevailing rhetoric on democracy, Yoo shows contempt for “government by consent.” He claims the 2004 election vindicated Bush’s torture policy: “Our nation had a presidential and congressional election after Abu Ghraib and the leaking of the [2002] memos. If the people had disagreed with administration policies, they could have made a change.”

How could the people judge the policy when the Bush administration was suppressing almost all information about it? There were no independent probes into the torture scandal during 2004. All the investigators were under the thumb of the Pentagon. The investigations were designed to look only downward—with no authority to pursue wrongdoing to the highest branches of the Pentagon and the White House. The Bush team succeeded in delaying the vast majority of damning revelations until after he was re-elected. Presumably, the public can “approve” atrocities even when the government deceives them about the actual events.

Yoo reasons like a devious personal-injury lawyer—yet it is the rights of the American people that are being run over. He is being feted by conservative foundations and think tanks, and often treated deferentially by liberals, for a theory of presidential power that would make Hobbes proud.

Yoo believes Americans should presume that the government always has a good reason for violating the law, even when it deceives the citizens about the reasoning. Yoo’s doctrines are absolutely unfit for any system with a pretense of self-government. ■

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[The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background, Klaus Gamber, Roman Catholic Books, 198 pages]

Recovering the Lost Liturgy

By Thomas E. Woods Jr.

KLAUS GAMBER’S BOOK *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy* was and is a publishing event, one of the most significant in the Catholic world in a generation. It sent shock waves throughout Europe when it first appeared there 16 years ago, and its appearance here during the pontificate of Benedict XVI—who as Cardinal Ratzinger provocatively endorsed it with a pointed preface to the French edition—promises to be no less eventful.

High Church politics is unfolding. The Mass is the center of Church life. Insiders expect Benedict to forcefully restore the old Latin Mass, at least as an option, thereby extending the baby steps taken by John Paul II, whose heart was clearly not in it, to atone for expunging the Latin liturgy from the life of the average Catholic after Vatican II.

This book provides, in bite-sized chapters, all the background. It is common knowledge that in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI dramatically revised the text and rubrics of the Mass. Whether the Council Fathers envisioned the radical changes that were ultimately made is a matter of dispute, but recent research by Father Brian Harrison of the Pontifical University of Puerto Rico found that most of the leading bishops as Vatican II opened favored only minor changes rather than a sweeping revision of the entire rite.

But a sweeping revision of the entire rite is exactly what we got.

Apologists for the reform tried to claim that the Mass had been changed countless times in the past and therefore that the discontent surrounding this most recent round of changes must

reflect either a lack of acquaintance with the checkered history of the Mass or a reactionary attachment to older forms for their own sake. But none of the organic and virtually imperceptible changes that had been made over the centuries was anything like the reform of the 1960s, in which a committee radically overhauled the entire rite.

Motivations for changing the rite varied, ranging from the pastoral concerns of misguided men of good will all the way to the downright sinister. Some, moved either by neo-Jansenism or Enlightenment contempt for the Middle Ages, claimed they were returning the Mass to its apostolic simplicity in light of recent liturgical research. This argument has not held up over time: research more recent still has shown that as a result of misreadings of the ancient sources, major aspects of the new rite—from the Prayer of the Faithful to concelebration to the practice of Mass facing the people—are in fact modern fabrications with no ancient analogue.

Others claimed they wanted to make the Mass more understandable to the people. But if that were all they were after, there was no need to draw up a completely new rite: they could simply have translated the traditional Mass into the vernacular.

Whatever the motivations behind the changes, though, Pope Paul VI acknowledged that something of priceless worth was being given up when he introduced his new rite in 1969-70. “A new rite of Mass: a change in the venerable tradition that has gone on for centuries. This is something that affects our hereditary religious patrimony, which seemed to enjoy the privilege of being untouchable and settled. It seemed to bring the prayer of our forefathers and our saints to our lips and to give us the comfort of feeling faithful to our spiritual past, which we kept alive to pass it on to the generations ahead.”

And although some even now pretend that stripping away the Latin language was the furthest thing from anyone’s mind at the time and that the abandonment of Latin was merely the unfortu-

nate result of a later misunderstanding of the reform, Paul VI spoke as if the loss of Latin was a clear and unavoidable aspect of the new Mass. And again, he used words upon which the most devoted Catholic traditionalist could scarcely have improved: "We are parting with the speech of the Christian centuries; we are becoming like profane intruders in the literary preserve of sacred utterance."

When it looked as if the traditional Mass was doomed, a group of 57 distinguished writers, scholars, artists, and historians in England—Catholic and non-Catholic alike—signed a petition urging Pope Paul to reconsider. The signatories of the appeal, who included Agatha Christie, Graham Greene, and Malcolm Muggeridge, urged that, apart from the spiritual ramifications of the abolition of the traditional Mass, the rite itself, "in its magnificent Latin text, has also inspired a host of priceless achievements in the arts—not only mystical works, but works by poets, philosophers, musicians, architects, painters and sculptors in all coun-

tries and epochs. Thus, it belongs to universal culture as well as to churchmen and formal Christians."

The appeal continued:

One of the axioms of contemporary publicity, religious as well as secular, is that modern man in general, and intellectuals in particular, have become intolerant of all forms of tradition and are anxious to suppress them and put something else in their place. But, like many other affirmations of our publicity machines, this axiom is false. Today, as in times gone by, educated people are in the vanguard where recognition of the value of tradition is concerned, and are the first to raise the alarm when it is threatened In the materialistic and technocratic civilisation that is increasingly threatening the life of mind and spirit in its original creative expression—the word—it seems particularly inhuman to deprive man of word-forms in one of their most grandiose manifestations.

The Archbishop of Westminster, John Cardinal Heenan—with whom a distraught Evelyn Waugh, aghast even at the initial liturgical changes he lived to see, carried on a lengthy correspondence—brought the issue before Pope Paul VI. The pope granted an indult for England and Wales for the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass on special occasions. Apart from an additional dispensation for elderly priests, though, that was the only allowance, anywhere, for the traditional rite.

That was how things stood until Pope John Paul II, prodded by French archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, broadened the indult in 1984 and again in 1988, urging the world's bishops to be "generous" in allowing the traditional Mass for those who wanted it. The generosity the pope asked for was not forthcoming: as of 2006, only a tiny fraction of one percent of all parish Masses are offered in the traditional rite.

The progressives who revised the Mass had won in a rout.

Then, in the late 1980s, came Monsignor Klaus Gamber. He was a liturgical scholar of great renown, who headed the liturgical institute at Regensburg and had brought out nearly three dozen volumes in the *Studia Patristica et Liturgica* and *Textus Patristici et Liturgici* series. It was Gamber's unimpeachable mainstream credentials that made his book *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy* all the more shocking.

The book was a blistering attack. The new Mass, said Gamber, was pastorally, theologically, and aesthetically disastrous. "The new liturgical forms," he wrote, "well intentioned as they may have been at the beginning, did not give the people bread, but stones." It radically unsettled and disoriented the faithful and probably sent countless numbers away for good. And it was an abuse of power to boot: Gamber suggested that whether the pope actually had the authority to revise the Mass so radically was "debatable, to say the least."

Against those who have argued that anything promulgated by the Holy See is ipso facto traditional, Gamber absolutely insisted that the new liturgy constituted a "break with Church tradition." He suggested that the new rite, in practice, amounted to a humanistic celebration of the assembled congregation rather than the propitiatory sacrifice of traditional Catholic theology.

We are now involved in a liturgy in which God is no longer the center of our attention. Today, the eyes of the faithful are no longer focused on God's Son having become Man hanging before us on the cross, or on the pictures of His saints, but on the human community assembled for a commemorative meal. The assembly of people is sitting there, face to face with the 'presider,' expecting from him, in accordance with the 'modern' spirit of the Church, not so much a transfer of God's grace, but primarily some good ideas and advice on how to deal with daily life and its challenges.

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And then Gamber did the unthinkable in the ecclesial climate of his day: he called for the restoration of the traditional rite “as the primary liturgical form for the celebration of Mass. It must become once more the norm of our faith and the symbol of Catholic unity throughout the world, a rock of stability in a period of upheaval and never-ending change.”

As recently as the 1990s, it was unthinkable that someone who endorsed the conclusions of Gamber’s book could ever be elected pope. But the current pontiff, when he was Cardinal Ratzinger, did just that: in his preface to the French-language edition he gave the book his hearty endorsement, including its finding that Mass with the priest facing East with the people, rather than with the priest facing away from the tabernacle and toward the people, was the ancient tradition and should be restored. Ratzinger’s endorsement of Gamber’s book made headlines across Europe.

And in his preface to Gamber’s book, speaking of the changes that were made to the Mass, Ratzinger added: “In the place of liturgy as the fruit of 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. Gamber, with the vigilance of a true prophet and the courage of a true witness, opposed this falsification ...”

The word out of Rome these days is that Pope Benedict XVI is considering lifting all restrictions from the traditional rite, such that any priest of the Roman Rite could offer the traditional Mass without needing the special permission from his bishop—as required under John Paul II—that has so often been denied. This is exactly what Gamber called for and what Benedict has long believed. “The old rite should be granted much more generously to all those who desire it,” he said in 1997, while still Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. “It’s impossible to see what could be dangerous or unacceptable about that.

A community is calling its very being into question when it suddenly declares that what until now was its holiest and highest possession is strictly forbidden and when it makes the longing for it seem downright indecent.”

Over the summer, Marcia Christoff Kurapovna wrote in these pages about reconciliation efforts currently under way between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox. Resolution of the liturgical question in the West is central to any kind of reconciliation between the two.

THE ORTHODOX ARE SUSPICIOUS OF THE MODERN MENTALITY THAT CONCEIVES OF ANCIENT CONVEYORS OF THE FAITH MERELY AS TEXTS IN NEED OF A GOOD EDITOR.

It is not simply that the traditional Mass has much more in common with the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom than does the new Mass. The point is that the Orthodox have no desire to see their own liturgies vandalized or “reformed,” and they are deeply suspicious of the modern mentality that conceives of ancient conveyors of the faith merely as texts in need of a good editor.

We live in strange times, in which nothing seems exempt from the forward march of ugliness and vulgarity. Architecture oscillates between the banal and the grotesque, the “art world” is a bad joke, and Hollywood hardly requires comment. We might have expected the Catholic Church, and Christians more generally, to remain entirely aloof from and unaffected by the spirit of vulgarization and narcissism that overtook the West in the 1960s.

But at the very time when the piety of the faithful most needed nourishment at the fount of tradition, and when the Western world needed more than ever to be reminded that tradition was more than something to be spat upon and discarded, the traditional Mass was taken away. Allen Tate, a convert to Catholicism and one of the Twelve Southerners who wrote the agrarian manifesto *I’ll Take My Stand*, regretted that he had converted not long before this venerable institution, which until then had success-

fully resisted the worst aspects of modernity, seemed to be throwing in the towel.

That is why the traditional Mass is potentially such an important pedagogical device for the Western world. I have often heard it said that in “today’s world” we need a simpler rite and one in the vernacular. But to the contrary: it is precisely in today’s world, a world in which man believes himself bound by nothing, in which the traditional Mass is so obviously necessary. What generation has

needed more than the present one to be told that the world does not revolve around it? In a world that believes that nothing is immune to change, that the family itself is subject to redefinition according to human whim, the piety and reverence of the traditional Latin Mass, in its beauty and stately reserve, and in its reservation of sacred tasks to the priest alone, reminds us that some things really are not to be touched by man. Here, in a nutshell, is the conservative’s outlook on the world.

If Pope Benedict follows through on what he has said in the past about the need to make the old rite widely available again, its significance will extend well beyond just those who have formed their spiritual lives around it. One of the great treasures of Western civilization will at long last have been restored. Those who prefer the Muppets to the Moonlight Sonata—and who for over 35 years have done everything they could to deprive people of the liturgical equivalent of the Moonlight Sonata—will doubtless bellow in protest, but to the relief of a great many Catholics and their sympathizers, Monsignor Klaus Gamber will at last have been vindicated. ■

Thomas E. Woods Jr. is author of How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization, a free chapter of which is available at ThomasEWoods.com.

MUSIC

Chanteuse of Strange Fruit

By Ralph de Toledano

HOW MANY ARE LEFT of the old jazz aficionados who listened to Billie Holiday decades ago in New York's West 52nd Street nightclubs? Not many. I still remember Billie singing "Strange Fruit" in the eddying smoke of Café Society. It was a Popular Front song about lynching—"strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees"—sung for a Popular Front audience in a Greenwich Village club. But it had its power and validity in the exquisite torture of her singing, in the ungainly beauty of a dark face flatly delineated by the baby spots.

Those were Billie's great days, when jazz was the real and the true, when she was recording to the sprung rhythms of Teddy Wilson's piano, the outbursts of Artie Shaw's clarinet, or the clean line of Bunny Berigan's cornet. Those were the days of "Billie's Blues," out of the deep south via Harlem; of "Summertime" in pounding accents that would have startled George Gershwin; of two evocative pop tunes, "Easy Living" and "Foolin' Myself"; of the great Commodore recordings. They can still be heard scattered throughout today's CD reissues—Billie before the demons moved in.

Then the rich boys of the Left took over, and so did the drugs. Billie continued to sing, but she had a monkey on her back—and the corruption of courts and hospitals and the futile "cures"—a story of degeneration and regeneration and ultimate collapse, a chronology not new to those who lived in jazz.

Billie is long dead, but to those of us who knew her she left an unforgettable legacy of memories and music. For there was no one quite like Billie as a singer of jazz or pops. Any song, good or bad, acquired a new dimension when she sang

it. Her phrasing was impeccable, and her sense of the *rubato*—that straying behind or around the beat that characterizes the best jazz—was perfect. She could wander from the melody until that split second those with a trained ear know and then return with a glorious resolution. Toward the end, her plangently full voice developed a kind of astringency, but she never lost the mastery of phrase or the sense of a song's inner logic.

Her old album "Solitude"—named after Duke Ellington's seductively velvet ballad—is a case in point. From Cole Porter's adolescently ironic "Love for Sale" to the Princeton Triangle Club's "East of the Sun," Billie took over these songs, and "Love for Sale's" somewhat mawkish lyrics of vice as seen by undergraduate eyes became poignant and hard as vice can be. "Easy to Love" and "Everything I Have Is Yours," which in the '30s I hummed on forgotten dance floors, became jazz *lieder* when they were transfigured by Billie.

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"Body and Soul," another old album, allowed her to elaborate on that great standard, to illuminate "Embraceable You," and to invigorate those two Gershwin movie tunes, "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me." Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers made those tunes popular in a musical you could once see on the Late Show, but Billie stole them. In an album inappropriately called "Billie's Blues," an oldie like "Just One More Chance," which that gusty crooner Russ Columbo mooed into prominence, became a plea for the return that parted lovers seek. And "You Took Advantage of Me," a specialty of Bing Crosby in his soprano days with the Paul Whiteman hot section, surrendered to Billie.

With her death, who was there to take Billie Holiday's place? There was, of course, Ella Fitzgerald—in the 1930s the tall and gawky singer who belted out

songs with Chick Webb's Savoy Ballroom band to the delight of Harlem and points south. With success, Ella acquired *embonpoint* and placidity, with nowhere any of Billie's *cri de coeur* intensity or artistry. There was Lena Horne, svelte and fashionable, who sang many of the songs that Billie made real. But neither the phrasing nor the instrument nor the emotion were there. Close your eyes and you saw the attractive figure and the formidably regular teeth. But you also heard a voice that occasionally wavered in pitch and tended to harshness. Lena Horne made Noel Coward's "Mad About the Boy," with its faux sophistication, a kind of signature—but it was neither Gertrude Lawrence (thin-textured, cold, and sardonic) nor jazz. It was a pale carbon copy of a pale carbon copy, with a touch of Broadway bitchiness.

You returned inevitably to the memories of Billie—the Billie we loved and applauded in smoky nightclubs; the

Billie in white satin who stood before big-name bands in the vast caverns of now vanished movie palaces; the Billie who all her life could sing and mean it, "If you let me love you, it's for sure I'll love you all the way"; the Billie whose records we had waited for and spun until the 78 rpm steel needles had vanquished them.

If your mind so orders, you remember the excitement of Billie's great days. And as you listen to her again, you may mutter with no *gaudeamus igitur*, "*Post jucundam juventutem, post molestam senectutem, nos habebit humus*"—"After joyous youth, after troubled old age, the earth will have us." And perhaps you smile. ■

Ralph de Toledano is a former editor of Newsweek and the author or editor of over 20 books, including *Frontiers of Jazz*.