

gorian chant as a "treasure of sacred music," the monody of the Dark Ages is an Eastern intrusion, based on the Byzantine modal system. The Benedictines, who foresee the crumbling of our musical edifice into the "omega point" simplicity of the monkish chant, readily admit this. They claim that the modal structure of the Gregorian chant derives from certain natural acoustical laws which characterized the music of Babylon and the Solomonic temple, and still characterize the music of primitive pagan peoples. They defend pagan primitivism against the "artificial" constructs of Cusa's equal-tempered system. The Benedictines are, in their own view, and in reality, the immediate heirs of the Venetian inquisition against the Golden Renaissance.

We do not wish to put words into Cardinal Ratzinger's mouth. He considers the Gregorian chant to be a moment in development of sacred music, which should no longer exclude the great composers from the liturgy. We differ, in viewing the reintroduction of Gregorian chant at the Council of Trent as an aberration, directed against the policies of the Council of Florence a century earlier. Nonetheless, he has brushed aside the empty rationalizations through which Gregorian chant returned, and through which polyphony was made lame. He has re-established the theological and philosophical criteria by which liturgical music may be judged. By reviving the Cusan outlook which founded the Golden Renaissance, Cardinal Ratzinger has given immeasurable impetus to the prospects for a new Renaissance in our time.

## 'The Word made flesh' and creative discovery in music

*We print below a condensed version of an address originally titled, "The liturgy and Church music," and delivered by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger on Nov. 17, 1985 to an audience in Sicily. The full text appeared originally in the English weekly edition of the Vatican publication Osservatore Romano, on March 4, 1986.*

### 1. Outstripping the Council? A new conception of the liturgy

The new phase of liturgical reform efforts is explicitly based not upon the texts of the Second Vatican Council, but upon its "spirit." As symptomatic of this view, I shall use here the informative and clearly conceived article on "Song and Music in the Church" which appeared in the "New Dictionary of the Liturgy" (*Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*). Let us attempt to familiarize ourselves briefly with the basic outlines of this new conception. The point of departure for the liturgy

(so we are told) lies in the assembly of two or three who gather in Christ's name. At first hearing, the reference to the promise of Jesus in Matthew 16:20 sounds harmless and quite traditional. However, it acquires a revolutionary impetus through the isolation of this one biblical text, which is viewed in contrast to the entire liturgical tradition. The "two or three" are now set up as the antithesis of an institution with institutional roles, as the antithesis of any kind of "codified programme." This definition of the liturgy therefore means that it is not the Church which takes precedence over the group, but rather that the group is more important than the Church. It is not the Church as a total entity which supports the liturgy of an individual group or congregation, but rather the group itself is the point at which liturgy begins in every instance. Hence, it also follows that liturgy does not grow out of a model shared in common, out of a "rite" (which as a "codified program" now becomes a negative image of constraint): Liturgy rather arises on the spot, out of the creativity of those assembled. On such a sociological view, the sacrament of priestly ordination appears as an institutional role which has created a monopoly for itself and which, by means of the institution (the Church), undoes the pristine unity and community of the group. In this constellation, we are told, both music and the Latin tongue have become a language of the initiates, "the language of another church, namely, of the institution and of its clergy."

It is evident that the isolation of Matthew 16:20 from the entire biblical and ecclesiastical tradition of the Church's common prayer has far-reaching consequences: The Lord's promise to those praying anywhere is transformed into the dogma of the autonomous group. The joint action of praying has been intensified to an egalitarianism which regards the development of spiritual offices as the beginning of a different Church. From this point of view, any guiding postulates derived from the Church as a whole are restraints which must be resisted for the sake of the originality and freedom of the liturgical celebration. It is not obedience to a totality, but rather the creativity of the moment which becomes determinative. . . .

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### 3. The anthropological pattern of the Church's liturgy

The answer to our question is suggested by two fundamental statements in the *New Testament*. St. Paul coined the expression *logike latreia* in Romans 12:1, but this is very difficult to translate because we lack a satisfactory equivalent for the concept of *Logos*. It might perhaps be translated "logos-like worship" or "worship fixed or determined by the Spirit," which would also echo Jesus's statement about adoration in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). But it is also possible to translate it as "adoration stamped or marked by the Word," adding, of course, that in a biblical sense (as well as in the Greek meaning), "word" is more than mere speech or lan-

guage: It is creative reality. To be sure, it is also more than mere thought or spirit: It is spirit which explains and communicates itself. The relationship to a text, the rationality, the intelligibility, and the sobriety of Christian liturgy have always been deduced from this fact and presupposed as the basic norm of liturgical music. But it would be a restrictive and false interpretation to understand this norm as strictly requiring of all liturgical music a very close link with the text, or to declare the intelligibility of the text to be a general requirement for all liturgical music. After all, "word" in the biblical sense is more than "text," and comprehension includes more than the banal perspicuity of what is obvious to everyone, what is to be compressed into the most superficial rationality. It is quite correct, however, that music which serves the adoration "in spirit and in the truth" cannot be rhythmic ecstasy, sensual suggestion or stupefaction, subjective emotional bliss, or superficial entertainment. It is rather subordinated to a message, to a comprehensive spiritual statement which is rational in the highest sense of the word.

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*Faith becoming music is part of the process of the Word becoming flesh, but simultaneously, the flesh, in the Cross and resurrection, becoming spirit.*

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In other words, it is quite correct to say that such music must correspond in its innermost nature to this "word" in a comprehensive sense, indeed must serve it.

And so we are quite naturally led to another text which makes the really fundamental biblical statement about worship by clarifying for us the importance of the "word" and its relationship to us. I refer to that sentence in the prologue of St. John's *Gospel*: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory" (John 1:14). First of all, the "word" to which Christian worship refers, is not a text, but living reality: a God who is meaning communicating himself and who communicates himself by becoming man. This incarnation is now the holy tent or tabernacle, the point of reference for all cult, which is a gazing upon God's glory and does him honor. But these statements of St. John's *Prologue* do not convey the complete picture. The passages will be misunderstood unless we take them together with the "farewell speeches" of Jesus, in which he says to his disciples: If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again. I go away, and I come unto you. It is expedient to you that I go, for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you (John 14:2 ff.; 14:18 ff.; 16:5-7 etc.). The Incarnation is only the first step in a longer process which moves to a final and meaningful conclusion in the Cross and the Resurrection. From the Cross, the Lord draws everything to himself and bears what is cor-

poral, i.e., man and the whole created world into God's eternity.

The liturgy is subordinate to this movement, which we might call the basic text to which all liturgical music refers; music must be measured from within by the standard of this line of motion. Liturgical music is a result of the demands and of the dynamism of the Incarnation of the Word, for music means that even among us, the word cannot be mere speech. The principal ways in which the Incarnation continues to operate are of course the sacramental signs themselves. But they are quite misplaced if they are not immersed in a liturgy which as a whole follows this expansion of the Word into the corporeal and into the sphere of all our senses. It is this fact which justifies and indeed renders necessary images, in complete contrast to Jewish and Islamic types of worship. This is also the reason why it is necessary to appeal to those deeper levels of comprehension and response which become accessible through music. Faith becoming music is part of the process of the Word becoming flesh. But at the same time, this "becoming music" is also subordinated in a completely unique way to that inner evolution of the Incarnation event which I tried to hint at earlier: The Word become flesh comes to be, in the Cross and Resurrection, flesh become Word. Both are permeated with each other. The Incarnation is not revoked, but becomes definitive at that instant in which the movement turns around, so to speak: Flesh itself becomes Word, is "logocized," but precisely this transformation brings about a new unity of all reality which was obviously so important to God that he paid for it at the price of his Son's Cross.

When the Word becomes music, there is involved on the one hand perceptible illustration, incarnation, or taking on flesh, attraction of pre-rational and supra-rational powers, a drawing upon the hidden resonance of creation, a discovery of the song which lies at the basis of all things. And so this becoming music is itself the very turning point in the movement: It involves not only the Word becoming flesh, but simultaneously the flesh becoming spirit. Brass and wood becomes sound; what is unconscious and unsettled becomes orderly and meaningful resonance. What takes place is an embodiment or incarnation which is spiritualization, and a spiritualization which is incarnation or em-"body"-ment. Christian "incarnation" or "embodiment" is always simultaneously, spiritualization, and Christian spiritualization is em-"body"-ment into the body of the *Logos* become man.

#### **4. The consequences for liturgical music**

##### **a. Basic principles**

To the degree that in music, this conjunction of both movements takes place, music serves in the highest degree and in an irreplaceable manner that interior exodus which liturgy always is and wants to be. This means that the propriety of liturgical music is measured by its inner conformity to this basic anthropological and theological model. At first glance, such a statement seems far removed from concrete musical

realities. But the statement becomes very concrete indeed when we consider the antithetical models of cultic music which I mentioned earlier. Or we can recall the Dionysiac type of religion and its music, which Plato discussed on the basis of his religious and philosophical views. In many forms of religion, music is associated with frenzy and ecstasy. The free expansion of human existence, towards which man's own hunger for the Infinite is directed, is supposed to be achieved through sacred delirium induced by frenzied instrumental rhythms. Such music lowers the barriers of individuality and personality, and in it man liberates himself from the burden of consciousness. Music becomes ecstasy, liberation from the ego, amalgamation with the universe. Today we experience the secularized variation of this type in rock and pop music, whose festivals are an anti-cult with the same tendency: desire for destruction, repealing the limitations of the everyday, and the illusion of salvation in liberation from the ego, in the wild ecstasy of a tumultuous crowd. These are measures which involve a form of release related to that achieved through drugs. It is the complete antithesis of Christian faith in the Redemption. Accordingly, it is only logical that in this area diabolical cults and demonic music are on the increase today, and their dangerous power of deliberately destroying personality is not yet taken seriously enough. The dispute between Dionysiac and Apolline music which Plato tried to arbitrate, is not our concern, since Apollo is not Christ. But the question which Plato posed concerns us in a most significant way.

In a way which we could not imagine thirty years ago, music has become the decisive vehicle of a counter-religion and thus calls for a parting of the ways. Since rock music seeks release through liberation from the personality and its responsibility, it can be on the one hand precisely classified among the anarchic ideas of freedom which today predominate more openly in the West than in the East. But that is precisely why rock music is so completely antithetical to the Christian concept of redemption and freedom, indeed its exact opposite. Hence music of this type must be excluded from the Church on principle, and not merely for esthetic reasons, or because of restorative crankiness or historical inflexibility.

If we were to continue our analysis of the anthropological foundations of various types of music, we could render our question even more concrete. There is an agitational type of music which animates man for various collective goals. There is a sensuous type of music which brings man into the realm of the erotic or in some other way essentially tends towards feelings of sensual desire. There is a purely entertaining type of music which desires to express nothing more than an interruption of silence. And there is a rationalistic type of music in which the tones only serve rational constructs, and in which there is no real penetration of spirit and senses. Many dry catechism hymns and many modern songs con-

structed by committees belong to this category. Music truly appropriate to the worship of the incarnate Lord exalted on the cross exists on the strength of a different, a greater, a much more truly comprehensive synthesis of spirit, intuition, and audible sound. We might say that Western music derives from the inner richness of this synthesis, indeed has developed and unfolded it in a fullness of possibilities ranging from Gregorian chant and the music of the cathedrals via the great polyphony and the music of the Renaissance and the Baroque up to Bruckner and beyond. This pre-eminence is found only in the West because it could arise only out of an anthropological foundation which unites the spiritual and the profane in an ultimate human unity. And the pre-eminence disappears to the degree that this anthropology vanishes. For me, the greatness of this music is the most obvious and immediate verification of the Christian image of man and of Christian faith in the Redemption which could be found. Those who are truly impressed by this grandeur somehow realize from their innermost depths that the faith is true, even though they may need to travel some distance in order to carry out this insight with deliberate understanding.

This means that the Church's liturgical music must be adjoined to that integration of human encounter through faith in the Incarnation. Such redeeming release is more toilsome than that sought in ecstatic frenzy, but this toil is the exertion of truth itself. On the one hand, it must integrate the senses into the spirit, in accord with the impulse of the *Sursum corda*. Pure spiritualization, however, is not the goal, but rather integration of the sensitive powers with the spirit, so that both taken together become the complete person. The spirit is not degraded by taking in the sense faculties, but actually receives thereby the complete richness of creation. And on the other hand, the senses are not rendered less real when they are permeated with the spirit, because thereby they participate in the spirit's infinitude. Very sensuous desire is really quite limited and ultimately incapable of intensification because an act of the senses cannot go beyond a certain limit. Those who expect release from an act of the senses will be disappointed, or "frustrated," as we say today. By being integrated into the spirit, the senses receive a new depth and reach into the endlessness of the spiritual adventure. Only there do they recover themselves completely—on condition, of course, that the spirit too does not remain uncommunicative. In "lifting up your hearts"—*Sursum corda*—music of faith seeks the integration of man, and finds it not within itself, but only by going beyond itself into the Word made flesh. Sacred music which forms framework of movement thus becomes man's purification, his ascent. Let us remember, though, that this music is not the product of a moment, but participation in history. It cannot be realized by an individual, but only in cooperation with others. And thus such a sacred music also expresses entrance into the history of the faith, and the mutual relation-

ship of all members of Christ's body. Such a sacred music bequeathes joy and a higher type of ecstasy which does not extinguish personality, but unites and thus liberates. Such a sacred music gives us a foretaste of that freedom which does not destroy, but which unites and purifies.

#### **b. Remarks on the current situation**

The musician, of course, will ask: How can that be accomplished? In the last analysis, great works of Church music can only be bestowed or presented, since it is a matter of going beyond oneself, which is something man cannot accomplish without help, whereas according to the well-known mechanisms of stupefaction, frenzy of the senses is producible. But all producing ends where the truly Great begins. It is this limitation which we must first of all recognize and acknowledge. To that extent the beginnings of great sacred music necessarily lie in reverence, in receptivity, and in that humility which is prepared to serve and to minister while partaking of already existing greatness. The I is only the person who at the very least lives radically within the inner framework of this image of man, who can create the music appropriate to it.

The Church has posted two additional signposts. In its inner character, liturgical music must fulfill the demands of the great liturgical texts, of the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanc-tus*, *Agnus Dei*. This by no means implies that it should be strictly limited to expressing the text, as I mentioned earlier. But in the inner direction of these texts, liturgical music finds a guideline for its own statement. And the other signpost is the reference to Gregorian chant and Palestrina. This too does not imply that all Church music must be an imitation of such music. In this respect, there was actually many a restriction in the Church music renewal during the 19th century as well as in the papal documents based upon it. Correctly understood, the reference to Gregorian chant and Palestrina simply means that we find here a standard which provides some orientation. But the results of creatively applying and transforming such orientation cannot of course be determined in advance.

One question remains. Humanly speaking, can we hope that new creative possibilities are still open here? And how is that to come about? The first part of the question is actually easy to answer, because if this concept of man is inexhaustible in contrast to the other one, then it also opens up continually new possibilities for artistic expression in proportion to the degree to which it vivifies the spirit of an age. And therein lies the difficulty for the second part of the question. In our own time, the faith has to a great extent receded as a public formative force. How is the faith supposed to become creative? Has it not been forced back on all fronts into the position of a mere subculture?

By way of reply, we might say that in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we are apparently on the threshold of a new florescence of the faith which could also give rise to new

cultural forms. But even in the Western world, we should not be frightened by the term "subculture." In the cultural crisis we are currently experiencing, new cultural purification and unification can break forth only from islands of spiritual composure. It is already apparent that Christian culture forms itself anew, wherever new departures of faith occur, and that joint experience inspires and opens new paths which we could not previously see. However, I. F. Doppelbauer has quite rightly pointed out that genuine liturgical music often and not by accident bears the traits of later or mature work and presupposes that growth and ripening have taken place earlier. Here it is important that there exist the "antechambers" of popular piety and its music as well as religious music in the broader sense, which should always remain in fruitful exchange with liturgical music. On the one hand, the "antechambers" will be fructified and purified by liturgical music, while on the other hand, they prepare the way for new forms of liturgical music. Out of such freer forms there can develop elements capable of entering the joint action of the Church's universal worship. Here, too, is the realm in which the group can try out its creativity, in the hope that one day something will emerge which can belong to all.

#### **Conclusion: liturgy, music, and the cosmos**

I would like to conclude my remarks with a fine quotation from Mahatma Gandhi which I recently found in a calendar. Gandhi mentions the three "living areas" of the cosmos and notes that each of these involves a specific manner of existing. Fish live in the sea, and they are silent. Animals on earth bellow, bark, and bray. But the birds who inhabit the heavens—they sing. Silence is proper to the sea, braying is proper to the earth, and singing belongs in heaven. But man has a share in all three, for within himself he bears the depths of the sea, the burden of the earth, and the heights of heaven. Hence he possesses all three properties: silence, bellowing, and singing.

Today, I would like to add, we see that for men deprived of transcendence, there remains only braying, because he desires to be earth and nothing more, indeed tries to make the heavens and the ocean deep to be his earth. True liturgy, the liturgy of the communion of saints, gives man once again his completeness. It instructs him once again in silence and in singing by opening for him the depths of the sea and by teaching him to fly—the existence of the angels. By "lifting up the heart," true liturgy allows the buried song to resound in man once again. Indeed, we could now actually say that true liturgy can be recognized by the fact that it liberates from everyday activity and restores to us both the depths and the heights, silence and singing. True liturgy is recognizable because it is cosmic and not limited to a group; true liturgy sings with the angels, and true liturgy is silent with the expectant depths of the universe. And thus true liturgy redeems the earth.