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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Reverence and the Mass

Mark Shea's "Some Thoughts on *Motu Proprio* Mania" (*Vital Signs*, October) misses the point. The Holy Father did not issue this as a counterfoil to the abuses of the Novus Ordo Mass. He issued this decree because he wished to restore that which was summarily taken away: the unbroken tradition (up to Vatican II) of the immemorial Mass—a Mass which traces its roots back to the earliest centuries of the Church and whose organic development, divinely inspired, was codified over 1,600 years ago.

Mr. Shea makes it seem as though it is a matter of tweedledum or tweedledee, as long as the Mass is "devoutly" offered. He could not be more wrong. The Mass is an outward manifestation of the Faith of the Church, and, as such, should be the most sublime liturgy possible. The prayers at the foot of the altar (eliminated in the Novus Ordo), the complete Offertory (also eliminated), the *Confiteor* (truncated in the New Mass), and, most of all, the Canon of the Mass are clear expressions of the penitential and sacrificial nature of the Mass. Everyone who attends a Traditional Mass has no doubt that he is witnessing an unbloody sacrifice, and that he is being turned humbly and reverentially toward God on the altar. There is just as much participation on the part of the laity who follow silently along with the priest, and this sort of participation reflects the Church's opposition to the danger of immanentism, which says that God is within you, so, therefore, your liturgy should be about you. God is also an objective Being. He is in the tabernacle, and Catholics have always reflected this truth by the holy silence, the genuflecting, the facing toward the tabernacle, the incense, the music, and the vestments of the priest.

When Cardinal Bugnini and his Protestant cohorts concocted the Novus Ordo, he was absolutely jubilant at its implementation. Had it not been for Cardinal Ottaviani, Cardinal Castro de Meyer, and a few others, the Roman Canon would not even have been included among the four choices offered. As Pope Paul VI lamented, "The smoke of Satan has entered the Church." At length, Cardinal Bugnini was "rewarded" for his treachery by being removed from the Vatican Curia

and sent to Iran!

Our present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has now affirmed for all the world the right of any priest to offer the immemorial Rite of Mass without persecution, or hindrance, even by bishops. That is why Catholics rejoice, Mr. Shea. Those of us who have suffered, whose families have suffered as a result of the chaos within the Church, and whose children have been subjected to the false theology stemming from Vatican II and its phony liturgy (*lex orandi, lex credendi*) are prayerfully hopeful that, in the future, the Mass in its entirety and in all its beauty will be completely restored. And it is not only lay people but priests who have suffered. We all know of cases in which priests who wanted to say the Mass were vilified, persecuted, shunned, and even removed from parishes or teaching positions. If the New Mass is so good, why this irrational hatred of the Tridentine Mass?

Are there Traditional Catholics who strain at gnats and swallow camels? Yes! I wonder if this stems from the fact that many families have had to homeschool their children, making themselves the final arbiter of all things orthodox and, ultimately, becoming little popes and theologians; not having a tradition of respect for priests, they are rude and judgmental at times. This does not apply to all Traditionalists, but there are significant numbers who go to extremes. There are others who, after reading extremist authors, become tainted with a bit of Jansenism—everything is a sin, the candle must be in this exact place, and, if you have a glass of wine, you are surely going to Hell!

If you are happy in your "reverent" Novus Ordo, then so be it; but don't minimize or trivialize the importance of the decree of our present Pope and what it will mean for the good of the Catholic Church.

—Peg Fallon
Rockford, IL

Mr. Shea Replies:

The quotation marks around the word "reverent" in that last paragraph unintentionally make exactly the point that I was trying to make. The tendency of devotees of the Tridentine Rite to suggest or say that those attending the Paul VI Rite

are second-class Catholics is, combined with their strange refusal to take yes for an answer, unlikely to win more hearts and minds for the cause of Traditionalist expressions of the Faith. I think that's sad since, as Mrs. Fallon points out, the riches of the Faith are a glory to be celebrated. I hope devotees of the Tridentine Rite can finally find some peace with the promulgation of the *motu proprio*. At the same time, I shall continue to operate on the basic principle "If it's good enough for the Church, it's good enough for me" and joyfully attend the Paul VI Rite at my solidly orthodox Dominican parish. I wish Mrs. Fallon well and hope she likewise meets our Lord in joy and gratitude in the Sacrifice of the Mass at her parish.

by and through the hypostatic union, Christ's soul possessed immediate knowledge of God from the very moment of His conception; and that, from this, He could not possess the theological virtues of faith and hope. In his book *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Dr. Ludwig Ott explains, "Christ as the Originator and Completer of Faith (Hebr. 12, 2), could not Himself walk in the darkness of faith. The perfection of the self-consciousness of the man Jesus can be explained only on the understanding that He possessed immediate knowledge of the Godhead with which He was united." In other words, our Lord Jesus Christ *knew* He was the Son of God.

—Jerry C. Meng
Imlay City, MI

On Faith's Darkness

As much as I appreciated Tom Piatak's upbraiding of the pathetic Christopher Hitchens ("Hitchens' Hubris," *Opinion*, October), I take issue with his statement, "Jesus believed He was the Son of God . . ." Such a statement is ambiguous and does a disservice to Christ and to Christianity.

The Catholic Church teaches that,

Mr. Piatak Replies:

I am grateful to Mr. Meng for his lesson in abstruse theology. But the portion of my review that he objects to must not be quite the "disservice to Christ and Christianity" that he now claims it is, or else he would have pointed that "disservice" out in one of the four comments he posted on the earlier version of the review that

appeared on *Taki's Top Drawer*. And I think he misses the larger point. Christopher Hitchens and the other "new atheists" are engaged in a ferocious assault on the heart of our civilization, and this assault is generally being applauded by the establishment left and justified by the establishment right. Unfortunately, as Steve Sailer noted, my review was "one of the few impolite reviews Hitchens . . . received." Indeed, Hitchens' book was a best-seller, and it has been nominated for a National Book Award.

This prevailing response to the "new atheists" is distressing, because the West would not exist without Christianity and will not survive without it. In the face of the hateful assault by the "new atheists," Christians and others who appreciate the legacy of Christianity in the West should not be obsessed over the finer points of theology or consumed in doctrinal disputes with one another. We should instead focus on defending the Christian heritage of the West from an enemy who hates all of us who treasure that heritage, whether Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, or Christophilic nonbeliever. As Ben Franklin observed in the face of a different threat, if we do not hang together, we will assuredly hang separately.

CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN HEADMASTER

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Big Brother *Versus* Jihad

The very idea of a War on Terror is preposterous. (Everyone remembers the War on Aviation after Pearl Harbor, right?) It is so preposterous that our elites have had a difficult time figuring out how to name the enemy, which is illustrated perfectly by the pathologically p.c. final line of a short article from the *New York Post* on September 19, 2007, about a teen who put fliers in his teachers' mailboxes asking them to convert to Islam, and then made threats when he was caught: "The student's religion was not immediately known."

Uh huh.

This gutless tendency to bow before his own relativist dictates leads many a watery secularist to submit every time Islam demands submission. Indeed, some watery secularists are so ready to submit that they do so even when nobody tells them to. For example, a Chicago school district recently panicked when one Muslim parent asked for a couple of Ramadan decorations in addition to Christmas decor. The district issued a draconian decree banning all references to Christmas and Halloween. The poor Muslim parent was aghast, intending no such "make a desert and call it peace" response from the district. Eventually, a bunch of other Muslims and Christians in the school district calmed the nerves of the jittery school officials and got them to restore their traditional holiday observances, with a couple Ramadan references tossed in.

So spineless is much of our culture in the face of *jihad* that it is easy to imagine this as the only response we can muster. As a recent story in the September 19, 2007, *Washington Post* makes clear, however, secularism can take other, more disturbing, forms. Here's the scoop in a piece with the rather creepy title "U.S. Working to Reshape Iraqi Detainees":

The U.S. military has introduced "religious enlightenment" and other education programs for Iraqi detainees, some of whom are as young as 11, Marine Maj. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, the commander of U.S. detention facilities in Iraq, said yesterday.

Stone said such efforts, aimed

mainly at Iraqis who have been held for more than a year, are intended to "bend them back to our will" and are part of waging war in what he called "the battlefield of the mind." Most of the younger detainees are held in a facility that the military calls the "House of Wisdom."

I remember when conservatives had a field day with the Clintonian attempts to transform the military into an extension of the Nanny State and an intercontinental Meals on Wheels program. Back then, conservatives rightly understood that social engineering is not the military's job.

Now we live in the Age of Dubyanism, when the military is tasked by the administration with the job of detaining 25,000 people (including hundreds of kids down to the age of 11) on who knows what charges for who knows how long in a positively Orwellian-sounding "House of Wisdom" devoted to—and I can hardly believe I am writing this—acting as the Magisterium for Islam. Their mission: Bend detainees to our will until some faceless technician decides their religious beliefs are up to the high standards of the culture that gave us Madonna, the Folsom Street Leather and Bondage Fair, and *Roe v. Wade*. At no point in the entire article are we given a clue how these 25,000 people, including kids, wound up in Islamic reeducation camps for an indefinite period. At no point do we hear how the House of Wisdom is viewed by the population of the country whose family members are detained there. We are simply to trust that they belong there and that Caesar knows what he's doing. Indeed, according to General Stone, the head of this allegedly sovereign state wishes that everybody in the whole country could reap the benefits of an American theological reeducation camp:

He quoted Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi as saying that "America could win the war if they just applied the exact process that you're putting in detention to the rest of the entire nation," in

Stone's words.

What could be creepy about that? What Christian in this country would not gladly submit to having his kids put in a reeducation camp if the police thought their views to be out of sync with state guidelines? And what is the military for, if not policing theology?

Now, terrorists must be defeated in the war of hearts and minds as well as on the battlefield and by our law-enforcement experts. But the article gives us no clue where these 25,000 people come from. Who did the arresting? Why? Nobody knows. Nor does the language used in the article provide assurance that these people are POWs: "Stone said that youths grow up to become insurgents by starting out as messengers, guards and even planters of makeshift bombs."

These kids are there not because of what they have done, but because of what they might do.

The Bush administration's newly minted Department of Pre-Crime assures us of Peace and Safety:

Stone said he wants to identify "irreconcilables"—those detainees whose views cannot be moderated—and "put them away" in permanent detention facilities. Psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and interrogators help distinguish the extremists from others, he said.

And we can always be sure that, when Caesar declares you an "irreconcilable," he knows what he is talking about, because he says he does. This saves a great deal of time and energy, because you don't even have to have fired a shot when they lock you up and throw away the key. You can be as young as 11 and be "detained"—maybe forever—on the word of a psych evaluator and without all that costly fuss of a trial or even a hostile act.

I miss wars when the military was tasked with either killing or capturing the enemy. The attempt to turn the military into a weird combination of Islamic Magisterium and Reeducation Camp is pernicious and dangerous. 