

# Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*: Is It Faithful to the Council or in Reaction to It? <sup>1</sup>

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“Cardinal Ratzinger Wants A Reform Of The Liturgy!” Under this title, *La Croix*, in its December 2001 issue, published an interview with the Cardinal, together with an account of his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.<sup>2</sup>

This book does not speak of a new “reform of the liturgy” or of a “reform of the reform,” but all its references to Vatican II (there are ten or so) concern the liturgy. Nevertheless, none of them mentions important aspects of the Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, with the single exception of “active participation,” which the Cardinal considers dangerous because it seems to involve “a risk that the Church may celebrate itself,” while on the other hand he says nothing regarding the importance that the Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* attaches to the Eucharist. In no case, when the book mentions liturgy and the Council, does it criticize liturgical practices subsequent to the Council, but rather, as a rule, pleads in favor of private Mass, and it shows no concern for how active participation deepens the piety of the faithful, nor for spiritual values such as that of the role (expressly mentioned in the council documents) of the faithful in the eucharistic sacrifice, or of communion under both species.

This work, which claims to be a book of spiritual theology, does not refer to article 48 of the Constitution on the Liturgy, which is the initial article for the program of reform of the missal: “The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent specta-

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1 This article originally appeared in *La Maison-Dieu* 229.1 (2002) 171-78; *Antiphon* gratefully acknowledges the gracious permission of the original publisher, Editions Cerf, and of Libreria Editrice Vaticana, to make available in an English translation this scholarly exchange.

2 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *L'Esprit de la liturgie* (Geneva: Ad Solem, 2001), trans. John Saward, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000).

tors; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers, they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's Word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him (*Immaculatam hostiam non tantum per sacerdotis manus, sed etiam una cum ipso offerentes*), they should learn also to offer themselves.<sup>3</sup> To see in this article of the Constitution on the Liturgy a risk of "self-celebration" would assuredly be an error in need of reform!

This being the case:

1. It goes without saying that the Cardinal's book is of a *private and not magisterial* character. I will not here get into whether such a private document may not be accorded a quasi-magisterial character or whether its possible deficiencies could do harm in this connection.

2. The present remarks are in no way an attack on the person of the author, assuredly one of the great theologians of our day.

3. The book has met with serious criticisms in both Germany<sup>4</sup> and Italy.<sup>5</sup>

Independently of criticisms that must be made of Cardinal Ratzinger's book, one must without any doubt agree with him in emphasizing the absolute necessity of faithfulness to the rules and doctrines concerning the liturgy and the sacraments (in particular the Real Presence and the eucharistic sacrifice).

As far as faithfulness to liturgical rules is concerned, one inadvertent mistake must be corrected involving the reciting aloud of the eucharistic prayer: this practice was allowed between 1967<sup>6</sup> and 1970, and has been obligatory since 1970.<sup>7</sup>

3 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* 48, in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Marianne Lorraine Trouvé (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1999) 62.

4 For example, see Klaus Richter's review in *Theologische Revue* 96 (2000) 324-26.

5 Rinaldo Falsini, "Lo spirito della liturgia da R. Guardini a J. Ratzinger," *Rivista di pastorale liturgica* 5 (2001) 3-7. The defects of the French translation of Ratzinger's book are attributable to the translators, with the exception, it seems, of the notion of a "new liturgical movement," which the Cardinal made use of again at the traditionalist conference of Fontgombault (summer 2001).

6 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Tres abhinc annos* (4 May 1967) 10.

7 *Présentation générale du Missel*, 12; *Institutio generalis ex editione typica tertia*, 32.

More broadly, one must recognize that, in the domain under consideration, what is said about papal authority in liturgical matters – for the Latin Church and beyond – is insufficient, and that the theologian Ratzinger should have taken greater care to avoid the appearance of egocentrism with regard to the rules of the Church. Would it not have been appropriate to mention the reservation of liturgical law (*droit*) to the Pope by the Council of Trent, and the reaffirmation of this role both by the Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican II and by current canon law?

Moreover, it is hard to see why not a whisper is breathed about the way Paul VI constantly followed the work of the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy (*Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra liturgia*), as was witnessed not only by Msgr A. Bugnini, secretary for the work of liturgical reform,<sup>8</sup> but also by its principal architects. This attention to the ongoing work of the Consilium was so detailed that it does seem to merit the qualification – well known to Cardinal Ratzinger, as well as to Roman canonists past and present – of papal approval *in forma specifica*, that is, applying even to the details.

The chapter on celebration *ad orientem*, which has been particularly remarked on by readers, is unsatisfactory both historically and with regard to the issue of active participation. On the historical side, it relies explicitly on Louis Bouyer's *Liturgy and Architecture* (1991),<sup>9</sup> in which this great voice of the liturgical movement, who is, however, not necessarily a great historian, thought he could apply to the entire West the eucharistic "orientation" characteristic of the liturgies in the regions east of the Mediterranean (these liturgies, in praying towards the East—awaiting the return of Christ – distinguished themselves from the prayer of the Jews, who turned toward Jerusalem), whereas in the churches of the western Mediterranean celebration with the priest facing the people is clearly attested, for example in Rome and Africa. Neither Bouyer nor Ratzinger have taken into account the fundamental work of the Bonn liturgist Otto Nußbaum, on the place of the celebrant at the altar, published in 1965<sup>10</sup> (although Ratzinger

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8 Annibale Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica, 1948-1975* (Rome: CLV-Edizioni liturgiche, 1983); English trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-1975* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1990).

9 Louis Bouyer, *Architecture et liturgie* (Paris: Cerf, 1991, reprint of 1967 edition); English trans. *Liturgy and Architecture* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003).

10 Otto Nußbaum, *Der Standort des Liturgen am christlichen Altar vor dem Jahre 1000: Eine archaologische und liturgiegeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1965).

began his academic career as a teacher at Bonn). Nußbaum's work subsequently has been refined and completed for North Africa by the French scholars Yvette Duval and Noël Duval, the latter having written on the state of the question in *La Maison-Dieu*.<sup>11</sup> For Rome<sup>12</sup> and Italy, it is clear, contrary to what Bouyer wrote and Ratzinger repeated after him, that celebration *versus orientem* was not introduced into the papal liturgy until Avignon, and that St Charles Borromeo, the archbishop of Milan and the nephew of Pope Pius IV, was careful to respect the tradition of the Roman basilicas. It is a mistake of certain historians of our day to see celebration facing the people as the result of the Protestant denial of the eucharistic sacrifice.

This particular case of celebration towards the East is typical of the difficulty experienced by a number of contemporary theologians, even among the greatest, in maintaining both the theological competence and attentiveness to history, whereas, contrariwise, a synthesis of the two characterized the meaning of Tradition in the conciliar documents of Vatican II and the conciliar liturgical reform.

With regard to celebration facing the people in the liturgical reform of Vatican II, this was the immediate and spontaneous consequence of the dialogue Mass in the vernacular, recognized and authorized by Roman authority less than a year after the Constitution on the Liturgy and while the Council was still going on.<sup>13</sup> This observation raises the question for historians whether, in Germanic countries, ignorance of Latin had a role in both the abandonment of dialogues and the development of celebration *versus orientem*.

As the Cardinal himself says, "the subject of his book is not the celebration of the liturgy, but its spirit."<sup>14</sup> Before inquiring into the way in which he conceives and practices this distinction, it is appropriate to point out a number of matters on which no disagreement appears, namely the place given in the liturgy in our day to the vernacular language; conjointly, if I may say so, the renewal of biblical readings in the Mass; and lastly the importance of the Fathers

11 Noël Duval, "L'espace liturgique dans les églises paléochrétiennes," *La Maison-Dieu* 193.1 (1993) 24-25; see also, *Revue des études augustinienne*s 42 (1996) 118.

12 With regard to the Roman basilicas, one must now take into account the important work of Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et décor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale: Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994) 95: this author believes that celebration *versus populum* is "the classic Roman disposition."

13 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Inter oecumenici* (7 March 1965) 91.

14 Ratzinger, *L'Esprit de la liturgie*, 163.

of the Church, whose renewed place in the Liturgy of the Hours I imagine he appreciates. This being the case, the spiritual nearness of Ratzinger's book to that of Romano Guardini, published in 1918, poses an essential and delicate question: do not Guardini, and the active participation encouraged by St. Pius X, lead to a spirituality integrated with liturgical life? And, nowadays, does not an attempt to separate anew spirituality and celebration amount to a reluctance to enter spiritually into the liturgy of Vatican II?

*The Spirit of the Liturgy* obliges one to wonder whether the Cardinal is in harmony with the Council's Constitution on the Liturgy. Spiritually, the author antedates Vatican II. He is faithful to the piety of his Christian childhood and of his priestly ordination,<sup>15</sup> but insufficiently attentive, on the one hand, to the liturgical rules currently in place (should he not, when he writes on this subject, give an example of attentiveness and fidelity?) and, on the other hand, to the liturgical values affirmed by the Council.

His piety is marked, at the same time, by an attachment to the priestly prayers said in a low voice, that the faithful *of his country* began to follow in a missal around the beginning of the twentieth century (if they did not recite the rosary during the Mass). He seems unaware of the distinction, which is constant in the Tradition, between the private prayers of the priest and the prayers said by him as celebrant<sup>16</sup>—and he situates himself *de facto* in the untraditional line,

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15 See the precise autobiographical indications of his book *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), notably the difficulty he had as a seminarian in accepting history as a way of knowing the Tradition. For the year 1948 he writes, on p. 67: "I had kept up till then certain reservations about the liturgical movement; in many of its representatives I felt, on the one hand, a unilateral rationalism and an historicism based too much on form and historical authenticity and, on the other hand, a strange coldness towards the feelings which allow us to experience the Church as the country of our souls."

16 *Institutio generalis Missalis Romani* (2002) 33: "Sacerdos . . . tamquam praeses, nomine Ecclesiae et congregatae communitatis preces effundit, aliquando autem nomine dumtaxat suo . . . Huiusmodi preces, quae ante lectionem Evangelii, in praeparatione donorum, necnon ante et post sacerdotis communionem proponuntur, secreto dicuntur," trans. International Committee on English in the Liturgy [ICEL], *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Third Typical Edition)* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002) p. 22: "The priest, in fact, as the one who presides, prays in the name of the Church and of the assembled community; but at times he prays only in his own name, asking that he may exercise his ministry with greater attention and devotion. Prayers of this kind, which occur before the reading of the Gospel, at the Preparation of the Gifts, and also before and after the Communion of the priest, are said quietly."

begun at Trent, of the private Mass as the fundamental form of the Mass, which subsequently allowed music to cover over the canon of the Mass spoken in a low voice, a practice criticized<sup>17</sup> by the 1970 missal and that seems to be a bit missed by the Cardinal and by the Church musicians of his country. In any case, the spirit of the liturgy according to Vatican II insists on the fundamental liturgical form of the Eucharist, which is the Sunday Eucharist with the active participation of the entire community.

I have already raised the issue of active participation, a concept enunciated for the first time by St. Pius X. What we should be doing is multiplying the aspects of the eucharistic celebration that the Constitution calls on us to emphasize by paying the closest possible attention to both the *lex orandi* and the Tradition, whereas the Professor Ratzinger of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* seems almost a little frightened by these two things.<sup>18</sup>

In the final analysis, it is appropriate to admit that Cardinal Ratzinger, though a great theologian, is not on the same level of greatness when it comes to knowledge of the liturgy and the liturgical tradition, whereas precisely the latter quality characterized the works and the decisions of the conciliar liturgical reform. At the very beginning of the Council, the debate on the liturgy was inaugurated by a great speech of Cardinal Frings of Cologne, who was almost blind at that time, the text of which, read in the Basilica of St. Peter by the young Doctor Ratzinger, said that the Constitution on the Liturgy was the happy accomplishment of what Pius XII had wanted to do in order to reform the liturgy.

May I add, aware as I am that I am a few years older than Doctor, now Cardinal, Ratzinger, that, in our twilight years, we are in

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17 *Institutio generalis*, 32: "Natura partium 'praesidentialium' exigit ut clara et elata voce proferantur et ab omnibus cum attentione auscultentur. Proinde dum sacerdos eas profert aliae orationes vel cantus non habeantur, atque organum vel alia instrumenta musica sileant," trans. ICEL, p. 22: "The nature of the 'presidential' texts demands that they be spoken in a loud and clear voice and that everyone listen with attention. Thus, while the priest is speaking these texts, there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent."

18 There is here, as it were, a fear of *ressourcement* in the Tradition, whereas according to the spirit of John XXIII and the Council, *ressourcement* is a rejuvenation that makes it possible for the Church to confront new times (see the preamble to the Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 4, and, even more, the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life *Perfectae caritatis*, 2, which, as Fr Yves Congar, that great theologian, remarked to me, must be considered one of the keys to the entire Council).

danger of retracing the intellectual path we traveled at the outset of our maturity? Some great theologians of Vatican II have not escaped this danger. In any case, we must all, liturgists or theologians, ask ourselves whether the liturgical spirituality of each of us is not still in need of reforming, in order to be truly faithful to the Second Vatican Council. Of this fidelity, we have a great example, with an exhortation adequate for an active participation of true spiritual profundity, in the apostolic letter *Dies Domini*,<sup>19</sup> published one year before Dr Ratzinger's book.

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19 John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (31 May 1998).

*Following the publication of the article by Father Pierre-Marie Gy in the preceding issue of this review, we received the following reply from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. The editorial board of La Maison-Dieu, as well as Father Gy, are very grateful to Cardinal Ratzinger for his article, of which one cannot but admire the French composition. This response opens up a very useful discussion, one that is respectful of both magisterial pronouncements and the freedom of theological and liturgical discussions. In keeping with this line of conduct, the review will contribute to the furthering of liturgical research by means of feature articles.*<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 15 April 2002

To the Editors of *La Maison-Dieu*

Sirs,

The Reverend Father Pierre-Marie Gy, O.P., has published in your review (no. 229.1, 2002, pp. 171-178) his critique of my book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, and he had the kindness to send me a copy.

In the interest of a fruitful dialogue on the questions involved, I ask you kindly to publish my response to the Rev. Fr Gy's critique in the same review as well, as soon as possible.

With my best wishes for the Easter season,

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

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<sup>1</sup> The following article and this introduction to it originally appeared in *La Maison-Dieu* 230.2 (2002) 113-20; it is translated and printed here by the kind permission of the publisher, Éditions Cerf, and of Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

# *The Spirit of the Liturgy* or Fidelity to the Council: Response to Father Gy

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Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

The critical remarks of Father Gy concerning my book on the spirit of the liturgy require a few clarifications, in the spirit of a dialogue that is open and guided only by interest in the great cause of the liturgy.

1. It is quite simply false to say, as Father Gy does, on page 171, that I see in *participatio actuosa* “a risk that the Church may celebrate itself.” The entire second chapter of the fourth part of my book is dedicated to “active participation” as an essential component of a proper celebration of the liturgy. What is needed in the first place is to set aside a false and superficial interpretation of this fundamental notion: active participation cannot consist in assigning exterior activities in the liturgy to all the faithful gathered for the eucharistic celebration. In the more populous parishes, that is simply impossible. Active participation means something greater. It demands first of all real familiarity with the texts and the forms of the liturgy, hence a liturgical formation, without which the purely exterior activities remain empty and meaningless. Liturgical formation is thus the fundamental presupposition and even already an essential form of active participation in the celebration of the Mass. But this participation, which makes possible a close union of the whole being, of thought and action, to the liturgy, must also be expressed corporally, and the succeeding paragraphs of the chapter give a whole series of indications along these lines that are developed on the basis of the great liturgical traditions of the East and the West and are carried on up to the present. How one could have mistakenly read a rejection of the dispositions of the Council in my criticism of superficial interpretations of active participation and in my attempt to confer on it a deeper and ultimately more concrete modality, remains a mystery to me.

2. I am truly delighted that Father Gy insists on fidelity to liturgical rules and reminds us that the right to change the liturgy is, at least in the Latin Church, reserved to the Pope. Alas, such is not the attitude of a considerable portion of the liturgists who continually bombard us, on the contrary, with newly proposed texts and forms and who have thereby contributed not a little, in divers places, to a certain anarchy in the liturgical domain. This anarchy constitutes the

principal obstacle to a general and positive reception of the missal of Paul VI. The liturgy is often so different from one parish to another, that the common missal is scarcely visible anymore. It would be easy to provide a good number of examples in this regard. Father Gy may be sure of it: I am altogether on his side in his effort to be faithful to the liturgical forms transmitted to us in the liturgical books.

3. It is true that Paul VI approved the missal published in 1970 *in forma specifica*, and I hold to it with an inner conviction, even if I regret certain deficiencies and do not consider each of the decisions made the best possible. I should prefer, on this point, not to get into the question how far, in the preparation of the missal, the wishes of the pope were truly sought out and maintained in detail. That is a matter for future historians to resolve, once all the material is available. Nicola Giampietro's book on Cardinal Fernando Antonelli and the developments of the liturgical reform from 1948 to 1970 presents views that raise questions and provide considerable material for discussion about the liturgical reform before and after the Second Vatican Council.<sup>1</sup> Why did the Pope withdraw his confidence from Bugnini in the end and remove him from the work on the liturgy? That must certainly still remain an open question. Questions like it naturally change nothing in the obligatory character of the missal, and I could wish, as I have said, that all liturgists should bring to this matter the seriousness it deserves. But that the impression should arise as a consequence that nothing in this missal must ever be changed, as if any reflection on possible later reforms were necessarily an attack on the Council – such an idea I can only call absurd. It is true, we need to regain stability in the liturgy, but we also need to reflect on the means for correcting the deficiencies of the reform, deficiencies that are more obvious today. Why we should not call such a possible future investigation and development a “reform of the reform” is something I have still not figured out. For that matter, a cardinal of the Roman curia, since deceased, an eminent man, completely involved in the conciliar reform, told me personally that one day he had asked Bugnini about the longevity that he attributed to “his missal.” Bugnini answered that he estimated it at approximately twenty or thirty years. On this point, I am altogether decidedly in disagreement with Bugnini: a missal is not a book good for only 20 or 30 years; rather, it is situated in the great continuity of the history of the liturgy, in which there is always growth and purification, but not ruptures. To

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola Giampietro, *Il Cardinale Ferdinando Antonelli e gli sviluppi della riforma liturgica dal 1948-1970* (Rome: Centro Studi S. Anselmo, 1998).

that extent, I am much more in favor of the stability of this missal than was he with whose name it is perhaps too much associated.

4. Totally inconceivable to me is what Father Gy writes on the question of the direction *ad orientem* of the liturgy. Of course I know Nußbaum's book, which was presented at Bonn, in the Department of Theology, as a doctoral thesis, when I myself was a professor there. This is not the place to engage in a polemic and to examine once again the details of the development of the scholarly debate on this matter.<sup>2</sup> But that one should be able to say that the question of "orientation" is valid only for the eastern half of the Mediterranean basin I find utterly incomprehensible. Here, one can only invite the author to take a trip some day to the early and medieval Christian churches of the West, to see that the principle of orientation was respected practically everywhere that specific local circumstances did not pose an obstacle to it. Regarding the particular situation of the Roman basilicas, I made at least a brief allusion to this in my book. There can, for that matter, be no doubt that the liturgical call *conversi ad Dominum*, after the sermon, was an invitation to the faithful to turn to the East, in those cases where the disposition of the building as such did not already provide for it.

I should like to emphasize moreover that, on this whole question, I have taken a very differentiated position, which I beg leave to summarize here in three points:

a) I said that it was just and necessary to create a space proper for the liturgy of the Word (around the ambo) and to accomplish it in the form of a proclamation and a response, as a dialogue between those who announce this Word (the lector, the cantor, the deacon, the priest) and those who hear it.

b) I observed moreover that in churches (especially cathedrals and monasteries) in which the main altar is too far from the people, it was good to build altars that could be placed closer to the people.

c) I added, lastly, that the great tradition of "orientation," the act of turning toward the "Orient" as the image of the return of Christ, in

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2 For that I refer to the article of Albert Gerhards, professor of liturgy at Bonn, "*Versus orientem – versus populum: Zum gegenwärtigen Diskussionsstand einer alten Streitfrage*," *Theologische Revue* 98 (2002) 15-22. Gerhards there presents all the material on both the historical question and the current debate, and shows clearly the universal value of prayer *versus orientem*, repeating as well the later corrections that Nußbaum had brought to his original thesis. He also proposes other aspects to be observed for the construction of churches and for liturgical celebration, arriving at, as far as practical questions are concerned, a balanced solution, one that I can accept completely.

no way requires that all altars must once again be reversed and that the priest's place be changed as a consequence. On the contrary, one can satisfy the internal requirements of this apostolic tradition without undertaking great external transformations, by arranging things such that the Cross (the eschatological Cross, as in early churches, the Cross of glory as in Romanesque churches, the Cross of suffering, with its emphasis on the resurrection) should be the common focal point of the priest and the faithful – such that it is placed in the middle of the altar, and not to the side. The Christ who was crucified and who returns today is the true *oriens*, the direction of history. He personifies the synthesis of the cosmic and historical orientation of the liturgy, so central in the tradition of prayer towards the “Orient.” For all together to be able to fix their gaze on him who is the Creator and causes us to enter into the liturgy of the cosmos, but who also shows us the road of history, this is what would also allow us to recover in the liturgy, in a very visible way, the profound unity of priest and faithful within their common priesthood. None of my critics has yet told me why this very simple idea – the Cross, the Crucified, and the Christ who returns, as the focal point of the liturgy – is false. Instead, they try to bog me down in archeological debates, the outcome of which is in the end not very important for the liturgical question as such.

5. To those who observe that I am not a liturgist and do not have adequate training in the subject, I can only answer that none of the great fathers of the liturgical renewal – Guardini, Jungmann, Bouyer, Vagaggini (to mention only a few) – was originally a liturgist, and this was so quite simply because this discipline did not yet exist at the time. Falsini's criticism, mentioned by Gy, is in my opinion superficial and without any value. Klaus Richter's criticisms do not touch on strictly liturgical questions; what he above all denounced, on the basis of his own basic orientation, is the emphasis, overly strong in his opinion, of my book on “adoration.” In doing this, he has not realized that the notion of adoration as I present it is not limited to prayer as such, but embraces all of life. Father Gy strangely neglected to mention by far the most detailed review of my book, that of Albert Gerhards, professor of liturgy at Bonn.<sup>3</sup> Gerhards is to date, as far as I can see, the only reviewer who took the trouble to bring the content of the book itself to the knowledge of the reader and thus make it possible to discuss its real intentions. In various ways, the other reviewers are content with reacting to one or another page that bothers them. In general, it is the question of orientation and that of active participation that have caused problems, and I really have to say that my position in

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3 In *Herder-Korrespondenz* 54 (2000) 263-68.

this regard is most often presented in a distorted way. I had tried in my book to illuminate the dimensions of the liturgy with a fourfold perspective: the cosmic dimension of the liturgy, the place of the Christian liturgy in the history of religions and the whole basic problematic of human existence that appears through it; the relationship between Israel and the Church in the historical path of the liturgy; the different ways of the Christian liturgy itself and the relation between cult and culture. But all that apparently does not interest most of the liturgists who have so far reviewed the book and whose reviews have mostly bypassed its content. Why, really? That is the question that I for my part would now like to address to my reviewers.

To conclude, one more little remark. Father Gy's declaration that the meeting at Fontgombault was a gathering of traditionalists irritated me. In reality, the invitees were only well-known persons who clearly accept the Second Vatican Council – in continuity with the entire history of the Church – and who represent at the same time quite diverse orientations. The question being raised, which really is one of pastoral significance, was how liturgical reconciliation, and hence a fuller acceptance of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, could be achieved. I am reluctant to label as traditionalists all those who are not in agreement with the current mainstream of liturgists, and to raise to the level of an obligation a uniformity of thought that cannot be reconciled with the breadth of the conciliar reform. Such partisan labels are contrary to the dialogue that we must all strive to conduct today, and to which the present attempt at dialogue with Father Gy hopes to make a modest contribution.

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