

# Theological Problems of Church Music

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The critical situation of church music today is part of the general crisis of the Church which has developed since Vatican 2. We do not primarily intend to discuss the artistic crisis which is affecting church music along with all other forms of art at present. We shall rather discuss the crisis conditioned by the situation of theology, in other words the properly ecclesiastical and theological crisis of church music, which actually seems to have fallen between two widely differing theological millstones which apparently agree only in grinding *musica sacra* down to dust.

On the one side stands the puritanic functionalism of a liturgy conceived in purely pragmatic terms: the liturgical event, it is claimed, should be made non-cultic and reduced to its very simple point of origin, a community meal. Everyone knows that the Second Vatican Council described the position of the individual in the liturgy with the phrase “*participatio actuosa*,” active participation. This concept, in itself quite meaningful, has not seldom led to the opinion that the ideal goal of liturgical renewal is the uniform activity of all present in the liturgy. Accordingly, we have witnessed the reduction of specially prominent tasks and in particular, festive church music was widely considered a sign of an inappropriate “cultic” view which appeared incompatible with general activity. On this view, church music can continue to exist only in the form of congregational singing, which in turn is not to be judged in terms of its artistic value but only on the basis of its functionality, i. e. its “community-building” and activating function. The lengths to which the renunciation of musical quality can go, are illustrated by the statement of a leading German liturgist. After the Council, he declared, none of the traditional church music could satisfy the liturgical norms now in force: everything would have to be created anew. Plainly, in this view liturgical music is not regarded as art, but as a mere commodity.

This is the point at which the first millstone (which we have termed puritanical functionalism) makes contact with the second millstone, which I should like to call the functionalism of accomodation. It has been repeatedly characterised as curious and indeed contradictory, that parallel to the disbanding of church choirs and orchestras, new ensembles often appeared, to perform “religious” jazz. In terms of the impression created, these ensembles were surely no less elitist than the old church choirs. They were not subjected to the same criticism as the choirs, however. Wherever such a transfer was enforced with passionate exclusivity, there was discernible an attitude in which all church music, indeed all previous Western culture was not regarded as belonging to the present and hence could not be a part of contemporary practise, such as liturgy can and must be. Instead, traditional culture is pushed aside into a more or less museum-like state of preservation in the concert hall. This attitude resembles the first one in its exclusively functional way of thinking, which comes into play here not merely as a theory of the liturgy but rather with an importance which is quite basic: the contemporary world is conceived so completely in terms of the functional that the link with history is broken, and history itself can only retain any value at all as a function, namely as an object in a museum. Thus history is completely relegated to the past, and loses all her vital power to shape life today.

These reflections make it clear that in the crisis described above, we are facing a difficult and deeply rooted phenomenon which cannot be dealt with through mere polemics. We need to re-

flect upon the roots of this attitude, in order to be able to overcome it from within. A few of the complicated roots from which contemporary problems have sprung, have become clear from what has already been said. And when we attempt to arrange and complete our insights, we find that we may well say that the problem has four levels.

## I. The panorama of problems

1. The first and relatively harmless, superficial level is located in the ancient dilemma of the pragmatism of parish priests versus art's claim to absolute dominion. This dilemma has always existed, and will always do so. Whether we think of St. Jerome's outbursts against the vanity of artists, or recall the archbishop of Salzburg who prescribed to MOZART the greatest permissible length of his liturgical compositions – the friction between two different claims is always identical. Here, one must try to see where each side is right in order to find the common ground upon which they can meet. Liturgy is something done in common, hence intelligibility and the ability to be executed or performed are essential requirements. In a certain sense, art is elitist activity, and thus resists subjection to a set of requirements which are not her own. To that extent there is a conflict rooted in the very nature of things, but the conflict can be fruitful because the matter itself points toward an inner unity which of course must always be sought anew, namely the fact that liturgy is not merely something done in common, but is by her very nature "feast." When exaggerated meal-theories fail to take this fundamental character of the liturgy into account, they no longer explain the essence of the liturgy but rather conceal it. As feast, though, the liturgy thrives on splendour and thus calls for the transfiguring power of art. Indeed, the liturgy is actually the birthplace of art, and it was from the liturgy that art acquired its anthropological necessity and its religious legitimation. Conversely, we can thus say that where a genuine feast no longer exists, art becomes a mere museum piece, and this precisely in its most splendid manifestations. In such a case, art lives on the memory that there once existed such a thing as the feast; its tense becomes the past. But a feast does not exist without liturgy, without a warrant to celebrate which surpasses man, and thus art, too, is referred to liturgy. For its part, art exists on the strength of her willing service to the solemn liturgy, in which she is continually re-born.<sup>1</sup>

2. As we have noted, the tension between the parish priest's pragmatism and the artist's absolutism is a perpetual problem on the practical level, though not a problem at the level of basic principles, at least not necessarily so. Much more profound is the question which we previously hinted at in passing, with the word "puritanism". In more precise terms of theology and the history of ideas one would really have to speak of the problem of iconoclasm and iconoclastic riots. In his book "Where is the Vatican heading?" REINHARD RAFFALT impressively describes the manner in which iconoclastic currents burst forth in the postconciliar Church and tries to find a Biblical denominator for this phenomenon. The Church as it used to be, the "old Church" (as he puts it) defined its feeling of existential presence in terms of, say, the parables of the labourers in the vineyard or the lilies of the field; today, casting the sellers out of the temple or the eye of the needle which prevents the rich from entering the Kingdom of Heaven, have moved into the foreground.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, church history shows that iconoclastic riots broke out repeat-

1 On this see J. PIEPER, *Zustimmung zur Welt. Eine Theorie des Festes* (München 1963<sup>2</sup>) as well as W. DÜRIG, *Das christliche Fest und seine Feier* (St. Ottilien 1974) with further literature in each case.

2 R. RAFFALT, *Wohin steuert der Vatikan?* (München 1973) esp. 93 ff.; *Idem*, *Musica eterna* (München 1978) 221/31.

edly. In the seventh and eight centuries the Church of Byzantium was excited by this problem in a manner which touched the very nerves of her existence, and thus the Orthodox Church celebrates the Second Council of Nicaea as the "Feast of Orthodoxy," because this Council sealed the victory of images and thus in general the victory of art within the faith. In other words, the Orthodox Church sees in this question the salient point of the Church's existence in general, for on this point the basic decision about our understanding of God, the world and man is at stake.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Western Church was palpably convulsed by the question during the Carolingian age,<sup>4</sup> it was really only the Reformation which ushered in the great iconoclastic drama, in which LUTHER sided with the ancient Church against CALVIN and the leftists of the Reformation, the so-called Fanatics or Schwärmer. The earthquake that we are experiencing in the Church today belongs in this historical context: here is the real core of the theological question about the justification for images and music in the Church. The main portion of our reflections will be devoted to the investigation of this question, and hence we shall temporarily postpone it. But at least this much is clear: the problem of church music is not merely a problem for music, but a vital question for the Church herself. And I would add that it is conversely a question for music as a whole and not just for church music, because when the religious ground is cut away from under music, then according to the foregoing considerations music and indeed art itself are threatened, even though this might not be immediately apparent.

3. To be sure, all of this makes quite clear the fact that the *ecclesiastical* crisis of church music cannot be separated from the present crisis of art in general. I understand that MAURICIO KAGEL wrote an opera some years ago which depicts in a reverse direction the history of modern times, and thus ultimately world history, as an utopian myth: the America of the Incas, the Mayas, the Chibchas etc. is not discovered by the Christian Spaniards, but rather Spain and Europe are discovered by the Indians, and liberated from their Christian "superstitions." The myth is intended as an utopian programme: this was the direction in which history should have moved; this would have been progress toward humanity and toward the unity of the world: they could have and should have met in the Pre-Christian and the Anti-Christian. Such images are not only an expression of protest against what is Christian, but are also intended as a cultural option. This disowning of Christian culture and search for new shores of cultural expression are, by way of protest, set over against the Christian world.<sup>5</sup> And herein lies the symptomatic importance of such images: the demands of Christian culture and of its materialisations which have grown organically within that framework, actually appear as a threat to the men of a world which has once again become heathen. And many aspects of the whole art industry in recent decades can at bottom only be understood as deliberate mockery of that which previously was art, as an attempt to liberate itself from the greatness of art through mockery and ridicule, an attempt to overtake and to supercede art and to regain the ascendancy vis-à-vis a claim with which we are simply unable to catch up.

3 On this see CHR. VON SCHÖNBORN, L'icône du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborés entre le I<sup>e</sup> et le II<sup>e</sup> Concile de Nicée (325/787), (Fribourg 1976).

4 See the presentation of F. SCHUPP, Glaube-Kultur-Symbol. Versuch einer kritischen Theorie sakramentaler Praxis (Düsseldorf 1974).

5 The most radical philosophical development of this position is by CL. LÉVI-STRAUSS, especially in *La pensée sauvage* (1962). An example is this sentence at p. 326: "The ultimate purpose of the anthropological sciences is not the production of man but his disintegration." Cited here according to H. U. VON BALHASAR, *Prolegomena = Theodramatik 1* (Einsiedeln 1973) 41. Instructive on the intellectual background is G. MARTELET, *L'Au-delà retrouvé. Christologie des fins dernières* (Paris 1974) 35 ff.

4. Once again, this is connected with the phenomenon of functionalism described earlier, and functionalism is in fact the best description of the way in which today's world exists. In their book "Chance and Risk of the Present," HUGO STAUDINGER and WOLFGANG BEHLER have recently examined in great detail the inclusive character of this functionalism.<sup>6</sup> They make clear that typically, the machine ultimately becomes the universal stereotype for human beings, that all of reality is reduced to quantitative dimensions and that this reducibility applies everywhere and in principle. Here, there is no longer any place for artistic events which are unique, since all that is unique must be replaced by the merely calculable. Art falls under the laws of the marketplace, and the marketplace abolishes it as art.<sup>7</sup>

All of this should have made somewhat more evident the very limited extent to which the problems of church music today are purely ecclesiastical problems. But conversely, it should also be clear that the problems of the contemporary age and of its culture have something to do with the convulsions racking all that is Christian, and in turn these problems are also strongly influenced by such shocks. Accordingly, the second part of our reflections must be devoted to illuminating the genuinely theological core of the whole question: is Christianity itself, in its very roots, perhaps iconoclastic, and did it therefore bring about artistic creation only through a "felix culpa" (in the sense in which GOTTLIEB SÖHNGEN called Salzburg a *felix culpa*, a princely-episcopal misunderstanding of apostolic succession, but a fortunate one<sup>8</sup>)? Or, is it perhaps the iconoclastic riots which are really un-Christian, so that art and precisely church music would actually be an inner requirement of what is Christian, and thus, along with church music, music in general could constantly draw new hope from this fact?

The inner crisis of Christianity today consists in the fact that Christianity can no longer recognise "orthodoxy" as it was formulated at the Second Council of Nicaea, and actually considers iconoclastic riots to be the primeval condition. All that remains then is either the desperate schizophrenia of joy on account of the fortunate misunderstanding in history, or an awakening to new iconoclasm.

Why is it that the experts today agree that enmity toward art, that Puritan functionalism is the genuinely Christian attitude? As a matter of fact, the idea has a twofold root. The first lies in the fact that the transition from the Old Testament to the community of Jesus Christ appears as escape from the Temple into the worship of the commonplace. Jesus continues the criticism of Temple worship begun by the Israelite prophets, and indeed intensifies it to the point of symbolically destroying the Temple when He cast out the sellers. The crucifixion of Jesus "without the

6 H. STAUDINGER-W. BEHLER, *Chance und Risiko der Gegenwart* (Paderborn 1976) esp. 97/224.

7 The attempt to escape this consequence through a "creativity" which frees itself from anything established in advance and seeks a totally new reality, is futile. The intellectual underpinnings of the attempt to find in this way a new basis for art by dissolving the links to its religious origin have been most impressively elaborated by ERNST BLOCH, for whom the artist is "the absolute breaker of boundaries," "the pioneer at the frontier of an advancing world, indeed a most important component of the world which is only creating itself." Genius is "consciousness which has progressed the farthest." Thus there disappears the qualitatively specific characteristic of art, which is mere anticipation of what is to come. Accordingly, ERNST BLOCH's concept of art quite logically flows into the prediction of a world in which "electric power plants and St. Mark's church" will be identical. For more details, see F. HARTL, *Der Begriff des Schöpferischen. Deutungsversuche der Dialektik durch ERNST BLOCH und FRANZ VON BAADER* = Regensburger Studien zur Theologie 18 (Frankfurt 1979).

8 G. SÖHNGEN, *Der Weg der abendländischen Theologie. Grundgedanken zu einer Theologie des „Weges“* (München 1959) 61.

gate" (Hebr 13/12) thus appears to His Apostles as the new cult<sup>9</sup> and hence as the end of all previous cults. From this, people today conclude that Christianity in the sense of Jesus Christ is opposed to Temple, cult and priesthood; that Christianity recognises no other sacredness and no other sacred space than that of everyday life; that as a consequence Christian worship must also be "profane" – a bit of the commonplace. And wherever cult and priesthood may have once again arisen, then this is simply regression into a pre-Christian stage. Such a profane comprehension of what is Christian of course in turn provokes that twofold reaction of which we spoke at the outset. On the one hand, the festive solemnity of Christian worship must be denied, and with it all previous church music is ushered out the door, since it appears "sacred." And the other reaction is that worship is supposed to be no different than everyday commonplace activity, and music can take part in worship, so to speak, on condition that it be profane.

Such ideas were completely unknown to the growing Church of the early centuries. The Epistles of the New Testament already speak of a rich and by no means profane liturgical life in which the Psalms of Israel were still sung, along with Christian additions in the form of hymns and chants. ERIK PETERSON has shown how in many respects the Apocalypse expands the Temple vision of Isaias, in which mention is made of the cries and utterances of the angels before God. Among other things, the Apocalypse reports more than mere cries: singing, calling, giving glory.<sup>10</sup> The background for this is a differentiation in liturgical usage which opened a new dimension in cultic praise and glorification: the addition of hymnody to psalmody, of song to speech or recitation. In this context, PETERSON refers to a noteworthy text of ORIGIN: "Singing psalms befits men, but singing hymns is for angels and for those who lead a life like that of the angels."<sup>11</sup> This much is clear: from the very beginning, Christian worship was the worship of *God* and clearly contrasted with the everyday and the commonplace. Indeed, from the very beginning it was characterised by earnest efforts toward a new form of poetic and musical praise, and this from theological motives.

But on the other hand it is true that Christian worship presupposes a break with the Temple and to that extent is more closely related to the synagogue service than to the Temple liturgy, in any case in terms of its external shape. This implies the omission of instruments; it does not signify a transition into the Profane, but rather a puristically accentuated sacrality. The Church Fathers accordingly described the entire path from the Temple cult of the Old Testament to Christian worship, in fact the path from Old to New Testament in general as a process of spiritualisation. From this point of view they were devoted to a purely word-like liturgy, and at first largely adverse to liturgical splendour on all levels. This is especially true of the father of Western theology, St. Augustine, who furthermore in his area held fast to the prohibition of images as an expression of his theology of spiritualisation, thus exerting a special influence upon the development of the Church and of theology in the West.<sup>12</sup>

Of course it was by no means necessary that the concept of spiritualisation produce only such effects, since great art is after all precisely the result of a maximum of spiritualisation. Here,

9 See my article *Weltoffene Kirche*, in TH. FILTHAUT (ed.), *Umkehr und Erneuerung* (Mainz 1966) 271/91, here 281 ff. For more details on the entire subject of de-sacralisation, see H. MÜHLEN, *Entsakralisierung* (Paderborn 1971).

10 E. PETERSON (tr. R. WALLS), *The Angels and the Liturgy* (New York 1964) 26.

11 *Ibid.*, 27 (= Sel. in psalmos, to Ps 118/71).

12 See F. VAN DER MEER, *Augustinus der Seelsorger* (Köln 1951) 329/74 as well as my article *Zur theologischen Grundlegung der Kirchenmusik*, in F. FLECKENSTEIN (ed.), *Gloria Deo-Pax Homini-bus = ACV Schriftenreihe 9* (Bonn 1974) 39/62.

it is rather the Platonic root in patristic thought which comes to the fore, giving its special cast to the patristic idea of spiritualisation and hence also to the patristic view of the relationship between Old and New Testaments. In a certain sense Plato may be called the discoverer of the spirit in the West, and that is his lasting fame. He describes Humanity as a passage from the Sensible to the Spiritual, as a process of de-materialisation. It is from this point of view that his comprehensive paedagogical program is drawn up. As a genuine Greek, he allots to music a central position in the education of human beings, but even his music pedagogy rests upon the concept of a de-materialisation of music, through which he simply desires to achieve the victory of Greek humanity over the "materialising" music of inherited religions. The basic concept as such is important, but he who constructs a perfect world in a test tube really ends up by doing violence to reality.<sup>13</sup>

To the Fathers of the Church, these concepts seemed like an anticipated explanation of the Christian passage from Temple to Church. And thus they too regarded the musical riches of the Old Testament and Graeco-Roman culture as a part of the sensible, material world which was to be overcome in the spiritual world of Christianity. They understood spiritualisation to mean dematerialisation and hence understood it in a manner which more or less borders on iconoclasm. That is theology's historical mortgage in the question of ecclesiastical art, and it is a mortgage which comes to the fore over and over again during the course of history.<sup>14</sup>

## II. The foundations of church music in the essence of the liturgy

With these reflections, we have nonetheless progressed toward an answer to our basic question: Viewed in terms of its origin, is Christianity iconoclastic and anti-art? or is it – precisely when it remains true to itself – a summons to artistic expression? We have seen that genuine liturgical activity is essential to Christianity and that precisely in its earliest phase, the New which happened with Christ seems a summons to intensified expression, which is presented as the transition from crying to singing. In order to find the correct solution to our problem, we must now pursue this point of view somewhat further. Let us return to PETERSON's analyses.

He shows that the changes introduced into the Apocalypse as compared with Isaias include the appearance not only of the Seraphim but of articulated and orderly choirs of angels. This in turn is related to the fact that Isaias' vision is strictly localised in the Temple at Jerusalem. Even after the destruction of the Temple, Judaism has always steadfastly believed that God's glory dwelt only in the Temple at Jerusalem. Christians, on the contrary, believe that during Christ's crucifixion, when the veil of the Temple was rent in two, God's glory departed from the Temple and now dwells where Jesus Christ is, namely in Heaven and in the Church which gathers with Jesus. Accordingly, heaven and earth are mentioned as the place where chants of praise are now sung.<sup>15</sup> But this means that the Church is indeed something quite different from the Synagogue which had remained in Jewry after the destruction of the Temple, which the Synagogue never desired or was able to replace. The Synagogue is the site of a purely lay worship service, which as such is also a mere Scripture service. He who desires to reduce the Church to Scripture services conducted by laymen is not practising that which is New in Christianity, but rather equates himself with the Synagogue and omits the path which leads to Christ. The Church, as Church,

13 For evidence of this, consult my article *Zur theologischen Grundlegung* (note 12) 50 ff. and 58 ff.

14 Once again, see my article cited in note 12 as well as the book of CHR. VON SCHÖNBORN cited in note 3, above all pages 77/85: *Origène et les racines de la théologie anti-icônique*.

15 See E. PETERSON (note 10) 16 ff.

accepts with Christ the inheritance of the Temple, although in a modified way. This is expressed liturgically in the fact that the Church does not assemble merely for Scripture readings and prayers, but also to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. But then this also means that in the external form of her celebration the Church can and must lay claim to the inheritance of the Temple. This implies that the Church's liturgy, which now regards the whole cosmos as its temple, must have a cosmic character, must make the whole cosmos resound. On this point, PETERSON'S comment, though certainly somewhat exaggerated, is basically quite worthy of consideration:

And finally it is not pure coincidence that the mediaeval music theorists begin their treatises by referring to the harmony of the spheres. Since the Church's hymn of praise tunes in to the praises of the cosmos, any consideration of the musical element in the Church's cult must also take into account the sort of praise offered by sun, moon, and stars.<sup>16</sup>

What this means *in concreto* becomes clearer when we recall the prayer in Ps. Cyprian which speaks of God as the One Who is praised by angels, archangels, martyrs, apostles and prophets,

to whom all the birds sing praises, whom the tongues of those in heaven, upon the earth and under the earth glorify: all the waters in heaven and under the heavens confess Thee. . . .<sup>17</sup>

This text is especially interesting because it discloses, so to speak, the theological principle according to which the „organon“ was understood, for it was simply called „the“ instrument as opposed to all the others. The organ is a theological instrument whose original home was the cult of the emperor. When the Emperor of Byzantium spoke, an organ played. On the other hand the organ was supposed to be the combination of all the voices of the cosmos. Accordingly, the organ music at imperial utterances meant that when the divine emperor spoke, the entire universe resounded. As a divine utterance, his statement is the resounding of all the voices in the cosmos. The „organon“ is the cosmic instrument and as such the voice of the world's ruler, the *imperator*.<sup>18</sup> As against this Byzantine custom, Rome stressed a cosmic Christology and on that basis the cosmic function of Christ's Vicar on earth: what was good enough for the Emperor was quite good enough for the Pope. Naturally, it is not a case here of superficial problems concerning prestige, but it is a matter of the public, political and cultic representation of the mandates received in each case. To the exclusivity of an imperial theology which increasingly abandoned the Church to the Emperor and degraded the bishops to mere imperial functionaries,<sup>19</sup> Rome opposed the Pope's cosmic claim and with it the cosmic rank of belief in Christ, which is independent of and indeed superior to politics. Therefore the organ had to resound in the papal liturgy as well.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 22/3.

<sup>18</sup> I gratefully acknowledge here the kindness of the Rt. Rev. Abbot URBANUS BOMM of Maria Laach, who pointed out these facts and referred me to the pertinent literature: D. SCHUBERTH, *Kaiserliche Liturgie. Die Einbeziehung von Musikinstrumenten, insbesondere der Orgel, in den frühmittelalterlichen Gottesdienst = Veröffentlichungen der Evang. Gesellsch. f. Liturgieforschung 17* (Göttingen 1968); E. JAMMERS, *Der gregorianische Choral und das byzantinische Kaisertum: StdZ 86* (1960/61) 445/51; *Idem*, *Musik in Byzanz, im päpstlichen Rom und im Frankenreich. Der Choral als Textausprache* (Heidelberg 1962); E. WELLESZ, *A. History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford 1961<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> A GRILLMEIER, *Auriga Mundi. Zum Reichskirchenbild der Briefe des sog. Codex Encyclius (458)*, in *Idem*, *Mit ihm und in ihm* (Freiburg 1975) 386/419.

Such a borrowing from imperial theology is not regarded with favour by contemporary theological scholarship, which considers such acceptance as “Constantinian” or as “Romanisation,” which is naturally far worse than Hellenisation. As a matter of fact, what has been said thus far suffices to indicate clearly the convincing reasons for the whole process, as well as its logic within a Christian context: this detour made it possible to avoid turning the Church into a synagogue and to carry out in practise the true claim of the Christian faith, which accepts the inheritance of the Temple and surpasses it by far, into the very dimensions of the Universal.

Furthermore, the history of the organ remained a theo-political history for quite a long time: the fact that an organ resounds at the Carolingian court is an expression of the Carolingian claim to equality with Byzantium. Conversely, the Roman usage was transferred to the cathedrals and abbey churches. Less than a lifetime ago it was still customary for the organ to play as background to the abbot’s recitation of the Pater noster in Benedictine abbeys, and this is to be understood as a direct inheritance from the ancient cosmic liturgy.<sup>20</sup>

And now we are in a position to formulate our thesis: church music with artistic pretensions is not opposed to the essence of Christian liturgy, but is rather a necessary way of expressing belief in the world-filling glory of Jesus Christ. The Church’s liturgy has a compelling mandate to reveal in resonant sound the glorification of God which lies hidden in the cosmos. This, then, is the liturgy’s essence: to transpose the cosmos, to spiritualise it into the gesture of praise through song and thus to redeem it; to “humanise” the world.

A final question remains: the question of sacredness, of the distinction between sacred and profane music. This distinction was very much present in the Church of the early Fathers, but was almost completely buried under a mass of other problems. The first time the problem was posed quite openly was during the separation of profane from sacred culture in the fourteenth century, and then with even more sharpness in the Renaissance culture of the sixteenth century. Ever since the twelfth century and the beginnings of polyphony the question has been posed with increasing urgency, though it was the exile of the Popes at Avignon which made everyone fully aware of the problem, because at Avignon “the French *ars nova* appeared at the papal court, and it must have seemed quite foreign to the officials of the Curia who were so familiar with Roman musical practises . . .”<sup>21</sup> It was time to inquire anew into the meaning of Christian spiritualisation. Once again the Church found herself in the dilemma between puritanical exclusion of the new developments in general, and an accommodation which both makes the Church lose face and simultaneously eliminates her as a source of human reality. The Constitution „*Docta Sanctorum Patrum*” issued by POPE JOHN XXII in 1324/25 found a path which was more than a compromise in the sense of the arithmetical mean:

It was not polyphony in itself which POPE JOHN XXII rejected, but rather the suppression of the Gregorian melody by a sensually effective polyphony which was far removed from the liturgical function in tonal terms as well as in terms of rhythmic movement . . . and expression.<sup>22</sup>

The Holy Father put it this way: “the occasional use of certain consonant intervals superposed upon the simple ecclesiastical chant” was not forbidden, “but always on condition that

20 For this reference, too, I am grateful to Abbot URBANUS BOMM.

21 K. G. FELLNER, *Die Constitutio Docta SS. Patrum Johannes XXII.*, in *Geschichte der katholischen Kirchenmusik* (Kassel 1972) 1/379 ff.

22 *Ibid.*, 379.



the melodies themselves remain intact in the pure integrity of their form . . .”<sup>23</sup> In other words relationship to the text, predominance of the melody and reference to the formal structures of the chant as the point of departure for ecclesiastical polyphony as against a concept of structure which destroys the text, as against the emphasis upon sensual sound effects.

The Council of Trent confirmed and deepened these provisions. In Masses celebrated with singing and organ music, “nothing profane should be intermingled, but only hymns and divine praises;” it should not be a matter of mere empty pleasure for the ear, but the words must be understood by all, so that the hearts of the listeners be drawn (*rapiantur*) to a desire for heavenly harmonies, in the contemplation of the joys of the blessed.<sup>24</sup>

When the Council speaks of “*raptus*” and of “*desiderium*” (desire) for heavenly harmonies, it is presuming a power to enrapture which mere functional application can never produce. Such an ability to enrapture rather presupposes inspiration, which surpasses the level of the mere Rational and Objective. Incidentally, HUBERT JEDIN has recently shown that the wellknown legend about the *Missa Papae Marcelli* influencing the Fathers of Trent is not mere legend, but that it has a core of historical fact, which he admittedly does not explain in any greater detail: the *composition* must be convincing, and not the theory, which can only follow the composition.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, one cannot expect timeless recipes in these conciliar texts. Otherwise, succeeding doctrinal statements, such as those made in our own century by Pius X, Pius XII and Vatican 2, would be superfluous. But the structure continues to remain valid: the liturgy demands an artistic transposition out of the spirit of the faith, an artistic transposition of the music of the cosmos into human music which glorifies the Word made flesh. Such music must obey a stricter law than the commonplace music of everyday life: such music is beholden to the Word and must lead to the Spirit.

Hence church music must find its way while constantly contending in two directions: in the face of puritanical pride she must justify the necessary incarnation of the spirit in music, and *vis-à-vis* the commonplace she must seek to point the spirit and the cosmos in the direction of the Divine. When the effort is successful, it is of course a gift; but the gift is not bestowed without the preparation which we offer through our own effort. When this takes place, then it is not a matter of exercising a mere hobby without obligation, but rather of living out a necessary dimension of Christian faith and in so doing, retaining a necessary dimension of what it means to be a human being. Without both of these dimensions, culture and humanity irresistibly decay from within.

23 *Ibid.*, 380.

24 K. G. FELLNER, *Das Konzil von Trient und die Kirchenmusik*, in *Geschichte der katholischen Kirchenmusik* (Kassel 1976) 2/9.

25 H. JEDIN, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient IV/1* (Freiburg 1975) 208 and 345 note 47, where we read: “The widely publicised version of AGAZZARI, that the *Missa Papae Marcelli* changed the minds of the Council Fathers, was previously . . . regarded as a legend. . . O. URSPRUNG has shown how probable it is . . . that this ‘legend’ is not entirely lacking in foundation.”