

THE MISSA MAJOR

Section I

An Ethnography of the Dominican [Tridentine] High Mass

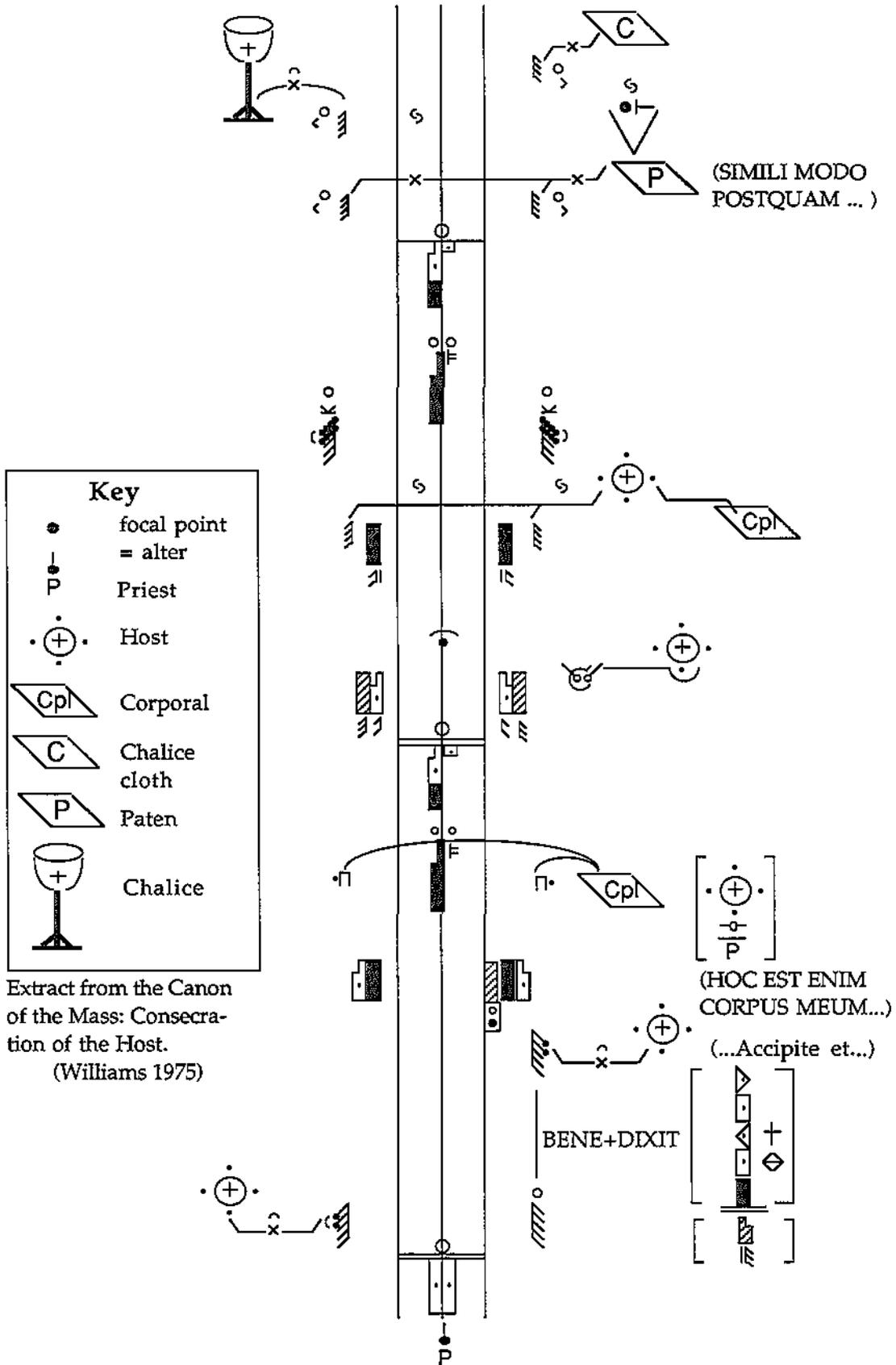
When this research was carried out (1973-75), the Latin Mass had been, and for some still was, a living and vital mystery: mysterious hocus-pocus to some, anathematic symbol of intellectual and political domination to others, outmoded mediæval custom to others, of no interest whatsoever to some, but for all that, for millions of people it was a consistent (although brief) daily or weekly respite; an hour's interlude of peace, sanity, continuity and Christian communion in the midst of an increasing press of secular affairs. It constituted an atmosphere which transcended ordinary work-a-day preoccupations.

The Mass constituted a world of meaning to which there were varying degrees and kinds of accessibility. The Missa Major was the central symbol of Catholic worship. It was the paradigm from which all subsequent changes in the rite were derived. It represented an indispensable act of Catholic worship. It was a most important sacrament which could be renewed daily if desired. Diachronically, it had persisted in a relatively static state for several centuries until decrees issued by the second Vatican Council¹[see p.20] in the early 1960s introduced changes which have thus far proved to be more significant than might have been expected.

The spatial alteration has, for example, been instrumental in changing the role of the entire priesthood in ways which will be discussed in more detail later. The changes with which this research is mainly concerned are two: a spatial alteration consisting of a 180° turn of the celebrant from having his back to the congregation as he faced the high altar to facing the congregation as it were 'over' the high altar, and a linguistic alteration consisting of translations of the Latin text into vernacular languages.

The Origin of the Mass

The historical origin of the Mass is thought to be datable some time in the third century A.D. The event which gave rise to it is commonly known as The Last Supper, which preceded the crucifixion and death of a man from Galilee: Jesus, who was subsequently called the Christ. The oldest written account of the Mass is in the New Testament, I Corinthians: 11: 23-26:²



23. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,³ that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread,
24. And, giving thanks,⁴ broke, and said: *Take ye and eat: This is my body, which shall be delivered for you. This do for the commemoration of me.*
25. In like manner, also the chalice, after he had supped,⁵ saying; This chalice is the new testament in my blood. *This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me.*
26. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come.

The italicized words are translated from this Latin (Vulgate) version:

*... hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur: hoc facite in meam commemorationem. Similiter et calicem, postquam coenavit, dicens: Hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine qui pro vobis fundatur.*⁶

The historical origins of buildings for commemorating the event of the Last Supper are mainly recorded with reference to some of the first buildings set apart for specific church use. The building of new and/or separate architecture for the purpose came, it is said, after Constantine. Before then, there were 'house chambers' or 'house churches', one of which has been studied extensively and was extant *circa* 252-300 (cf. Rostovtzeff, 1938). There is no way of pinning down exactly when the first Mass in the form we are concerned with took place. Before the third century, the Last Supper is looked to as the first Mass. In one sense, it is unnecessary to search for an earlier literary source for the sacrament of the Eucharist. Pedagogically, the account in I Corinthians, plus the accounts in the synoptic Gospels, cf. Luke, 22: 19-20; Mark, 14: 22-24; and Matthew, 26: 26-29, provide the sources.

The meaning and substance of the Mass are best thought of in connection with these words of St. John, 15.

1. I am the true vine; and my Father is the husbandman.
4. Abide in me; and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me.

5. I am the vine; you are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.

These and similar statements of John are in one sense comments on other historical accounts of the Last Supper. The vine imagery is directly related to discourse on the Eucharist, as is the gesture of washing the feet, described in John, 13, *passim*.

4. He riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments and, having taken a towel and girded himself.
5. After that he putteth water into a basin and began to wash the feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Surrounding meanings such as those cited above, are of central importance to specific acts within the rite of the Mass, just as the many questions asked by the disciples on the nature of the Way, scattered throughout the Gospels, are important.

It is well to remember that St. John's method was not to give a flat, descriptive account of the Last Supper like those of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but to emphasize recurring themes which bear upon the event.⁷ In one way of looking at these matters, the synoptic Gospels can be seen as the ethnography of the event, i.e. simple descriptive reportage. St. John assumed the role of anthropologist, i.e. theorist, although he was, if any of the evangelists were, a theologian. John wrote approximately thirty years after Paul's death and he did not seem interested in merely repeating what had been said already. The passages are cited, therefore, not as abstractions, but because they represent semantic fields of imagery and ideas surrounding the original event of the Last Supper, hence the rite under discussion. They merely draw attention in diverse ways to the original injunction, "do this . . . and do this . . . in remembrance (or in commemoration) of me", which is the real origin of the Missa Major.

The sections to follow in this introduction and the beginning of Chapter II concerning the priesthood and the general notions of sacrifice and transformations with regard to the Mass are attenuated accounts meant to clear the way for examination of the rite itself.

The Priesthood

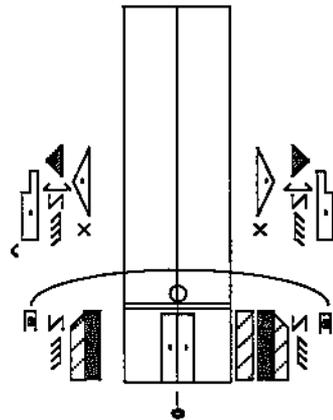
The priestly notion of a priest turns around the idea of a mediator. From the movement text of the Dominican rite, one gesture ("a posture") can be

extracted which sums up the mediatorial idea. In the diagram below, readers can see a written movement version of the whole body gesture *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ) which accompanies the verbal phrase, expressing the mediatorial idea.

If priests conceive of themselves as mediators in terms of the rite, acting *for* Jesus, where, if anywhere, is the warrant for connecting the notion of a 'priest' with Jesus?

20. Where the forerunner, Jesus, is entered for us, made a high priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech (Hebrews: 6).

The body gesture *in persona Christi*



But, as is commonly known, Jesus was not a priest, and he was certainly not a priest in Jewish eyes at the time he lived, because among other things, he was not a Levite. There were, in effect, two categories of Levites: ordinary Levites and priests who were descendents of Aaron. The Hebrew priest had to be a descendent of Aaron, and by definition, therefore, they were Levites, but they were separated from ordinary Levites by their priestly office. The latter were acolytes who sang, washed the hands of priests, etc. if they were involved in religious rituals, but could not become priests themselves, for the office was conferred by birth. The author of Hebrews is explicit:

14. For it is evident that our Lord sprung out of Judah; in which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.
15. And it is yet far more evident, if according to the similitude of Melchisedech there ariseth another priest,

16. Who is made, not according to the law of a carnal commandment, but according to the power of an indissoluble life.
17. For he testifieth: Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech.
18. For the law brought nothing to perfection, but a bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God (Hebrews 17).

But, who was Melchisedech?

1. For this Melchisedech was king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him;
2. To whom also Abraham divided the tithes of all; who first indeed by interpretation is king of justice; and then also king of Salem, that is, king of Peace;
3. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened unto the Son of God, continueth a priest forever⁸ (Hebrews: 7).

The author of Hebrews was concerned to justify Christianity, as doubtless many leaders of primitive Christians were, to Jewish converts who had, by becoming Christians,⁹ lost their traditional hereditary priesthood. Thus an appeal was made to the greater antiquity of Melchisedech, not merely as an example of a concept of a priesthood of greater age, *but of an entirely different order and kind.*

The point is that a priesthood was part and parcel of the notion of religion at that time, but in order to make a distinction between the hereditary, tribal priesthood and the new Christian religion, an appeal was made to an *eternal* priesthood; one which was not the same as the prevailing one and which was set over and above the hereditary priesthood. This perhaps begins to explain why the Catholic priesthood can legitimately be called *a community by choice*, for it is from the concept of eternal priesthood, associated with Melchisedech and not from the notion of a genetically transmitted, hereditary priesthood, that the Catholic idea of 'priest' is derived.

Jesus was thus presented as *a kind of priest*, foreshadowed by an earlier concept and, moreover, as a kind of priest on a higher level than the existing priesthood. It was necessary to stress the uniqueness of his acts and

that he had done something which the old law could never have done regarding the relations between God and humankind. With reference to the uniqueness of Jesus's act, it must be remembered that in Christian interpretation, the Last Supper was the first interpretation of the Mass and it came before what happened on Good Friday (the crucifixion), which was the event that the Last Supper and every Mass interprets in a particular way.¹⁰

The Last Supper is thought to have not only interpreted the event, but to have generated¹¹ the event -- not only the crucifixion, but of any Mass subsequent to the crucifixion. More will be said later of the reconciliation with God which Jesus's death brought about in the section on sacrifice. Suffice it to say there that people evidently experienced that the death of Jesus had effected a reconciliation in a totally different way. There are some who would state the difference of relation briefly as a move from propitiation to love;¹² a statement requiring a short digression.

The Missa Major has often been classed as a 'propitiatory rite' but in fact, wrongly so, both in connection with various types of animal sacrifice and in relation to concepts of 'dominance' and 'submission' when ethological resemblances are postulated. In the Dominican liturgy, there is a recognition of the 'dominance' of God, although the word would rarely, if ever, be used by priests. But even if it were, it would in all cases be contextualized within the notion of the humanity/Divinity relation, for such actions as genuflection, for example, are not motivated by fear, which arises out of weakness or servility.

With regard to currently popular ethological, basically Behavioural comparisons between animals and human beings, one really has no idea what motivates, say, chimpanzees or wolves to 'cower' before their 'leaders', but it is fairly safe to say that, empirically, they can be seen to shrink and lower themselves towards the ground the closer they approach the feared, dominant animal. There are no cases of equivalent cowering or cringing movements in the liturgy of the Mass.

The *inclinatio profunda* (*a sacerdotia et ministris*) and the *inclinatio usque ad genua* (*in choro*) as well as the *inclinatio profunda* (*in choro*) are all distinguishable as 'bowing actions' and as kinesemes.¹³ They are significant in that they express different degrees of acknowledgement of the Divinity. The celebrant and ministers who are closer to the altar, i.e. closer to the sacrament, *do not bow as deeply as those who are farther away*, as in the case of the *inclinatio profunda* (*in choro*). These elements of the Dominican liturgy are governed by the religious notion of *hieros*,¹⁴ where nearness to

the Divinity involves lesser degrees of inclination of the body. In fact, the fifth, sixth, seventh and ninth ways of prayer of St. Dominic (see Lehner 1964) are all completely erect postures; the ninth including 'walking meditation' as well (Lehner, 1964: 158-159). The kinesemes written out in the movement text of the Mass are meant to express humility, as in a filial relation; not as before a judge or an executioner, mainly because it is the figure of Jesus who is involved in the Missa Major in any case¹⁵, but more will be said of these matters later.

Early Christians were, after all, principally Jews who undoubtedly felt the loss of their traditional priesthood deeply. I was told by informants¹⁶ that they avoided calling their presbyters 'priests' at all. It is not difficult to imagine why they did so. It was often dangerous to hold Christian beliefs in those times. In view of this, it is not surprising that records for church buildings appear two or three centuries later. There have been diachronic shifts of meaning of the word 'liturgy' over the centuries, but in connection with the Tridentine Mass, the word is *leitourgia*; a public work, which here, we take to mean 'public worship'. Early public services are said to have been performed in basilicas and in market halls. By the third century, churches more like those we know of had started to appear.

A church is a public, although in a Catholic sense, consecrated, sacred space. Public spaces generally indicate acceptance of and tolerance towards the practices they represent by a significant portion of the society. While there are some who might deplore the fact that Christianity ever became institutionalized in that sense at all, the fact remains that it did. In the case of early Christians, it can be safely assumed that while they were prepared to witness¹⁷ to their beliefs, they apparently did not feel obliged to advertise their persuasion in the form of public buildings. If they did, we have no records of them.

A Catholic priest is mainly to be defined as a mediator, regardless of where or when he celebrates the Mass. The association with mediatorial capacities stems from Jesus having offered himself in a mediatorial, if unique, way. The Mass is described by many priests as a remembrance of the human potential existing, in virtue of Jesus's act, to face their Divinity through, first, Jesus's and second, through the priest's mediation. The uniqueness of Jesus's act is stressed because in this way it can be understood that the Missa Major is not a re-enactment of the crucifixion.¹⁸ It is not a passion-play,¹⁹ it is not a drama,²⁰ nor is it understood by Dominican friars-preachers as such.

The priest is probably best described as a servant of grace. His human characteristics with reference to the ritual acts under consideration did not matter in the least, because in the semantic space of the Latin Mass, *nothing of what the priest was as a personality* entered into the acts at all.²¹ The essence of the Missa Major does not lie in the social or human *persona* of the priest, but in the moral disposition of Jesus.²² The effect of the Mass lies in the hallowing of the whole Christian community. This is achieved in the Missa Major through communion and intercessory prayer by a priest and two major and four minor ministers.

The new and different dimension in priesthood which was introduced with the notion of Melchisedech was, of course, both atemporal and ahistorical; an eternal priesthood. Jesus was not presented as *a successor to Melchisedec*, as if in a tradition which was parallel to the existing Jewish priestly tradition. Rather, his being associated with priests at all in the context of those times (and, indeed, now) represented *a leap into another different dimension*, a dimension meant to represent a new possible relationship between Divinity and humanity.

A Dominican friar preacher is ordained both as a minister of the word and minister of the sacrament.²³ The difference here lies between the notions of giving and receiving. The priest gives on behalf of another, but only in the sense that he is *in persona Christi*. The religious value is that placed on performing an action for another who represents the priest's Divinity and at the same time giving that Divinity to another. This becomes clearer if thought of in the following way: the priest speaks in the Mass in the person of Christ to God and he also speaks to God and brings gifts before God in the name of all the people present. In the request the priest makes for prayer just before the action begins, his dual responsibility is evident: "*Orate fratres . . .*, i.e. Pray, brethren, that this sacrifice (e.g. mine and yours) may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord". And the people say, "May the Lord see the sacrifice at your hands". The sense of this is that the offering of the sacrifice is equally everyone's sacrifice, but it is offered only through the hands of the priest. The priest therefore has a representative function vis-à-vis the congregation.

It is at this point where ordinary models of what the priest does begin to fall down because of the uniqueness of the original act and because of the unique relationship of mediation which is at the bottom of it all. When a priest is talking to God, he is representing the 'whole Christ', that is, Christ as the head of the body of Christians. In Catholic thought there is only one mediator between Divinity and humanity and that was Christ Jesus, thus the mediation of the priest is related, in this way of looking at it, to the

only possible channel of mediation there is. The priesthood can thus be seen to be misunderstood if it is interpreted as a mediation alongside that of Jesus.²⁴ It is important to remember that the priest is a mediator, but his mediation is *not homologous to that of the mediation of Jesus*. There is a non-parallelism here which is central to the notion of the mediation of the priest.

Sacrifice

When the New Testament is examined and practising priests are consulted on the matter of sacrifice (see Hebrews 13) regarding the death of Jesus, it becomes apparent that 'sacrifice' must be thought of in inverted commas. It has to be, because sacrifice for the peoples of Palestine at the time of the Second Temple had very specific meanings.²⁵ Often, beasts were killed in the Temple and their blood was taken into the holy of holies, the tabernacle, after which their bodies were taken outside the walls and burned. Although, as the writer of Hebrews says, Jesus's death occurred "outside the gate" his committed death followed a conviction by a Roman tribunal on a political charge (see Vermes 1974: 46-52). It amounted to a civil punishment on one level, but as his death was foretold by himself, it was a *conscious* act on his part.

Not only was Jesus not a priest, but a layman, he was not consecrated before being a 'victim'. That is to say that he was not a 'victim' at all in the sense the animals sacrificed for temple use were. Without a consecrated victim, no immolation can occur. Jesus was not ritually sacrificed in that sense, and it would have been, since the time of Abraham, considered obscene to think that the God of Israel would have had human sacrifice offered to him.

Ritual sacrifice of animals in the literal sense seemed to have been aiming at reconciliation with the Divinity, as in the forgiveness of sins, but the aim was apparently not fully realized for everyone. As we have noted previously, it was the death of Jesus which did fulfill this aim for those who came to be called Christians.²⁶ Thus from this point of view it is correct to say that the death of Jesus was the only *real* sacrifice, in which case, the sacrifice of animals was not 'sacrifice' but something else, which amounts to saying the same thing.

It is here that we encounter a curious kind of historicity which is, I think, an essence of Christian religion: the man, Jesus, was an incarnation of Divinity. That is to say, a 'God-made man', i.e. *God became man -- the passive usage*. It is to St. John's concept of the Word, and to the Hebrew

concept of sonship (Vermes, 1974: 192-213) that we can best turn to find the keys: the relation of word to thought in Greek is expressed in the term *logos*. And that requires some further explanation: were we to conceptualize a semantic field for the word *logos* in Christian thought, we would discover that the Hebrew word *debar* (also *debarim*) and the Greek word *rhema* would have to be included. *Debar* can mean both word and 'thing' (in the sense of material object), as *rhema* means both word and actual event. For example, the shepherds go to see the '*rhema*' which is happening in Bethlehem, and Mary kept the *rhema* (*rhemata*) or *debarim* in her heart.

Further to the understanding of *logos* in Christian thought, it is necessary to look to the Judeo-Hellenistic period of Christianity which produced a kind of 'mixture' of thought which is particularly relevant to the historicity I mention. It seems impossible to assume a purists' view of any description, thus I would want to draw attention to the fact that there is a definite similarity in the Greek notion of '*logos*' as expressed through the Stoics (i.e. *logos* as the 'seed-word' or *logos spermatikos*) and the Chinese notion of the Tao, i.e. the pattern or paradigm, so to speak, in the universe. This is a central idea in the first chapter of John, thus the justification for saying that the word is made flesh, in the sense that it is the Logos or paradigm which in Jesus's case was manifest, crucified and all the rest.

Jesus, a *God-made man*, was the Word incarnate. Owing to the intimate bonds between word, thought, reason and event it is obvious how the notion of sonship can be fraught with confusions, as e.g. taken not in a *filiate*, but in a physical-biological sense. Moreover, in much Christian thought, it is the Word, or Logos which is manifest and crucified. It is in this way that destruction or immolation in a syntagmatic or ordinary historical sense are simply irrelevant to the Mass.²⁷ In one way of looking at things, it simply does not matter whether Jesus lived or not -- although I am aware that this statement may be shocking, if not intolerable, to some. Nevertheless, it is only in the light of this notion that the nature of the sacrifice involved in the Mass and the dimensions of time involved in the rite are comprehensible.

The rite commemorates an event, The Last Supper, but it does not commemorate it in the sense that an event might be commemorated as in the history of a people, where it might be expected that the ceremony is performed, say, on a hill, or in a room over a pub in Jerusalem. Furthermore, we are dealing with an event, The Last Supper, which may or may not have happened historically, depending upon what criteria of 'proof'

one decides to demand of historians. But this too is irrelevant because the Last Supper is an event which is itself a generative structure: a paradigmatic structure which over-rides any syntagmatic structural ordinary sense of historical, chronological time. This will become more apparent as we examine in some detail the words spoken at the two consecrations of the host and the chalice of wine.

1. [host] *Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas, et elevatis oculis in caelum ad te Deum, Patrem suum omnipotentem, tibi gratias agens, benedixit, fregit, deditque discipulis suis, dicens: Accipite, et manducate ex hoc omnes. Hoc Est Enim Corpus Meum.*

2. [chalice] *Simili modo postquam coenatum est, accipiens et hunc praeclarum Calicem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas, item tibi gratias agens, benedixit, deditque discipulis suis, dicens: Accipite, et bibite ex eo omnes. Hic Est Enim Calix Sanguinis Mei, Novi et Aeterni Testamenti: Mysterium Fidei: qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum. Haec quotiescumque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis.*

The reason why these words²⁸ weren't supposed to be spoken or translated is that for a long time the Canon of the Mass was set in a context of a special, one might say, 'eternal' place and time. In eastern rites, this dimension of the semantic space was marked by the fact that everything which was done at the consecrations went on behind a solid screen. There were parts of the eastern rite in which the screen was opened, but during the consecrations, it was closed. The above words -- or the equivalents of these words -- were sung aloud from behind the screen so that people knew what was going on.²⁹

In the western rite, although at one time there was a development of a rood loft and/or screen, which tended to separate Choir (an area of the church) from Nave, there was never a sense visually of screening the *acts* of the consecration. What was done in the western rite consisted of visible acts performed in silence. After the Canon, the priest was silent and these words were 'uttered' silently. They were supposed to be said so quietly that they could not be heard, even by people standing close around. In the eastern rite, then, priests were heard but not seen. In the western rite, priests were seen, but not heard.³⁰

It does not seem to be the case that in any Latin liturgy the Eucharistic Prayer was lifted verbatim from any of the accounts of the Last Supper or from the account in I Corinthians. The Eucharistic Prayer has always been

a re-telling of what happened at the Last Supper in the light of those accounts, with little bits of meditation brought in from elsewhere.

For example, ". . . *in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas . . .*" (the holy and venerable hands of Jesus) is a phrase which does not occur anywhere in the New Testament although there are many references to the hands of Jesus, as when healing. This is, basically, simply a reverential way of talking.³¹ The phrase ". . . *et elevatis oculis in caelum . . .*" (and lifting up his eyes to heaven) is found nowhere in the accounts of the Last Supper; that is, specifically in terms of what he *did* with the bread and wine. But the phrase *does* occur at the beginning of the stories of the feeding miracles and presumably one is meant to see some relation here. The phrase also occurs in the Johannine Gospel at the beginning of the prayer Jesus makes at the Last Supper. However, in this account, there is no reference made to bread and wine.

1. These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up his eyes to heaven he said: Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee (John 17: 1).

The above is itself a prayer of consecration; the offering of himself, and through himself, the people and the disciples. Again, one is meant to see that there is a relationship between what is going on here in the prayer of Jesus and what the priest says at the consecration.

The giving thanks to God, his almighty Father (*ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem*) is liturgical language, but the next phrase is important because of the word 'blessing'. The translation of ". . . *tibi gratias agens, benedixit . . .*" is "giving thanks, he blessed". Some of the New Testament accounts say that he gave thanks, some that he blessed. The New Testament sense of blessing is not rightly conceived of as just making the sign of the cross over something; an object, say, or a person. Strictly speaking, a priest does not bless 'things'; *he blesses God over things*. The blessing of God over a thing enters into the properties of the thing itself, i.e. it becomes a *blessed* thing, as well as retaining all the other properties it has.

A typical Jewish, and Christian, way of blessing something is to tell a story.³² That is to say, a story is repeated gratefully of something God has done, and, especially in Jewish understanding, the story enters into and *informs* what it is told over. In the case of food and drink, for example, one shares the food and drink, one shares the story, thus *one enters into the story*.

Consider, momentarily, the sacrament of baptism: a priest tells a story about all that God has done with water, i.e. creation, the flood, the Red Sea, all those kinds of things -- so that *this* water here in front of him, over which the story is told, becomes in a certain sense the waters of chaos, creation, the water of the Red Sea, the water from the side of Christ. The person who is baptized is *plunged into the story*, which is related to, indeed we might say, contained in, the element of *this* water in front of him.

"*Accipte, et manducate ex hoc omnes. Hoc est enim Corpus meum*", i.e. "Take and eat of this - all of you", does come from the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, and the second of the phrases is from Matthew and Mark. Comparison of different Biblical accounts does not result in a clear, unequivocal account of exactly what Jesus said.

In the consecration of the chalice ". . . *praeclarum Calicem* . . ." refers to the good, upstanding, noble chalice. That particular Latin word comes from the twenty-third psalm, which is traditionally regarded as a "Christian mysteries psalm", for it makes reference to God preparing a table for the psalmist and this preparation of a table is associated with the Eucharistic table. Further to the point of the nature of the psalm, there is the image of God anointing the head of the psalmist which is taken in relation to the anointing with chrism at Confirmation. The waters spoken of in the psalm are taken to mean the waters of Baptism and it also says, ". . . *quam praeclarum est* . . .", which is to say how goodly it is.³³

This way of talking about the chalice identifies the chalice on the altar with the chalice of the twenty-third psalm. And it is also ". . . *et hunc* . . ."; that is to say, he takes not *a* chalice or *the* chalice, but **THIS** chalice, thus the chalice on the altar where the prayer is being prayed is identified with the chalice (the fourth cup) of the Last Supper, which is thought of as the Eucharistic cup of the supper which took place in the upper room over a pub in Jerusalem.

Later on in the Roman Canon, there is a prayer for asking God that an angel may take these gifts to the altar on high (i.e. to the altar of another dimension) so that as many as are seen from **THIS** altar, that is the sacred body and blood of the Son: the people, may be filled with every blessing. It is not entirely clear from the Latin text what "this" altar is; whether it is the altar on high (the heavenly altar to which the priest prays that the gifts will be taken) or whether it is **THIS** altar, which is in front of the priest at the time.³⁴ In fact, to the priest it is both, of course; both *that* altar and *this* altar. The notion of "that is this" is very important, as **THAT** chalice is **THIS** chalice and **THAT** altar is **THIS** altar. The words following these,

translated as, "Once again, giving thanks, he blessed. Take of this and drink -- all of you, for this is . . . my blood" are common in all New Testament accounts.

The words, ". . . *mysterium fidei* . . ." have long been under dispute. The words have now been removed from this particular point in the Roman Canon and are used as an introduction to an acclamation to the people. The words do not occur anywhere in relation to the Eucharist in Scripture, but in the ordinary usage of the liturgical language, they were the words which the deacon said when he points to the chalice. That is to say, *this* (pointing to the chalice) is the mystery of faith, and it came in at this point in the Mass. The notion turns up somewhere in 1 Timothy; i.e. the deacons must hold the mystery of faith with a pure conscience. The traditional role of the deacons in the Mass was to hold the chalice, and it is possible that the connection lies here. *What* the deacons held with a pure conscience was the mystery of faith because what the people saw them holding every Sunday was, precisely, the chalice: the mystery of faith.

"Which will be shed for you . . ." and, "*multis*" . . ." (*qui pro vobis et pro multis* . . .): the Latin here is a translation from Aramaic and because of this can be translated either "many" or "all", but "*multis*" is not meant to exclude. That is, it does not have the sense of "for the many but not for all". It means "for a multitude", i.e. vast numbers of people.

"And as often as you do these things, do them in memory of me . . ." has an obvious meaning. The form of the words said over the cup in Latin are also parts of the prayer which begins, "Father, accept this offering, the offering that comes from your people", and God is asked to make it an offering in spirit and in truth. In the Latin forms of the prayer, there are several Roman formulae: to bless, to ratify, and the notions of reasonableness and acceptability,³⁵ so that it can become for us the body and blood of Jesus, i.e. ". . . *qui pro vobis* . . ." as on the night he suffered, which was the fulfillment of something for Christians the old law had never done.

Grammatically, the prayers are *oratio obliqua*, i.e. (indirect speech or talk) and one could without any loss of sense, simply miss out the account of the Last Supper: "so that it may become for us the body and blood of our Lord". To priests, the grammatical function of the words of the Eucharistic Prayer is to give the basis to God of what they are doing. The Last Supper is the basis on which they celebrate the Mass, *in persona Christi*. And at the end of it, Jesus says ". . . *do these things, and do them in memory of me*", and all the Eucharistic prayers go on to say, "Therefore, Father, remembering, we offer these gifts.

In the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, there was a tendency to play down the particular significance of the above words because there has been a controversy between the Eastern and Western churches as to what exactly effects the consecration in the Eucharistic prayers.³⁶ Is it the saying of these words, or is it the calling down of the Holy Spirit, cf. the *epiklesis* gesture?³⁷ In the only Eucharistic prayers in Latin which anybody knew during the Middle Ages, there was no reference to the calling down of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is thought that it is not the gesture which effects the consecration. From the point of view of Latin theology, it could not have been the calling down of the Holy Spirit.

In modern western theology, it is held that the *whole* Eucharistic Prayer is what matters. There has been a tendency, therefore, to reduce the emphasis on these words in the following way: in the Missa Major, a warning bell rang before the priest said the words. The whole church would go silent, then the words were spoken, but not aloud, the host was elevated, and the rite carried on.³⁸ There was, if the phrase can be permitted, a *tremendously loud silence* at this point. However, none of this is done any more and there is a tendency to shift the emphasis almost completely to the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, i.e. "Through him, with him, and in him is all glory given to God the Father". This goes with the tendency to shift emphasis from adoration of the elements of the Eucharist which are there, towards a strong sense of that to which the elements are relative, which are offered in sacrifice to God, and it is at the end of the Prayer that the bread and wine are now elevated in the Dominican rite.³⁹

A few comments on the notion of transubstantiation are relevant here: the idea of transubstantiation comes from an *Aristotelian way of thinking about the natural world*. Relative to this world, one could ask various questions about objects in the world, like, "what is it?", "where is it?", "how big is it?", "what colour is it" and so on. The answer to the question, "what is it?" would be the answer of substance. The answer to any other question one might ask about a given object would be "accidents". *Within this sort of framework,*⁴⁰ what the idea of transubstantiation is saying is that when they are asked about the Eucharistic elements, i.e. *what* they are, then priests give the answer, "The body and blood of Jesus Christ". If *any other* question is then asked, regarding colour, size and so forth, then the answer is in terms of bread and wine.

As one Dominican aptly put it, "It is a way of keeping the logos out of the mythos".⁴¹ That is to say, it is a way of keeping logical considerations out of mythical considerations. It was a way of ensuring that priests play the

New Testament language game properly, and the problem becomes clear if thought of in this way: Jesus says, "This is my body; this is my blood" and priests say "yes" to that, but they do not (and in terms of the above notions about transubstantiation, they are forbidden to) draw *any* logical or material conclusions from it -- even as logical a conclusion as "well, then, the body of Christ is here, or here-now". This is the answer in terms of bread and wine.

What the whole exercise represents is a way of insisting on the sacramentality; that is, on the ritual nature of what is being said. Put in another way, it is a way of defining the boundaries of the verbal semantic space of the Missa Major.⁴² It probably also needs to be said that none of my informants would expect that if a chemical analysis were to be done of the contents of the chalice after the consecration, it would show the presence of hæmoglobin instead of wine. Similarly, they do not believe that as the congregation walks towards the sanctuary to receive communion they are now twenty, now ten, now five yards closer to the body of Christ.⁴³ We need not go too far to find near-parallel notions in other religions; most orthodox Jews would not be prepared to defend the point that a chemical analysis of kosher meats would indicate any change in the chemical composition of the flesh of the animal. One hardly knows how to be tactful with regard to matters of this kind.⁴⁴ No one would deny that such confusions do exist and have existed on a popular level through-out the history of Catholicism, but they are in all cases simply evidence of ignorance and superstition: hopelessly naive interpretations of semantic and spiritual levels of meaning. They are not interpretations of the rite which would be held by learned people -- or they are not in the majority of cases.⁴⁵

Another way of putting the matter would be to say that *the body of Christ is present*, but *Christ is not bodily present*, i.e. anything *adverbial* is said of the bread and wine, not of Christ. Anything *adverbial* or *adjectival* is one of the "accidents" and not the "substance" in an Aristotelian, and hence in a scholastic theological universe. Furthermore, there is no notion attached of the *literal* interpretations people are wont to make regarding alchemical transformations, i.e. no notion of *literal* transformations of base metals into gold. The transformations *in* the Missa Major (and *of* the rite, should they occur) are semantic, spiritual and psychological, not material, transformations. It seems relevant to paraphrase two statements attributed to Jesus at this point: "my kingdom is not of this world . . . the kingdom is within".

It is well to bear in mind throughout that this ethnography sees and interprets the *actions* of the Missa Major as exegetical.⁴⁶ These acts constitute a liturgy, i.e. a public work on the part of ministers, and a public act of worship on the part of the congregation. The Mass creates certain conditions which identify the actions taking place *as a Mass* and not something else.⁴⁷ The function of such exegetical actions is to re-create or re-present conditions wherein inner transformations of, say, attitudes, can take place. The conditions of the Catholic tradition for several centuries are those which are notated in the movement text of the Missa Major and constituted the 3rd vol. of the D.Phil. thesis (Williams 1975).⁴⁸

Suffice to say here, with regard to our original theme of sacrifice, that in the interpretations of practising English friars-preachers, the author of Hebrews *did not make a literal interpretation of sacrifice*, for this kind of interpretation, for the reasons I have given, would be inappropriate to the Eucharistic feast. There is no direct association made between Christ and the animals which were slaughtered in the Temple of the time. It is perhaps unfortunate that what is unique to Christianity with regard to the notion of sacrifice is typologized and made to have doubtful similarities to all manner of ritual forms of sacrifice.

In anthropological literature, Hubert and Mauss (1898/1964) stressed certain overlaps because they were trying to uncover a "universal mechanism of sacrifice", which they conceived of as a communication between two realms: the sacred and the profane -- the famous Durkheimian distinction, which was applied to all religion. It is of no consequence, perhaps, to say that they misidentified the unifying structures because they had doubtful ethnographic sources to rely upon. Had they stressed *only* the notions of passage and of mediation between levels of experience, not attaching such importance to ". . . the mediation of a *victim*" (1964: 97), they would have come closer to the mark in their search for unifying structures on a different level, but the stress upon a victim weakens their case considerably in view of their inclusion of the Catholic rite.

Many have, of course, tried to re-insert the Mass into an historical continuum,⁴⁹ comparing it in various ways with other kinds of sacrifice, and they generally begin by asking "where does the immolation occur?" However, if one proceeds starting from the smoke of animal offerings, then one can simply bend things in whatever way one likes. Certain fundamental differences seem to be overlooked. To illustrate these, it is only necessary to draw attention to Lienhardt's ethnography of Dinka religion (1961) or to Evans-Pritchard's of Nuer religion (1956). Even cursory reading will suffice to convince a reader that no Nuer ox was the

son of Kwoth and no Dinka sacrifice is, or commemorates, a once and for all event consisting of the committed, conscious death of a human being. The Missa Major in the Dominican context therefore consists of two consecrations and no immolations.

The separateness of the consecrations points to the opposition of death and life, which is coincident with the opposition physical (death) as against spiritual, ethical or moral (life). If and when the model of animal sacrifice was (or is) used by priests, according to my informants, it was used in connection with the Mass to point to *a higher order of things*. They said that effectively, Jesus's sacrifice was the sacrifice of an obedient will: a concept far removed from the notion of animal flesh, which suggests a removal from the animal to a spiritual or to an ethical, moral sphere of human spatio-linguistic structures, and it is to these that we will now turn.

NOTES:

¹ See Hastings (1966) and also see Abbott (1966). For many Catholics, these changes seemed sudden and arbitrary, but according to my informants, Vatican II simply pulled together and formalized changes already taking place locally in several parts of the world.

² The Biblical texts quoted in English are those from the conventionally used translation in the Catholic church: the Douay Version from the Latin Vulgate. The King James texts are included in a short Appendix (pp. 85-87) for convenience of readers who may not be familiar with the Douay translation, or who may not know that the King James version was translated from a Greek text. Any Latin Mass would be directly connected with the Douay version which is dated A.D. 1609: Rheims, A.D. 1582.

³ Paul claims to have himself received a tradition of the supper 'of the Lord' (I Corinthians, 15: 3-6), and says, "For I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures . . . etc."

⁴ This breaking of the bread occurred at the beginning of the meal and would have been traditional at any ordinary Jewish meal. The 'paschal' meal is special; the word deriving from the word *pasach* meaning passover. *Paschal* refers to two things; a ceremony commemorating a Jewish event, the Exodus, which in turn meant freedom. These were re-interpreted in the Christian tradition to refer to the event of Easter, which came at the same time of year, and the freedom was assigned to the notion of freedom from sin and death through redemption by Christ.

⁵ This cup (chalice) was the last cup, e.g. the fourth cup of the passover meal. Only the passover meal had four ritual cups of wine. These were drunk in a reclining position which symbolized freedom as well, as in the freedom of leisure, or the positions assumed by nobility. The passover meal begins with hors-d'oeuvres and the telling of a story. The ritual aspect of the meal begins in fact with the story. The breaking of the bread follows the story, and the fourth cup (the last cup) was lifted up in blessing of the whole company. The direction 'up' is therefore a semantic marker in the Mass because the chalice *is lifted up* after it is consecrated and so is the host. It isn't, of course, merely the act of lifting the empirically perceivable chalice, but the offering of themselves on the part of the congregation which is meant, as for example, when the invitation is extended in the Mass to 'lift up your hearts'. There is a way of talking about the central prayer of the Mass as 'a lifting up', called *anaphora*.

⁶ More will be said in detail later about the Latin texts of the consecrations in the Mass. The words in the written movement text of the Mass are taken from Dominican missals.

⁷ It is perhaps necessary to say that of all the evangelist's accounts, the Johannine Gospel makes more sense of the tradition to me than any of the others. The reader may attribute

this to personal bias, or look on it as an element of personal anthropology (see Pocock 1994: 11-42). There have been endless arguments, interpretations and disputes over every sentence written in the Bible. I propose neither to unravel these disputes nor to compare scholarly accounts of their many interpretations – itself the undertaking of a lifetime were it to be followed out. I here attempt a semasiological analysis of the Missa Major as an object of anthropological interest. There are two aspects of the anthropology of the Mass which are in any way different or 'new' which are thought to justify tackling such a vast subject in the first place: this account of the Mass was largely taken from the point of view of contemporary, practising Dominican friars and the main body of the ethnography is an analysis of the written text of the rite. Neither the approach from verbal accounts of priests, nor a written score of the Mass have ever been done before to my knowledge. Both types of inquiry are genuinely and perhaps, uniquely, social anthropological. I intend the enquiry to illuminate our own and other types of research into the general subject of ritual and religion.

⁸ For controversies on the point of Melchisedech and the eternal priesthood, see Smith (1969). Anthropologically, we may note the difference here between an office conferred *by commission*, i.e. under oath and/or covenant, in contrast to an office conferred *by birth*, both of which differ from an office conferred *by election*.

⁹ See Vermes (1974), *Jesus the Jew*. He says, '... so central and vital was this designation in the life of the primitive Church that within a generation of the crucifixion a Greek neologism, 'Christian' could be coined in the Judeo-Hellenistic community of Antioch in Syria (cf. Acts, 11: 26). A little later, King Agrippa II uses the name with familiarity in his rejoinder to Paul.

¹⁰ For many Catholics, priests or not, the Mass is not just a recalling of Christ's death, but also his resurrection and glorification, for without the latter two ideas, i.e. the exaltation of the death, the Mass would be meaningless. The two thieves, after all, were crucified too.

¹¹ The term 'generated' is not used here in a causal, but in a prophetic sense with reference to the crucifixion. The usage of the word in relation to subsequent Masses is obvious.

¹² In singling out "a move from propitiation to love", I draw attention to attempts to fit the rite into an evolutionary biological continuum. The statement is not meant to imply any comment on the nature of Judaism.

¹³ A 'kineseme' is a whole bodily action or a whole body gesture – some would say 'posture' – but the connotations of that word don't really fit the case. The profound inclinations (*inclinatio profunda*) were, with reference to the choir (or chorus) of friars, so deep they were expected to touch their knees with their foreheads if they possibly could.

¹⁴ See Williams (1975 and 1975a) for some discussion of this with reference to Carmelite nuns, and for the general notion of religious hierarchy in anthropological literature, see Dumont (1970).

¹⁵ This is not to say that the concept of God, the Father, is not involved in the Mass. As we shall later see, all the prayers said aloud were prayers to the Father, prayers to the Son were said in silence. The Canon is directed to the Father, *in secreto* and the prayers said just before communion were addressed to Jesus.

¹⁶ I have discovered that many people misinterpret the word 'informants', used here in the technical anthropological sense as *someone who instructs an anthropologist*. The word has been interpreted as if it had the same definition it does when it is used in the phrase "police informants". I can only say the latter usage is irrelevant and immaterial to this study.

¹⁷ Another notion which has undergone considerable change in meaning over the centuries is the idea of 'witnessing' to one's beliefs. In earlier Christianity, it quite simply meant martyrdom. It did not then mean a public profession of dogma or an emotional expression of sorrow or exhilaration.

¹⁸ There are religious sects whose members have practised real crucifixion. There was one which was, to my knowledge, still in existence up to 1966 in the southwestern United States. Commonly known as *The Penitentes*, they were not recognized by the Catholic Church or by the United States government. Choreographer Martha Graham drew attention to the existence of this sect when she based a now famous early contemporary dance work on their activities in a piece entitled *El Penitente*. Her research permitted a few people to become acquainted with their religious practices which took place in near-inaccessible reaches of mountain ranges near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

¹⁹ During certain periods in the history of the Church, the Mass has been treated both as a passion play and as a drama, for instance, as Durandus would have seen it, or in terms of certain dramatic elements in Eastern Orthodox liturgies where the bread is lanced with a tiny spear. In Durandus's time and for his followers, moving the Missal from one side of the altar to the other would have been seen as Jesus moving from Galilee down to Jerusalem, or the washing of hands during the Mass would have been seen as Pilate washing his hands before passing sentence, instead of being seen as connected with a wider notion of ritual or spiritual purity and innocence. It would seem that at one period, such symbolic acts had come to be entirely 'signs' in the sense of signs which point to something other than what is being done at the time. The meanings were taken to be singular and connected with historical events connected with the passion, so the gestures were not what they were in

themselves, but they stood for something else, much as highway signs stand for something else.

There seems to be, however, a return after periods like this to the idea that performing certain gestures, like breaking the bread in the Mass, can give access to a great mystery, and this is how such matters were looked upon by most of my Dominican informants. There was a confusion, in such periods as are mentioned above, between real sacramental celebration and these dramatic elements, which is why the Mass has sometimes been put into the same category as, for example, the service of the stations of the Cross, or older Palm Sunday processions where people had little donkeys that were pulled along on wheels, as in Germany. It is even said that in Spain during similar periods, the deacon brayed!

²⁰ More will be said later regarding the relation between the priest and his actions in the Mass which are *in persona Christi* and, e.g. an actor playing a part in a play. Suffice it to say here that an actor playing Henry V is not acting *in persona* Henry V in the same kind of way. In Brechtian theatre, a person would be failing in his or her job if, for example, the actor were thought to actually BE Mother Courage. It is a form of acting which is done in 'indirect speech' (such speech when used in the Mass is called *oratio obliqua*). And, of course, even 'method acting' can only be carried so far, lest the company of actors be decimated following performances of plays like Hamlet. There is a very fine difference between gestures which are signal and gestures which are symbolic in the full logical and psychological meanings of those terms, but further discussion cannot detain us.

²¹ See Malachi 1: 10-12; also Ignatius of Antioch about himself. Also see St. Augustine, *City of God*, on the subject of true sacrifice. These references are not liturgical, but they are meant to point to a deeper level of sacrifice, although these aren't included in this study. For example, the citation about Ignatius concerns what he said about himself when he was being taken to die.

²² One of the major problems now confronting priests and congregations is connected with this because (i) in turning around to face the congregation, many priests find that they are self conscious in ways they never were before and they have to work very hard to perform the rite so as not to draw attention to themselves, (ii) in being faced by the priest, the congregation now has several psychological problems which did not exist before. The congregations at Blackfriars, Oxford, felt obliged to be critical of actions and words they had never criticized previously.

²³ Regarding the ordination of Word and Sacrament, the usage of 'and' in the phrase is not meant to imply a distinction, but is meant to bring together things of superficially disparate levels. The Dominican Order was founded primarily for the purpose of preaching, hence the hyphenated term by which these men are known: 'friars-preachers'. Preaching, i.e. the 'word', is a parameter of all their activities, including liturgical activity. This is in contrast to the emphasis given the Sacrament by other Orders. That is

to say that in popular priestly consciousness, the sacrament usually takes priority, but St. Dominic specifically served God as a minister of the Word, hence the strong emphasis on preaching.

²⁴ 5. For there is one God; and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ-Jesus, 6. Who gave himself a redemption for all, a testimony in due times. 7. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle (I say the truth and lie not), a doctor of the Gentiles in faith and truth (1 Timothy: 2).

²⁵ See Vermes, 1974: 54 and 60. [N.B. many of my informants considered Vermes an erratic source of information, not of historical, but of theological knowledge]. I cite him for the historical kind of information, not because I necessarily agree with him theologically.

²⁶ The writer of Hebrews, putting up as he does an argument for the *differences of sacrifice* that occurred at the time, would have doubtless not softened the statement about the aims of reconciliation which animal sacrifice represented. *He would have thought that animal sacrifice did not fulfil the aim of reconciliation for anyone.* A modern social anthropologist couldn't make that statement with impunity because there is no way of knowing (on the basis of what we consider to be evidence), whether it fulfilled the aim for some people and not for others, or for how many, etc., hence my own usage of the term 'everyone' in the first sentence of this paragraph.

²⁷ It is appropriate to note the continual battle over the centuries for practising Christians, Catholic or Protestant, to hold on to both the notion of Jesus the man, and Jesus as Divinity. If either line is taken and followed to its conclusion as an intellectual argument, the result seems to be mutual exclusion - either one or the other, but not both. Priests say that the Nicene Creed grew out of such controversies and much argumentation was couched in an Aristotelian style of logic, from the point of view of a classical, kinematic universe. The important point here is that I would not wish my subsequent remarks to be misinterpreted as a denial of Jesus's humanity or his Divinity. Social anthropologists who understand anything about religion will recognize that denial of either renders the Missa Major incomprehensible.

²⁸By edict, prior to Vatican II, these words were not supposed to be translated into vernacular languages. Until the nineteenth century, there was an edict that translations could not be *printed*, but towards the end of the century that was relaxed and Missals were printed of translations; however the words *were never spoken* in the vernacular in the Mass. People in general always knew what the priest was saying, i.e. "This is my body" etc., but there was always a strong sense of the awesomeness of the words. In fact, many priests thought that even if all the rest of the Mass were to be translatable, these words would remain as they are here written, but that was not to be the case. It is difficult to find a suitable explanation for the edict, or for the strong feeling on the part of many Catholics

that translation is in any case impossible. The latter, of course may be regarded as a wish to put a boundary around 'sacred' language and that argument in turn rests upon the notion of immutability of meaning.

Less charitable critics of the Church would probably insist that these words are merely an example of an hieratic language, meant to dominate the unlearned or untutored through obscurantism; an argument which boils down to an involved example, for them, of class exploitation. However, there are two factors which seem to be overlooked by the proponents of either of these views: the first points to a rather short-sighted grasp of the diachronic aspects of Church history. That is to say that Latin was itself at one time a translation from Aramaic and Greek, thus Latin emerged in the first instance as a move towards vernacularization. Second, it must be remembered that there are liturgies of the Eastern church which are, and have been, valid in terms of the Roman Church which are not just different translations of other texts (as the cited Latin text is) but texts which are composed of entirely different words.

²⁹ This statement and the next one need some qualification, especially for the literal-minded; it is sometimes literally true that Orthodox priests are often *neither seen nor heard* during the consecration owing to the fact that the singing of hymns by the choir drowns out the priest's voice.

³⁰ This is an important anthropological point, as it is an excellent example of differing cultural modes of registration (see Ardener, 1973, on modes of registration of the anthropologist). It is a good example, too, of the Saussurian principle of arbitrariness as it applies to body languages. One would wish to know much more about these differing emphases on modes of registration: why is it that in rituals one society conceals gestures and allows spoken words to be heard, whilst another allows gestures to be seen whilst words are not spoken aloud? It seems clear that human groups place different values on different sensory channels of expression and registration. A legitimate area for cross-cultural comparison would certainly include a parallel study of the Eastern Orthodox rite, for one would be able to note in detail semantic and value differences (and similarities) of this kind. It is interesting to speculate whether one would be allowed to write the gestures of consecration in the Orthodox case into a movement text.

³¹ Mention must be made of the fact that for priests the reference to the hands of Jesus was a way of distancing the priest from Jesus himself; an ethnographic detail which underlines the non-parallelism in the idea of the mediation of the priest.

³² It is worthwhile to quote one such *blessing story* in detail from the Old Testament in illustration:

2. Thou shalt take of the first of all thy fruits and put them in a basket, and shalt go to the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, that his name may be invocated there.

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3. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him: I profess this day before the Lord thy God, that I am come into the land, which he swore to our fathers, that he would give it to us.
 4. And the priest, taking the basket at thy hand, shall set it before the altar of the Lord thy God.
 5. And thou shalt speak thus in the sight of the Lord thy God: The Syrian pursued my father, who went down into Egypt, and sojourned there in a very small number, and grew into a nation, great and strong and of an infinite multitude.
 6. And the Egyptians afflicted us, and persecuted us, and laying on us most grievous burdens.
 7. And we cried to the Lord God of our fathers: who heard us, and looked down upon our affliction, and labour, and distress.
 8. And the lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, with great terror, with signs, and wonders.
 9. And brought us into this place, and gave us this land, flowing with milk and honey.
 10. And therefore now I offer the first-fruits of the land, which the Lord, hath given me. And thou shalt leave them in the sight of the Lord thy God, adoring the Lord thy God.
 11. And thou shalt feast in all the good things which the Lord thy God hath given thee, and thy house; thou and the Levite and the stranger that is with thee.
 13. And thou shalt speak thus in the sight of the Lord thy God: I have taken that which was sanctified out of mine house, and I have given it to the Levite, and to the stranger, and to the fatherless, and to the widow, as thou has commanded me. I have not transgressed thy commandments, nor forgotten thy precepts.
 14. I have not eaten of them in my mourning, nor separated them for any uncleanness, nor spent anything of them in funerals. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God, and have done all things as thou hast commanded me.
 15. Look down from thy sanctuary, and thy high habitation of heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou didst swear to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The elements of blessing are doubtless self-evident: (1) the telling of the history of the act, which culminates in this basket of fruit which is placed before the priest, (2) the sense of community and (3) the sense of ritual purity.

³³ There is a long tradition of the intoxication indicated here which is connected with a theme in Philo, i.e. the "*sobria [in]ebrietas*".

³⁴ See Cabasilas (1966 edition) *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, in the section on *epiklesis* – the reference to the Roman prayer – remarking that the "heavenly altar" does not refer to a spatial transference as if so many thousands of feet up in the air reckoned in *metrically measurable* terms.

35 The earlier concept of 'rational' is meant in the prayer, i.e. 'rationabilis'; a thinking-feeling being, not only the intellectual faculties.

36 I do not know whether this controversy was resolved, or whether the question still remains.

37 The *epiklesis* gesture is, in any case, not used in the old Dominican rite; instead we find the *orantes* gesture, as e.g. throughout the Preface of the Mass.

38 In Harré and Secord's discussion of a liturgical model the following statement occurs:

The rite could be described wholly in terms of movements and the sentences uttered, but the analyst might be unable to decide which of these was part of the rite and which was not. It could be that a nervous priest *always* coughed at the elevation of the host (1972: 188).

The authors then go on to say that a Chinese anthropologist might be unable to detect whether the cough was part of the [movement] utterance. If the Latin Mass was the Mass to which the authors referred, their misapprehension raises interesting points about the rule-based nature of the Latin liturgy which might as well be dealt with here: in the *Missa Major*, the words of consecration were never said aloud, thus a cough on the priest's part during the silence after the warning bell would be glaringly obvious *as a cough*.

But it is doubtful if such a thing would ever have happened, because (a) the priest who had a severe cold would be unlikely to celebrate a public Mass and (b) during the priests' rather extensive training, amounting roughly to seven years, it is likely that any nervousness about celebrating Mass would have first, been detected, and second, dealt with such that it would not be a problem. Even in the case of modern Masses in English, a Chinese anthropologist would be assumed to understand the language sufficiently well that he would be able to detect the difference, and if he were doing fieldwork in England, one could also assume that he might have heard the Mass in Chinese somewhere in his own country, perhaps in Hong Kong, or in nearby Taiwan perhaps, thus he would know through his own language what the rite meant.

To examine a somewhat less frivolous case: what *did* happen if a priest became ill, fainted or died during the Mass? If the mishap occurred before the consecration, the Mass was stopped. If after the consecration of the bread, but before the wine was consecrated, or after both were consecrated, the Mass was to be completed by another priest from the point where the first priest stopped. If it was the case that there was no priest present who has not fasted, then another priest could finish the Mass even if he had eaten or drunk. If the words of the first consecration hadn't been completed, the Mass was stopped. Should the priest have died at any of these points, then the Mass was continued, but with a repetition of the incomplete form over the first chalice plus the whole form over another chalice (or

host, as the case might have been). In these instances, the second priest received the second host and consecrated chalice and then the uncompleted one.

These are a few examples of the kinds of detailed rules which governed pre-Vatican II liturgical procedures. With regard to coughing during the Missa Major, it may seem rather curious, but it has been noted by priests that even congregations (who may have included members with colds, influenza, etc.) responded to the silence following the warning bell with silence. There might have been coughing on the congregation's part before, and immediately afterwards, but they say that it was rare indeed to hear anything during the silence.

39 While this research was being done (1973-1975), there were public complaints at the wide variation in Masses in the vernacular in Britain. There existed a movement towards re-establishing the Tridentine Mass as the real Mass. The idiosyncratic nature of modern Masses in English was thus a source of confusion, perplexity and outright rebellion in some parishes. Derogatory allusions appeared in editorial columns of newspapers about "liturgical bingo". It becomes obvious, I think, that syntax is a meaningful element in an action sign system because (a) changes of syntax evidently connote changes of emphasis upon ideas, and (b) change of syntax alters the semantic space of a rite, or can do, to the extent where it becomes *unrecognizable as that rite* to its congregations.

40 It is not binding on Catholics to hold to this Aristotelian way of thinking as a philosophical framework as is sometimes wrongly thought, both by Catholics and non-Catholics.

41 There is a way in which the terms *logos* and *mythos* are used which does not imply the concept of *logos* outlined on page 10-11 (*supra*). That is, where *logos* is associated with 'intellect' or 'rationality' and *mythos* with 'emotion' and 'sentimentality', more along the lines of the Nietzschean polarity of Apollonian/Dionysian. This is not what the informant meant here, nor is the above interpretation appropriate to the research in hand. "Keeping the *logos* out of the *mythos* means *steering clear of a kind of materialism* which was evident in Catholic thinking following the Council of Trent and during the high Middle Ages, regarding the Mass. The sense of "This is my body" at that time came to be understood wholly in the sense of a *material body* and the word *this* in the phrase disappeared from people's thinking with reference to the Eucharist. When the Mass is seen to pertain to inner transformations, then the word "this" assumes its rightful, appropriate place and the Mass becomes a mystery to be entered into and contemplated, not an expression of a dogma to be believed.

42 The definition of boundaries of meaning (or what in our technical language is called 'semantic fields') is essential to understanding. Religion is so often looked upon merely as dogma, doctrine or beliefs held through persuasion, imitation or acquired habits -- hence its many close resemblances to politics and political beliefs of numerous kinds. The parallels

are obvious. However, belief that is *based upon understanding* is an altogether different thing. It's no good trying to understand human ritual or religions, wherever they may be found, unless one is prepared to attempt to understand what it is that its practitioners are doing. There are those, of course, who defend the position that understanding destroys the mystery, reminiscent of the arguments put forward by those who are convinced that the science of linguistics, for example, has spoiled or detracted from the mysteries and beauties of drama and literature. This is not a position I defend regarding religion – or art – whether our own or that of others.

⁴³ Attempts to *locate* the body of Christ: that is, *body in a material sense*, are simply silly. Attempts to locate the body of Christ in any other terms are as futile as attempts to locate a non-material structure such as an *isomer*, a *quark* or a *hadron*. The Eucharist connotes a priest doing things with bread and wine. It is seen as a holy meal in memory of the Lord. It is a technical theological term. The primary function of the rite surrounding the Eucharistic feast is to focus and channel attention. More will be said later with regard to the accessibility and inaccessibility of the rite.

⁴⁴ The word 'kosher' is an adjective. The nutritive or chemical properties of the meat are not changed. The Chinese consider that a pig is only good for eating, but an orthodox Muslim, an orthodox Jew or Hindu won't touch one or eat its flesh. Ritual purity forbids it. These matters have nothing to do with the chemical composition or the physical properties of the meat. Likewise, the Eucharist has nothing to do with the physical or chemical properties of bodies. The body of Christ does not *come or go* anywhere. Thomas Aquinas was quite clear about this. The only analogy he uses is that of creation, i.e. *creation out of nothing*. One hardly knows how to be tactful because it would appear that with some people, thinking on the subject of religion was arrested between ages five and nine. It is impossible to discuss such matters rationally at that level, and it makes no difference what form of religion or what educated discourse is under investigation and discussion.

⁴⁵ There are, of course, many Catholic jokes about this level of superstition. For example, mothers who won't let their children have an ice cream after they have had communion, ". . . so you won't get the baby Jesus's feet cold", etc. Although one doesn't wish to make distinctions between learned and ignorant people, especially in this present age of equalitarianism because such distinctions tend to arouse indignation, there seems to be no recourse. Being learned doesn't necessarily make someone into a good Christian, but ignorance and superstition aren't necessary pre-conditions for being a good Christian either.

⁴⁶ An 'exegesis' is usually taken to refer to words and is basically defined as reading something out of a text. Exigetical gestures or action signs are here meant to be those which act something out formally in specific contexts, then written into movement texts.

⁴⁷ The actions of the Mass are, after all, not very different actions, thus we are involved in a question about *identity of behaviour*. That is, the actions of the Mass include such ordinary acts as walking, hand washing, breaking bread, pouring wine, bowing, addressing others with words or gestures, etc. These actions are repeated over and over by millions of people daily in a variety of different contexts and for thousands of different reasons. They are not, however, done by everyone *in the particular sequences or contexts in which they are performed in the Missa Major*, nor are the actions assigned the same value or meanings that they are assigned, say, in cases of hand washing by surgeons in operating theatres.

⁴⁸ It has been suggested that a diagram of a church would be helpful to readers unfamiliar with Catholic rites, but I have not included anything of that kind because the rite was transcribed *in relation to the high altar*, so that, if reproduced, it could be performed in any church regardless of size or shape. I feel obliged to maintain inflexibility on the point because of the nature of the ethnography undertaken, which does not depend upon an outside, physical structure for its existence, its coherence or its form(s). The rite could be (and probably was, somewhere in the world), celebrated in an open field with a table, bread, wine and suitable containers. Then too, I am convinced that our understanding of human rites, ceremonies and other structured systems of human action signs remains flawed because many people tend to conflate physical surroundings with the *form space* of the rite, dance or whatever, with the result that their perceptions are irrevocably tied to architectural or geographical locations. Finally, the introduction of a church diagram would invalidate much of what is said in section III regarding the relationships between geographical locations and the rite.

⁴⁹ To insert the rite itself into an historical continuum is a somewhat different exercise from the one Vermes undertook; "At first sight the re-insertion of Jesus into the Galilean Judaism of his day would appear not only reasonable and necessary, but also easy . . ." (1974: 43).