Chapter 6

Catholic Reformation Hymnody

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

With the rapid spread of Reformation ideas across Europe after Martin Luther's call for church reform in 1517, a response was called for by the Roman Catholic authorities. This response has often been called the "Counter Reformation." The Council of Trent (1545–63) was noted for its defensive attitude. The Catholic bishops at Trent condemned Protestant teachings, defined Catholic teachings, and defended them strongly, with an emphasis on what divided Catholics and Protestants rather than what united them.

But scholars have increasingly noted that efforts to reform the Catholic Church predate the Protestant Reformation and continued throughout the sixteenth and successive centuries independent of it. Hence, while the term "Counter Reformation" continues to be used, it has become more common to speak of the Catholic Reformation.[1] It is this term that is used in the present work. It refers to the entire complex of efforts to renew the Catholic Church, including the founding of new religious orders such as the Jesuits, the creation of seminaries, efforts to improve preaching and catechetical

1. Lampe and Soergel, "Counter Reformation."

instruction, publication of religious works of all sorts, standardization of liturgical practice with the issuing of the missal in 1570 for the rite of the Mass, and most important for our purposes, the development of hymnody and the publication of hymnals.

The term "Counter Reformation" has some accuracy in that the life of the Catholic Church came to be characterized by resistance and opposition to Protestant ideas and practices. This attitude began to soften only gradually with Catholics movements of renewal in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century. These movements culminated in the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), which marks a turning point in the direction of less defensiveness, greater respect for other Christian traditions, and explicit advocacy for ecumenical dialogue toward the goal of eventual reunion of divided Christians. With the Second Vatican Council the era of the Catholic Reformation in the sense of a "Counter Reformation" drew to a close and the Catholic Church undertook an internal reform of a markedly different character.

It is well attested that people sang religious hymns and songs in vernacular extensively in the Middle Ages, and that at least in some cases, this vernacular singing was brought into an otherwise Latin and clericalized liturgy.[2] It was the work of Martin Luther to give much greater emphasis to congregational vernacular hymnody and make it a central feature of Protestant worship.[3]

In response to the popularity of Protestant hymn-singing, some Roman Catholic figures were skeptical of hymnody because of its association with "heretical" movements. But the more common Catholic reaction—especially in German-speaking countries, Hungary, and Slavic lands—was to make greater use of vernacular hymnody.[4] This was done in part to counter the spread of Protestant movements, but it was also done out of recognition of the positive value of hymnody in itself.

An early hymnal of the Catholic Reformation is the Czech Catholic hymnal of 1529, *Pisniĉky Velmi Pěkné a Přikladné* ("Good and Exemplary Hymns"). It contained vernacular hymns based on the Epistles and Gospels assigned to the various Sundays of the liturgical year and the Vespers hymns.[5]

The first significant hymnal of the German Catholic Reformation was issued by Michael Vehe in 1537 in Halle, Germany: *Ein new Gesangbüchlin*

2. Please see chapter 15 in volume 1: "Western European Vernacular Song."
3. Reynolds and Price, *Survey,* 26.
4. Ruff, *Sacred Music,* 576–92.
5. Ducreux, "L'Hymnologie," 171.

geistlicher Lieder ("A New Little Hymnal of Spiritual Hymns"). It included, in addition to hymns borrowed from Protestant sources, eight German metrical psalms, German versions of the Our Father and Hail Mary, hymns based on canticles such as the *Te Deum* and the *Magnificat,* and German versions of Latin hymns such as "Pange Lingua." Based on the layout of the hymnal, it is very possible that Vehe intended for vernacular hymns to be sung at Mass. As a contemporary, Georg Witzel, wrote in 1542, "On the high feasts of the year one already knows, based on the custom of the Church, what is to be sung in German."[6]

Georg Witzel's *Psaltes Ecclesiasticus* ("The Church Musician") of 1550 contains many Latin hymns in translation, with indications for their extensive use at High (i.e., fully sung) Mass. For example, it says above the vernacular hymn "Christ ist erstanden": "At this point the entire church shouts out with resounding high voice and unutterable joy."[7]

Johann Leisentritt of Bautzen issued the hymnal *Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen* ("Spiritual Hymns and Psalms") in 1567. It contained approximately 260 texts set to 175 notated melodies, many borrowed from Protestant sources. It was reissued in 1573 and 1584. Leisentritt stated explicitly his desire to bring people back to the Catholic Church who had defected to Protestantism.[8] Leisentritt wrote in the forward to his hymnal that vernacular hymns could be sung at Offertory and Communion "without harm to the substance of the Catholic religion."[9]

The first diocesan synod in Dilingen, Germany, in 1567 stated, "We permit ancient and Catholic vernacular hymns, especially those which our praiseworthy German forebears employed on the major feast days of the church, and we approve that they be retained in church and in processions." The influential Salzburg provincial synod of 1569 issued a similar decree.[10]

The Diocese of Bamberg issued its first diocesan hymnal in 1576. It stated that no elements of the official Latin liturgy were to be omitted because of the vernacular hymns. This perhaps suggests a doubling in which a proscribed Latin element of the liturgy was followed by a vernacular piece.[11]

A Czech Catholic hymnal of 1580 titled *Písně na Evangelia* ("Hymns on the Gospels") had sixty-seven hymns based on the Gospel readings and fifty hymns based on the Epistles of the church year, with the second half

6. Gülden, *Johann Leisentrits,* 59–60.
7. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche,* 323.
8. Wetzel and Heitmeyer, *Johann Leisentrit's Geistliche Lieder.*
9. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche,* 329n93.
10. Ruff, "Metrical."
11. Schmidt, "Kirchenlied," 112.

of the book based on the Christian life and the life of Christ.[12] A 1581 German-language hymnal, issued in Prague by Christoph Hecyrus, provided seasonal hymns to be sung after the first reading, strophic stanzas of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* that follow the Latin text very closely, and hymns for the Offertory and the Our Father.[13]

In France, the *Paraphrase des Hymnes* ("Paraphrases of Hymns") of Michel Coyssard, first printed in 1592 and reprinted into the middle of the seventeenth century, is an example of French translations of Latin hymns and antiphons.[14]

A particularly interesting hymnal of the Catholic Reformation is the one issued in 1602 in Graz, Austria, by Nicolaus Beuttner.[15] Beuttner spent three years in outlying villages around Graz listening to popular hymns and songs known by memory by older people that otherwise had almost died out during the years when the areas were predominantly Lutheran. The hymnal also includes Protestant material: its first hymn is Luther's "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland" ("Savior of the Nations, Come"). The hymnal speaks of replacing Latin chant with congregational hymnody, and Beuttner lists seven vernacular hymns for singing at Mass during Communion.

A *Cantual* issued in Mainz and Hildesheim in 1605 is a striking example of extensive use of vernacular hymnody at Latin High (i.e., sung) Mass. It provided for vernacular hymnody at the Gradual, Sequence, or Alleluia, after the Gospel, after the Homily, at the Offertory, at the Elevation, during the Communion procession, and after the final blessing. At Low (i.e., recited) Mass, nearly uninterrupted vernacular hymnody was permitted, with pauses only for the Gospel, the consecration of the bread and wine, and the final blessing.[16] In 1661, Archbishop Johann Philipp von Schoenborn published a hymnal in Mainz with "Evangelienlieder" ("Gospel Hymns") for every Sunday and feast day.[17]

Benedictine Abbot David Corner issued the *Groß catholisch Gesangbuch* ("Large Catholic Hymnal") in Nurnberg in 1625/1631, with further printings in Vienna under the title *Geistliche Nachtigal der catholischen Teutschen* ("Spiritual Nightingale of the Catholic Germans") from 1631 on.

12. Ducreux, "L'Hymnologie," 171.

13. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche*, 330.

14. Launay, "Aprés," 413.

15. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche*, 343–45; Harnoncourt, "Das Gesangbuch"; Lipphardt, "älteste"; Ruff, "Unity."

16. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche*, 348–51.

17. Schmidt, "Kirchenlied," 115.

The second edition had almost 500 hymns.[18] *Davidische Harmonia* ("Davidian Harmony") was first printed in Vienna in 1659, then reprinted and enlarged as *Rheinfelsischen Gesangbuch* ("Rheinfels Hymnal") in Augsburg in 1666. It was of three-fourths Protestant origin.[19]

There are numerous witnesses to vernacular hymnody sung at Latin High (i.e., sung) Mass in Germany. In 1677 the bishop of Munster authorized vernacular hymns at High Mass at the Introit, Gloria, after the first reading, before the Homily, at the Offertory, Elevation, Agnus Dei, during Communion, and after the blessing.[20] The foreword to a Munster hymnal contains a directive from the prince ordering German hymns at High Mass as appropriate to the season.[21] A 1687 hymnal from Friedrichstadt, provided for the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei (i.e., the "Ordinary") to be sung in vernacular strophic settings, with the Introit, Offertory, and Communion to be replaced by vernacular metrical psalmody.[22]

Metrical psalmody is genre in which the text of psalms are rhymed and put into a meter with a regularly recurring pattern of syllables in each line of a strophe. This allows the strophes of text to be sung to a hymn tune in the same meter. While metrical psalmody has been developed especially in Protestant traditions, at was also part of Catholic practice in various places beginning in the sixteenth century.[23]

Catholic priest Kaspar Ulenberg issued a collection of all 150 psalms in meter in Cologne in 1582. It was often reprinted into the nineteenth century.[24] In Poland, Jan Kochanowski set the entire psalter in rhymed meter, and this was set for four voices by Mikołaj Gomółka and published in 1580. It was used widely by Catholic and Protestant congregations.[25] Metrical psalmody was also sung in Catholic Bohemia.[26]

In Hungary, the 1676 *Cantionale Catholicum* of János Kájoni (1629–87) had 60 psalm hymns among its 545 Hungarian hymns. Fifty-two of these were of Protestant origin, including a Hungarian version of Luther's

18. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche*, 346–47.
19. Bäumker, *Katholische*, vol. 1, 232, 182–86, 411.
20. Heinz, "Jesuiten," 161–62.
21. Schmidt, "Kirchenlied," 112.
22. Heinz, "Jesuiten," 162–65.
23. Ruff, "Metrical."
24. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche*, 331; Fornaçon, "Kaspar Ulenberg."
25. Witkowski, "Die polnischen."
26. Ducreux, "L'Hymnologie," 172.

famous paraphrase of Ps 46, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." Later Hungarian Catholic hymnals also included metrical psalmody.[27]

In France, the 1551 translation of the psalter by the Protestant Marot was popular also among Catholics. Other translations were approved by Catholic officials, and in 1648 the *Paraphrases des Psaumes* was issued by Bishop Godeau of Grasse. In 1686 a royal council prohibited this translation because the popularity of the psalms was seen to draw people away from the Latin liturgy.[28]

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with its emphasis on rationality, brought with it a catechetical and didactic thrust in hymn texts. Sentiments emblematic of the era were expressed by a Catholic leader in Breslau:

> The people should be *actual participants* of what occurs in the assembly, and not idle spectators, or worse, just staring in admiration at what is happening. . . . The actual participation of the members of the community in the communal worship of God is only conceivable when every member is conscious and remains conscious of what the servant of the altar undertakes in the name of Christ or in the name of the community.[29]

The Enlightenment brought the development of the *Singmesse*—literally the "sing-Mass." This was a series of strophic hymns to be sung throughout Mass, intended to help Catholics understand what was happening in the Latin liturgy.[30] In Austria, Empress Maria Theresia decreed in 1755 that a *Singmesse* be used throughout Austria.

An influential hymnal of the Enlightenment era was issued in Landshut in 1777, *Der heilige Gesang zum Gottesdienst in der römisch-katholischen Kirche* ("Sacred Song for Worship in the Roman Catholic Church"). This hymnal included a *Singmesse* by Johann Kohlbrenner, later set to music by Michael Haydn, which is still in use today in Europe in various languages.[31] The practice of singing hymns throughout Mass spread from Germany and Austria eastward to Slavic and Hungarian lands.[32] For a time it was in use in northern Italy as well.[33]

27. Holl, "Das Psalmlied"; Csomasz and Papp, "Abriss," 19–31.

28. Launay, "Après," 411–13.

29. Ruff, *Sacred Music,* 582.

30. Harnoncourt, *Gesamtkirchliche*, 352–54; Kurthen-Weidesheim, "Zur Geschichte."

31. Brenninger, "Das Landshuter."

32. Csomasz and Papp, "Abriss," 26–28; Ropitz, "Slowenischer," esp. 45; Sehnal, "Der tschechische,"

33. Cattaneo, *Il Culto*, 477n57.

Borrowing from Protestant sources, which is found already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, increased in the Enlightenment era. The *Katholische Gesangbuch zum allgemeinen Gebrauch bei öffentlichen Gottesverehrungen* ("Catholic Hymnal for General Use at Public Worship of God") issued by Kaspar Anton von Mastiaux in Munich in 1810, for example, took over half of its 800 hymn texts from Protestant sources.[34]

Count von Zinzendorf of the Church of the Brethren is best known for his influence upon Protestant hymnody in Europe and the US.[35] Less well known is his *Christ-catholisches Singe- und Bet-Buechlein* ("Christian Catholic Booklet for Song and Prayer"), issued for Catholic use in Breslau in 1727, with approximately 150 Protestant hymns.[36] It is reported that this hymnal was "truly received with joy by many honorable and open-minded people of the Catholic Church, and used with blessings for their hearts."[37]

A study of eighteen Czech Catholic hymnals from 1588 to 1762 showed an average of approximately 30 percent of their contents of Protestant origin, with only one hymnal less than 20 percent (13 percent in 1601) and a 1652 hymnal being of 77 percent Protestant origin.[38]

In the nineteenth century, the German reformist Cecilian movement attempted to eliminate vernacular hymnody from High (sung) Mass and preserve the exclusive use of Latin. Though a decree from Rome of 1894 prohibited vernacular hymnody at High Mass,[39] this did not prevent the continued use of vernacular hymns there.[40] At Low (recited) Mass, it was undisputed that vernacular hymnody was permitted, and figures in the Cecilian movement worked hard to provide high quality hymnals for this use as well as at devotional exercises.

As already noted, it was primarily in German-speaking regions and in regions further east that vernacular hymn singing occurred at Mass. But some examples from other regions are also to be found. In 1598, a council at Avignon had permitted vernacular hymns to be sung in church at Christmas, most likely during the liturgy. But another council prohibited the practice in 1725.[41] In 1725, a Roman provincial council under Pope Benedict XIII decreed that a hymn be sung every Sunday at High Mass after

34. Bretschneider, "Pädagogische."
35. Reynolds and Price, *Survey,* 42–43.
36. Baümker, *Deutsches*, vol. 3, 144; Teuscher, "Jesus," 40.
37. Müller, *Hymnologisches,* 25.
38. Ducreux, "L'Hymnologie," 173.
39. Hayburn, *Papal*, 456; Romita, *Jus Musicae*, 206–7.
40. Ruff, *Sacred Music,* 93–105.
41. Romita, *Jus Musicae*, 70, 87.

the sermon.[42] A late nineteenth-century children's hymnal printed in Paris, *Cantique Parouissial,* also includes vernacular hymns for use during Mass, with indications above some hymns for singing at the elevation of the host and chalice and at communion.

There is a long history of vernacular singing at both High Mass and Low Mass in Brittany.[43] There are reports of vernacular hymnody being used at Mass and other liturgies in England and America in the early nineteenth century before being suppressed.[44] A decree from Toledo, Spain, in 1850 allowed for vernacular singing at First Communion, Confirmation, and other particular days of the year.[45]

Especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, efforts to involve people more actively in Catholic worship developed into the "Liturgical Movement."[46] In the decades before the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), popes gave increasing emphasis to the value of congregational hymn singing.[47] There was a marked increase in the production of congregational hymnals across the entire Catholic Church. This extensive movement need not be documented in detail here, for it belongs, by way of anticipation, more to the reforms affirmed by the Second Vatican Council than to the spirit of the Catholic Reformation issuing from the sixteenth-century Council of Trent.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

In appraising theologically and liturgically the hymnody of the Catholic Reformation, two distinctions should be kept in mind: that between liturgy and devotions, and that between High Mass and Low Mass. These distinctions played a role in the function of the congregational hymnody used in worship and prayer.

First, the liturgy of the Catholic Church consists primarily of the Mass (the service of Holy Communion) and the daily cycle of Scripture-based offices (such as Lauds, Vespers, and Compline) in the Liturgy of the Hours.[48] These texts for these liturgies are found in officially approved books issued by Rome or, in some cases, by religious orders under Rome's supervision. Up until the Second Vatican Council, the Latin language was used exclu-

42. Jungmann, *Mass*, vol. 1, 155.
43. Abjean, "Chant" 579.
44. Higginson, *History*, 13.
45. Pons, *Droit*, vol. 4, 59.
46. Ruff, *Sacred Music,* 194–242.
47. Ruff, *Sacred Music,* 293, 313.
48. Ruff, "Gregorian," 24–40.

sively in these books. In the case of Mass, all the texts officially part of the liturgy were found in the missal, to be read or sung by the ordained priest.

In a less important category are devotions. These communal services are more popular in character, vary regionally in their content, and are less regulated by church authorities. The have often emphasized aspects of the Catholic faith less centrally important than the Mass and the Office, such as prayers to Mary and the saints or adoration of the eucharistic host put on display. But because these services have largely been in vernacular, they have often had a disproportionate attraction for the Catholic people compared to the more important services of the officially regulated Mass and Office.

There has been little dispute historically that vernacular hymnody befits devotional services. As a result, there is a large body of devotional hymnody sung historically by Catholics. This explains why there is to this day so much Catholic Marian hymnody, though the Blessed Virgin Mary is entirely subordinate to God and Jesus Christ in Catholic teaching.

As the historical survey above shows, there is also a long history of vernacular hymnody being sung at the Latin liturgy, particularly in German-speaking and Slavic regions. This vernacular singing seems to have been permitted at the officially Latin liturgy as a salutary byproduct of an overly clergy-dominated view of liturgy. Because the official liturgy was done by the ordained priest rather than the congregation, it did not much matter what the congregation did—for example, sing vernacular hymns—parallel to the Latin liturgy of the priest. Though congregational vernacular hymnody was not central to the liturgy, and its legitimacy was always somewhat unstable and susceptible to critique, it was nevertheless in use—in some times and places, quite extensively.

To understand the use of congregational hymnody in the Latin liturgy, the second distinction is important: between High Mass and Low Mass. In High Mass, the primary public texts of the liturgy were all sung by the priest, with a choir singing Latin responses in alternation with the priest. In Low Mass, such texts of the priest were recited, with an acolyte or altar boy reciting the choral responses. The significance of this distinction for vernacular hymnody is that, at least in theory, singing vernacular hymns was not permitted at High Mass. But as history shows, such singing nevertheless was widely practiced, especially in German-speaking countries. Reformist efforts to purge High Mass of vernacular hymns did not meet with success. By 1943—this was in the wake of the expanding Liturgical Movement—Rome officially decreed that in Germany and Austria vernacular hymns could be sung at High Mass, though it was canonically illegal.

At Low Mass, by contrast, it was never disputed that vernacular hymns could be sung. While the priest quietly said his official Latin texts alone

or in alternation with a server, the congregation could sing hymns. These locally chosen hymns might be more closely related to the content of the Latin liturgy or more removed from it. Though this practice was permitted, it was not equally practiced everywhere. It was less common in Romance countries and among English-speaking Catholics in England and Ireland.

The upshot of all this is that the inheritance of Catholic Reformation hymnody varies widely in its relationship to the central aspects of the Catholic faith celebrated in the official liturgy. Some of the hymnody, in some times and places, has helped Catholics understand and participate in the most important rites of their religion. But much of it has put undue emphasis on secondary aspects of the faith.

An important theological aspect of Catholic Reformation hymnody is the ecumenical sharing it witnesses between Catholic and Protestant traditions. Many cases have been noted above in which Catholic hymnals drew extensively upon Protestant repertoires. This might not have been expected, given the defensive posture of the Council of Trent noted earlier. The Catholic Reformation is known for its polemical, anti-Protestant stance. Fortunately, this stance was counterbalanced by the impulse among at least some Catholic musicians and publishers to make use of worthy repertoire from Protestant sources. One could perhaps speak of a "practical ecumenism" in musical matters long before the rise of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITURGY AND WORSHIP

The tradition of Catholic Reformation hymnody has produced an extensive repertoire that has enriched and continues to enrich the worship of the churches. There is an ecumenical dimension to this, since hymns coming from the Catholic Reformation are typically found in the hymnals of most Christian traditions today. But a central contribution of this tradition is the way in which it affected the worship of the Catholic Church itself in the era between the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century and the Second Vatican Council in the twentieth century.

Catholic worship in this era is generally described as highly centralized, uniform, regulated down to the most minute detail, inaccessible to the faithful because of the Latin language, and dominated by clergy to the exclusion of lay people.[49] Each of these tendencies, all of which are unfortunate in various ways, were mitigated and counterbalanced by the presence of vernacular congregational hymnody.

49. White, *Roman Catholic.*

Catholic Reformation hymnody was highly localized, with much regional variance. There was little uniformity from one region to another. Because hymnody was not considered to be an integral part of the Latin liturgy, it was not highly regulated by church officials for the most part. There are instances in Germany of diocesan hymnals approved by bishops, but these are an exception to an overall tendency toward great freedom and personal initiative. Vernacular hymns helped make the liturgy more accessible to lay people by facilitating their comprehension and participation. This allowed for a significant role for lay people in a liturgy that otherwise would have been the exclusive domain of clergy.

NOTABLE HYMNS

Because congregational hymn singing has been cultivated more strongly among Protestants than Catholics historically, and only came to find strong, explicit Roman approval in the decades before the Second Vatican Council, many hymns of the Catholic Reformation have been in use more among Protestants than among Catholics in the English-speaking world. Several examples can be named of hymns commonly found in hymnals of various Christian traditions today.

From Catholic hymnals in Cologne come two widely used tunes: *Es ist ein Ros*, commonly sung with "Lo, How a Rose," of 1599, and *Lasst uns erfreuen*, commonly sung with "All Creatures of Our God and King," of 1623. *Paderborn,* commonly sung to "Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim," comes from that city from 1765. *Grosser Gott,* commonly sung with "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," comes from a Catholic hymnal of 1775 in Vienna. *Ellacombe,* sometimes sung with "I Sing the Almighty Power of God," comes from an Enlightenment era hymnal of 1784 from Wurtemberg.

Two hymn tunes in Catholic use are *Gott Veter sei Gepriesen* and *Ich glaub' an Gott.* The first is often sung with "O God, Almighty Father" and comes from Limburg in 1838. The second is often sung with "To Jesus Christ, Our Sovereign King" and comes from an 1870 hymnal from Mainz.

As is well known, the beloved Christmas carol "Silent Night" / *Stille Nacht* comes from Catholic Austria in 1818.

In a separate category are hymn melodies from France not treated above because they were originally conceived as tunes for use with Latin Office hymn texts rather than congregational vernacular texts.[50] Because of the way chant hymns were then sung, however, these tunes have the character of congregational hymns. They readily lend themselves to congregational

50. Pocknee, *French Diocesan.*

singing and are used as such today in many hymnals. Three examples in widespread use in many church traditions, with characteristic Latin names, are the tunes *Christe sanctorum* of 1681, *Iste confessor* of 1746, and *Deus tuorum militum* of 1753.

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