

# **The Rise and Fall of Annibale Bugnini**

## **The destruction of Catholic Faith through changes in Catholic Worship**

### **Liturgical Time Bombs in Vatican II: Excerpts**

**by Michael Davies (TAN BOOKS, 1990)**

Before discussing the time bombs in the Council texts, more specifically those in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which would lead to the destruction of the Roman Rite, it is necessary to examine the role of Annibale Bugnini, the individual most responsible for placing them there and detonating them after the Constitution had won the approval of the Council Fathers.

Annibale Bugnini was born in Civitella de Lego [Italy] in 1912. He began his theological studies in the Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentians) in 1928 and was ordained in this Order in 1936. For ten years he did parish work in a Roman suburb, and then, from 1947 to 1957, was involved in writing and editing the missionary publications of his Order. In 1947, he also began his active involvement in the field of specialized liturgical studies when he began a twenty-year period as the director of *Ephemerides liturgicae*, one of Italy's best-known liturgical publications. He contributed to numerous scholarly publications, wrote articles on the liturgy for various encyclopaedias and dictionaries, and had a number of books published on both the scholarly and popular level.

Father Bugnini was appointed Secretary to Pope Pius XII's Commission for Liturgical Reform in 1948. In 1949 he was made a Professor of Liturgy in the Pontifical Propaganda Fide (Propagation of the Faith) University; in 1955 he received a similar appointment in the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music; he was appointed a Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1956; and in 1957 he was appointed Professor of Sacred Liturgy in the Lateran University. In 1960, Father Bugnini was placed in a position which enabled him to exert an important, if not decisive, influence upon the history of the Church: he was appointed Secretary to the Preparatory Commission on the Liturgy for the Second Vatican Council. [Biographical details are provided in *Notitiae*, No. 70, February 1972, pp. 33-34.] He was the moving spirit behind the drafting of the preparatory schema (plural schemata), the draft document which was to be placed before the Council Fathers for discussion. Carlo Falconi, an "ex-priest" who has left the Church but keeps in close contact with his friends in the Vatican, refers to the preparatory schema as "the Bugnini draft." [Carlo Falconi, *Pope John and His Council* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1964), p. 244.] It is of the greatest possible importance to bear in mind the fact that, as was stressed in 1972 in Father Bugnini's own journal, *Notitiae* (official journal of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship), the Liturgy Constitution that the Council Fathers eventually passed was substantially identical to the draft schema which he had steered through the Preparatory Commission. [Notitiae, No. 70, February 1972, pp. 33-34.]

According to Father P. M. Gy, O.P., a French liturgist who was a consultor to the pre-conciliar Commission on the Liturgy, Father Bugnini "was a happy choice as secretary": He had been secretary of the commission for reform set up by Pius XII. He was a gifted organizer and possessed an open-minded, pastoral spirit. Many people noted how, with Cardinal Cicognani, he was able to imbue the discussion with the

liberty of spirit recommended by Pope John XXIII. [A. Flannery, Vatican II: The Liturgy Constitution (Dublin: Sceptre Books, 1964), p. 20.]

The Bugnini schema was accepted by a plenary session of the Liturgical Preparatory Commission in a vote taken on January 13, 1962. But the President of the Commission, the eighty-year old Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, had the foresight to realize the dangers implicit in certain passages. Father Gy writes: "The program of reform was so vast that it caused the president, Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, to hesitate." [Flannery, p. 23.] Unless the Cardinal could be persuaded to sign the schema, it would be blocked. It could not go through without his signature, even though it had been approved by a majority of the Commission. Father Bugnini needed to act. He arranged for immediate approaches to be made to Pope John, who agreed to intervene. He called for Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, his Secretary of State and the younger brother of the President of the Preparatory Commission, and told him to visit his brother and not return until the schema had been signed. The Cardinal complied:

"Later a peritus of the Liturgical Preparatory Commission stated that the old Cardinal was almost in tears as he waved the document in the air and said: 'They want me to sign this but I don't know if I want to.' Then he laid the document on his desk, picked up a pen, and signed it. Four days later he died." [Fr. Ralph M. Wiltgen, S.V.D., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: A History of Vatican II* (1967, rpt. TAN, 1985), p. 141.]

### ***1 - The First Fall***

The Bugnini schema had been saved – and only just in time. Then, with the approval of Pope John XXIII, Father Bugnini was dismissed from his chair at the Lateran University and from the secretaryship of the Conciliar Liturgical Commission which was to oversee the schema during the conciliar debates. The reasons which prompted Pope John to take this step have not been divulged, but they must have been of a most serious nature to cause this tolerant Pontiff to act in so public and drastic a manner against a priest who had held such an influential position in the preparation for the Council. In his book *The Reform of the Liturgy*, which to a large extent is an apologia for himself and a denunciation of his critics, Bugnini blames Cardinal Arcadio Larraona for his downfall. He writes of himself in the third person:

Of all the secretaries of the preparatory commissions, Father Bugnini was the only one not appointed secretary to the corresponding conciliar commission (...) This was Father Bugnini's first exile. At the same time that Father Bugnini was dismissed from the secretariat of the conciliar commission, he was also discharged from his post as teacher of liturgy in the Pontifical Pastoral Institute of the Lateran University, and an attempt was made to take from him the chair of liturgy at the Pontifical Urban University. This repressive activity emanated directly from Cardinal Larraona and was very kindly seconded by some fellow workers who wanted better to serve the Church and the liturgy. The basis for the dismissals was the charge of being a "progressivist," "pushy," and an "iconoclast" (innuendos whispered half-aloud), accusations then echoed in turn by the Congregation of Rites, the Congregation of Seminaries, and the Holy Office. But no proof was offered, no clear justification for such serious measures. [Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 30.]

Bugnini's claim that "no proof was offered" is simply a gratuitous assertion on his part. The fact that he saw no proof in no way proves that it did not exist. Falconi condemns the dismissal of Father Bugnini as a retrograde step, but adds:

All the same, Bugnini managed to get his draft through as far as the Council, and now it will be interesting to see if it is passed, and even more so if the draft schema of the proscribed Secretary of the Liturgical Commission should open the way for the success of other drafts of a progressive character. [Falconi, p. 224.]

The dismissal of Father Bugnini was very much a case of locking the stable door after the horse had bolted. It would have helped Father Bugnini's cause had he been appointed Secretary to the Conciliar Commission (the post was given to Father Ferdinand Antonelli, O.F.M.), as he could then have guided his schema through the Council – but this was not essential. It was the schema that mattered.

Seventy-five preparatory schemata had been prepared for the Council Fathers, the fruits of the most painstaking and meticulous preparation for a Council in the history of the Church. [Wiltgen, p. 22.] The number was eventually reduced to twenty, and seven were selected for discussion at the first session of the Council. [Ibid.] The Bugnini schema was the fifth of these, and it was presumed by most bishops that the schemata would be debated in their numerical sequence. [Ibid.] But the other schemata were so orthodox that the liberals could not accept them – even as a basis for discussion. At the instigation of Father Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., a Belgian-born Professor of Dogmatics at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, the schemata were rejected with one exception – the Bugnini schema. This, he said, was "an admirable piece of work." [Ibid., p. 23.] It was announced at the second general congregation of the Council on October 16, 1962, that the sacred liturgy was the first item on the agenda for examination by the Fathers. [Bugnini, p. 29.] Notitiae looked back on this with considerable satisfaction in 1972, remarking that the Bugnini preparatory schema was the only one that was eventually passed without substantial alteration. [Notitiae, No. 70, p. 34.] Father Wiltgen comments: "It should be noted that the liturgical movement had been active in Europe for several decades, and that quite a large number of bishops and periti from the Rhine countries had been appointed by Pope John to the preparatory commission on the liturgy. As a result, they had succeeded in inserting their ideas into the schema and gaining approval for what they considered a very acceptable document." [Wiltgen, p. 23.]

As for the other schemata, one prominent Council Father, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, wrote: "Now you know what happened at the Council. A fortnight after its opening not one of the prepared schemata remained, not one! All had been turned down, all had been condemned to the wastepaper basket. Nothing remained, not a single sentence. All had been thrown out." [Marcel Lefebvre, *A Bishop Speaks* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1987), p. 131.]

Bugnini's allies who had worked with him on preparing the schema now had the task of securing its acceptance by the bishops without any substantial alterations. They did so with a degree of success that certainly exceeded the hopes of their wildest dreams. They seem to have presumed that the bishops would be a bunch of "useful idiots," men who preferred to laugh rather than to think. "It was all good fun," wrote Archbishop R. J. Dwyer, one of the most erudite of the American bishops. "And when the vote came round, like wise Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.M., 'We always voted at our party's call; we never thought of thinking for ourselves at all.' That way you can save yourself a whole world of trouble." [Twin Circle, October 26, 1963, p. 2.] The Bugnini schema received the almost unanimous approval of the Council Fathers on December 7, 1962 and became Vatican II's "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" (CSL). But the Constitution contained no more than general guidelines; therefore, to achieve total victory, Father Bugnini and his cohorts needed to obtain the power to interpret and implement it.

## ***2 - The Second Rise***

The Rhine Group [Note 1] pressed for the establishment of post-conciliar commissions with the authority to interpret the CSL. It "feared that the progressive measures adopted by the Council might be blocked by conservative forces near the Pope once the Council Fathers had returned home." [Wiltgen, pp. 287-288.] Cardinal Heenan, of Westminster, England, had warned of the danger if the Council periti were given the power to interpret the Council to the world. "God forbid that this should happen!" he told the others. [Ibid., p. 210.] This was just what did happen. The members of these commissions were "chosen with the Pope's approval, for the most part, from the ranks of the Council periti. The task of the commissions is to put into effect the Council decrees (...) and, when necessary, to interpret the Council institutions, decrees, and declarations." [The Tablet (London), January 22, 1966, p. 114.] On March 5, 1964, *l'Osservatore Romano* announced the establishment of the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, which became known as the Consilium. The initial membership consisted mainly of members of the Commission that had drafted the Constitution. Father Bugnini was appointed to the position of Secretary of the Consilium on February 29, 1964. What prompted Pope Paul VI to appoint Bugnini to this crucially important position after he had been prevented by Pope John XXIII from becoming Secretary of the Conciliar Commission is probably something that we shall never know.

In theory, the Consilium was an advisory body, and the reforms it devised had to be implemented by either the Sacred Congregation for Rites or the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments. These congregations had been established as part of Pope Paul's reform of the Roman Curia, promulgated on August 15, 1967. Father Bugnini's influence as Secretary of the Consilium was increased when he was appointed Under-Secretary to the Sacred Congregation for Rites. [Notitiae, No. 70, February 1972, p. 34.] On May 8, 1969, Pope Paul promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Sacra Rituum Congregatio*, which ended the existence of the Consilium as a separate body; it was incorporated into the newly established Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship as a special commission which would retain its members and consultors and remain until the reform of the liturgy had been completed. *Notitiae*, official journal of the Consilium, became the journal of the new Congregation. Father Annibale Bugnini was appointed Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and became more powerful than ever. It is certainly no exaggeration to claim that what in fact had happened was that the Consilium, in other words Father Bugnini, had taken over the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. The April-June 1969 issue of *Notitiae* announced Father Bugnini's appointment, stating:

This number of *Notitiae* appears under the direction of the new Congregation for Divine Worship. Pope Paul VI, at the end of the 28 April Consistory, made the announcement and gave it an official character with the Apostolic Constitution "Sacred Congregation of Rites" of 8 May. The new Congregation will continue on a firmer juridical foundation, with more effectiveness and renewed commitment, the work accomplished by the Consilium in the past five years, linking itself with the Council, its preparatory commission, and the entire liturgical movement (...) The Consilium continues as a particular commission of the Congregation until the completion of the reform.

Father Bugnini was now in the most influential position possible to consolidate and extend the revolution behind which he had been the moving spirit and the principle of continuity. Nominal heads of commissions, congregations, and the Consilium came and went – Cardinal Lercaro, Cardinal Gut, Cardinal Tabera, Cardinal Knox – but Father Bugnini always remained. He attributed this to the Divine

Will: "The Lord willed that from those early years a whole series of providential circumstances should thrust me fully, and indeed in a privileged way, in medias res, and that I should remain there in charge of the secretariat." [Bugnini, p. xxiii.] His services would be rewarded by his being consecrated a bishop and then being elevated to the rank of Titular Archbishop of Diocletiana, as announced on January 7, 1972.

### ***3 - The Imposition of the New Rite of Mass***

What the experts were planning had already been made clear on October 24, 1967 in the Sistine Chapel, when what was described as the Missa Normativa was celebrated before the Synod of Bishops by Father Annibale Bugnini himself, its chief architect. Since he had been appointed secretary of the post-Vatican II Liturgy Commission, he had the power to orchestrate the composition of the New Rite of Mass which he had envisaged in the schema that he had prepared before his dismissal by John XXIII – the schema which had been passed virtually unchanged by the Council Fathers. As already remarked, why Pope Paul VI appointed to this key position a man who had been dismissed by his predecessor is a mystery which will probably never be answered.

Fewer than half the bishops present voted in favor of the Missa Normativa, but the far-from-satisfied majority was ignored with the arrogance which was to become the most evident characteristic of the liturgical establishment, to which the Council Fathers had been naive enough to entrust the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The Missa Normativa would be imposed on Catholics of the Roman Rite by Pope Paul VI in 1969, with a few changes, as the *Novus Ordo Missae*: the New Order of Mass.

In 1974 Archbishop Bugnini explained that his reform had been divided into four stages – firstly, the transition from Latin to the vernacular; secondly, the reform of the liturgical books; thirdly, the translation of the liturgical books; and fourthly, the adaptation or "incarnation" of the Roman form of the liturgy into the usages and mentality of each individual Church. [Notitiae, No. 92, April 1974, p. 126.] This process (which would mean the complete elimination of any remaining vestiges of the Roman Rite) had already begun, he claimed, and would be "pursued with ever increasing care and preparation." [Ibid.]

### ***4 - The Second Fall***

At the very moment when his power had reached its zenith, Archbishop Bugnini was in effect dismissed – this was his second fall – to the dismay of liberal Catholics throughout the world. What happened was that the Archbishop's entire Congregation was dissolved and merged with the Congregation for the Sacraments under the terms of Pope Paul's Apostolic Constitution *Constans Nobis*, published in *l'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) of July 31, 1975. The new congregation was entitled the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. The name Bugnini did not appear in the list of appointments. Liberals throughout the world were dismayed. The *Tablet*, in England, and its extreme liberal counterpart in the United States, the *National Catholic Reporter*, carried an indignant report by Desmond O'Grady:

Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, who, as Secretary of the abolished Congregation for Divine Worship, was the key figure in the Church's liturgical reform, is not a member of the new Congregation. Nor, despite his lengthy experience was he consulted in the planning of it. He heard of its creation while on holiday at Fiuggi (...) the abrupt way in which this was done does not augur well for the Bugnini line of encouragement for reform in collaboration with local hierarchies (...) Msgr. Bugnini conceived the next ten years' work as concerned principally with the incorporation of local usages into the

liturgy (...) He represented the continuity of the post-conciliar liturgical reform. [The Tablet, August 30, 1975, p. 828.]

*l'Osservatore Romano* carried the following announcement in its English edition, on January 15, 1976: "5 January: The Holy Father has appointed Apostolic Pro Nuncio in Iran His Excellency the Most Reverend Annibale Bugnini, C. M., titular Archbishop of Diocletiana." This was clearly an artificial post created to gloss over the fact that the Archbishop had been banished.

In his book *The Devastated Vineyard*, published in 1973, Dietrich von Hildebrand rightly observed concerning Bugnini that: "Truly, if one of the devils in C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* had been entrusted with the ruin of the liturgy, he could not have done it better." [Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), p. 71.] This is a statement based on an objective assessment of the reform itself. It is beyond dispute that whether or not the Roman Rite has been destroyed deliberately, it has been destroyed. (See later herein.) If this result is simply the consequence of ill-judged decisions by well-meaning men, the objective fact remains unchanged: they could not have destroyed the Roman Rite more effectively had they done so deliberately. But the thoroughness of the destruction caused many to wonder whether it might be more than the result of ill-considered policies. It came as no great surprise when, in April of 1976, Tito Casini, Italy's leading Catholic writer, publicly accused Archbishop Bugnini of being a Freemason. [Tito Casini, *Nel Furno di Satana* (Florence: Carro di San Giovanni, 1976), p.150.] On October 8, 1976, *Le Figaro* published a report stating that Archbishop Bugnini denied ever having had any Masonic affiliation.

I have made my own investigation into the affair and can vouch for the authenticity of the following facts. A Roman priest of the very highest reputation came into possession of evidence which he considered proved Archbishop Bugnini to be a Freemason. He had this information placed into the hands of Pope Paul VI with the warning that if action were not taken at once, he would be bound in conscience to make the matter public. Archbishop Bugnini was then removed by means of the dissolution of his entire Congregation. I have verified these facts directly with the priest concerned, and the full facts can be found in Chapter XXIV of my book *Pope Paul's New Mass*.

An important distinction must be made here. I have not claimed that I can prove Archbishop Bugnini to have been a Mason, but that Pope Paul VI dismissed him and exiled him to Iran because he had been convinced that the Archbishop was a Mason. I made this same point in a letter published in the January 1980 *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, which prompted a violent attack upon me by Archbishop Bugnini in the May 1980 issue. He denied that any of the prelates who, since Vatican II, had been accused of Masonic affiliation "ever had anything to do with Freemasonry," and he continued:

And for Michael Davies it would be enough. [sic] But for him and his colleagues, calumniators by profession (...) I repeat what I wrote in 1976: "I do not own anything in this world more precious than the pectoral cross: if one is able to prove honestly, objectively, an iota of truth of what they affirm, I am ready to return back the pectoral cross."

But, as I have already stated, I did not accuse him of being a Mason but simply pointed out that Pope Paul VI had been convinced that this was the case, and the fact that this does not constitute calumny is proved by the fact that Bugnini conceded precisely what I had alleged in his book *The Reform of the Liturgy*. Referring to his removal from his position by Pope Paul VI and the suppression of the Congregation for Divine Worship, he wrote:

«« What were the reasons that led the Pope to such a drastic decision, which no one expected and which lay so heavily on the Church? I said in the preface to this book that I myself never knew any of these reasons for sure, even though, understandably in the distress of the moment, I knocked on many doors at all levels (...) There were those who ascribed the change to the "authoritarian," "almost dictatorial" way in which the secretary of the congregation supposedly managed the agency, not allowing freedom of movement to his own co-workers and limiting the role even of the cardinal prefects. [NOTE 2] But when all is said and done, all this seems to be the stuff of ordinary administrative life. There must have been something more earthshaking. Toward the end of the summer a cardinal who was usually no enthusiast for the liturgical reform told me of the existence of a "dossier" which he had seen on (or brought to?) the Pope's desk and which proved that Archbishop Bugnini was a Freemason. »» [Bugnini, p. 91.]

Although one is not supposed to speak ill of the dead – *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* [literally, "of the dead, nothing except good"], in an historical study such as this, objectivity demands that it be made clear that truth was not a priority with Archbishop Bugnini. In an attempt to play down the role played by the Protestant observers in his liturgical revolution, he stated: "They never intervened in the discussions and never asked to speak." [Notitiae, July-August 1974.] As is made clear in Appendix I, this is highly misleading. There is not the least doubt that the Second Vatican Council was a cause of great satisfaction to Protestants. In their final message to the Council, read by Archbishop Felici on December 4, 1965, the Observer-delegates enlarged on this theme: "Blessed be God for all that he has given us so far through the Holy Spirit, and for all that he will give us in the future." Oscar Cullmann, the noted Swiss theologian, summed up their thoughts when he declared: "The hopes of Protestants for Vatican II have not only been fulfilled, but the Council's achievements have gone far beyond what was believed possible." [Xavier Rynne, *The Fourth Session* (London: Herder & Herder, 1966), p.256.]

1. In the Preface to *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber* (p. 1), Father Wiltgen explains that the "predominant influence" during the Second Vatican Council came from Council Fathers and periti (experts) from the "countries along the Rhine river – Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands – and from nearby Belgium. Because this group exerted a predominant influence over the Second Vatican Council, I have titled my book *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*:" This is certainly the most informative book written on what really happened at Vatican II, and it should be owned by every Catholic taking a serious interest in events since the Council. The six countries named were those in which the Liturgical Movement had been most active and in which liberal ideas were most manifest.

2. In a footnote commenting on these complaints made by members of the Congregation for Divine Worship, Archbishop Bugnini comments: "Human deficiencies are always possible, of course, but the accusation reflects a mentality that was periodically revived among officials of the Congregation who out of ambition or defects of character, were determined to create difficulties for the secretary." This remark is typical of his insistence throughout the book that no criticism made of him can ever be justified and that those who make these criticisms have bad motives.

---

# How the liturgy fell apart: the enigma of Archbishop Bugnini

by Michael Davies

Michael Davies is an English convert to Catholicism and a prolific writer on liturgical issues, including his trilogy 'Liturgical revolution.' He examines the role of Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, a major architect of the Catholic Church's liturgical changes since Vatican II.

Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, who died in Rome on 3 July 1982, was described in an obituary in *The Times* as "one of the most unusual figures in the Vatican's diplomatic service." It would be more than euphemistic to describe the Archbishop's career as simply "unusual". There can be no doubt at all that the entire ethos of Catholicism within the Roman Rite has been changed profoundly by the liturgical revolution which has followed the Second Vatican Council.

As Father Kenneth Baker SJ remarked in his editorial in the February 1979 issue of the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*: "We have been overwhelmed with changes in the Church at all levels, but it is the liturgical revolution which touches all of us intimately and immediately."

Commentators from every shade of theological opinion have argued that we have undergone a revolution rather than a reform since the Council. Professor Peter L. Berger, a Lutheran sociologist, insists that no other term will do, adding: "If a thoroughly malicious sociologist, bent on injuring the Catholic community as much as possible had been an adviser to the Church, he could hardly have done a better job."

Professor Dietrich von Hildebrand expressed himself in even more forthright terms: "Truly, if one of the devils in C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* had been entrusted with the ruin of the liturgy he could not have done it better."

## ***5 - Major Conquest***

Archbishop Bugnini was the most influential figure in the implementation of this liturgical revolution, which he described in 1974 as "a major conquest of the Catholic Church."

The Archbishop was born in Civitella de Lego, Italy, in 1912. He was ordained into the Congregation for the Missions (Vincentians) in 1936, did parish work for ten years, in 1947 he became active in the field of specialised liturgical studies, was appointed Secretary to Pope Pius XII's Commission for Liturgical Reform in 1948, a Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1956; and in 1957 he was appointed Professor of Sacred Liturgy in the Lateran University.

In 1960 Father Bugnini was placed in a position which enabled him to exert a decisive influence on the future of the Catholic Liturgy: he was appointed Secretary to the Preparatory Commission for the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. He was the



moving spirit behind the drafting of the preparatory schema, the draft document which was to be placed before the Council Fathers for discussion. It was referred to as the "Bugnini schema" by his admirers, and was accepted by a plenary session of the Liturgical Preparatory Commission in a vote taken on 13 January 1962.

The Liturgy Constitution for which the Council Fathers eventually voted was substantially identical to the draft schema which Father Bugnini had steered successfully through the Preparatory Commission in the face of considerable misgivings on the part of Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, President of the Commission.

## ***6 - The First Exile***

Within a few weeks of Father Bugnini's triumph his supporters were stunned when he was summarily dismissed from his chair at the Lateran University and from the secretaryship of the Liturgical Preparatory Commission. In his posthumous *La Riforma Liturgica*, Archbishop Bugnini blames Cardinal Arcadio Larraona for this action, which, he claims, was unjust and based on unsubstantiated allegations. "The first exile of P. Bugnini" he commented, (p.41).

The dismissal of a figure as influential as Father Bugnini could not have taken place without the approval of Pope John XXIII, and, although the reasons have never been disclosed, they must have been of a very serious nature. Father Bugnini was the only secretary of a preparatory commission who was not confirmed as secretary of the conciliar commission. Cardinals Lercaro and Bea intervened with the Pope on his behalf, without success.

The Liturgy Constitution, based loosely on the Bugnini schema, contained much generalised and, in places ambiguous terminology. Those who had the power to interpret it were certain to have considerable scope for reading their own ideas into the conciliar text. Cardinal Heenan of Westminster mentioned in his autobiography "A Crown of Thorns" that the Council Fathers were given the opportunity of discussing only general principles: "Subsequent changes were more radical than those intended by Pope John and the bishops who passed the decree on the Liturgy. His sermon at the end of the first session shows that Pope John did not suspect what was being planned by the liturgical experts." The Cardinal could hardly have been more explicit.

The experts (periti) who had drafted the text intended to use the ambiguous terminology they had inserted in a manner that the Pope and the Bishops did not even suspect. The English Cardinal warned the Council Fathers of the manner in which the periti could draft texts capable "of both an orthodox and modernistic interpretation." He told them that he feared the periti, and dreaded the possibility of their obtaining the power to interpret the Council to the world. "God forbid that this should happen!" he exclaimed, but happen it did.

On 26 June 1966 *The Tablet* reported the creation of five commissions to interpret and implement the Council's decrees. The members of these commissions were, the report stated, chosen "for the most part from the ranks the Council periti".

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was the first document passed by the Council Fathers (4 December 1963), and the commission to implement it (the Consilium) had been established in 1964.

## ***7 - Triumphant Return***

In a gesture which it is very hard to understand, Pope Paul VI appointed to the key post of Secretary the very man his predecessor had dismissed from the same position on the Preparatory Commission, Father Annibale Bugnini. Father Bugnini was now in a unique and powerful position to interpret the Liturgy Constitution in precisely the manner he had intended when he masterminded its drafting.

In theory, the Consilium was no more than an advisory body, and the reforms it devised had to be approved by the appropriate Roman Congregation. In his Apostolic Constitution, *Sacrum Rituum Congregatio* (8 May 1969), Pope Paul VI ended the existence of the Consilium as a separate body and incorporated it into the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. Father Bugnini was appointed Secretary to the Congregation, and became more powerful than ever. He was now in the most influential position possible to consolidate and extend the revolution behind which he had been the moving spirit and principle of continuity. Nominal heads of the Consilium and congregations came and went, Cardinals Lercaro, Gut, Tabera, Knox, but Father Bugnini always remained. His services were rewarded by his consecration as an Archbishop in 1972.

## ***8 - Second Exile***

In 1974 he felt able to make his celebrated boast that the reform of the liturgy had been a "major conquest of the Catholic Church". He also announced in the same year that his reform was about to enter into its final stage: "The adaptation or 'incarnation' of the Roman form of the liturgy into the usages and mentality of each individual Church." In India this "incarnation" has reached the extent of making the Mass in some centres appear more reminiscent of Hindu rites than the Christian Sacrifice.

Then, in July 1975, at the very moment when his power had reached its zenith, Archbishop Bugnini was summarily dismissed from his post to the dismay of liberal Catholics throughout the world. Not only was he dismissed but his entire Congregation was dissolved and merged with the Congregation for the Sacraments.

Desmond O'Grady expressed the outrage felt by liberals when he wrote in the 30 August 1972 issue of *The Tablet*: "Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, who as Secretary of the abolished Congregation for Divine Worship, was the key figure in the Church's liturgical reform, is not a member of the new congregation. Nor, despite his lengthy experience, was he consulted in the planning of it. He heard of its creation while on holiday in Fiuggi ... the abrupt way in which this was done does not augur well for the Bugnini line of encouragement for reform in collaboration with local hierarchies ... Mgr Bugnini conceived the next ten years' work as concerned principally with the incorporation of local usages into the liturgy ... He represented the continuity of the post-conciliar liturgical reform."

The 15 January 1976 issue of *L'Osservatore Romano* announced that Archbishop Bugnini had been appointed Apostolic Pro Nuncio in Iran. This was his second and final exile.

## ***9 - Conspirator Or Victim?***

Rumours soon began to circulate that the Archbishop had been exiled to Iran because the Pope had been given evidence proving him to be a Freemason. This accusation was made public in April 1976 by Tito Casini, one of Italy's leading Catholic writers. The

accusation was repeated in other journals, and gained credence as the months passed and the Vatican did not intervene to deny the allegations. (Of course, whether or not Archbishop Bugnini was a Freemason, in a sense, is a side issue compared with the central issue - the nature and purpose of his liturgical innovations.)

As I wished to comment on the allegation in my book *Pope John's Council*, I made a very careful investigation of the facts, and I published them in that book and in far greater detail in Chapter XXIV of its sequel, *Pope Paul's New Mass*, where all the necessary documentation to substantiate this article is available. This prompted a somewhat violent attack upon me by the Archbishop in a letter published in the May issue of the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, in which he claimed that I was a calumniator, and that I had colleagues who were "calumniators by profession".

I found this attack rather surprising as I alleged no more in *Pope John's Council* than Archbishop Bugnini subsequently admitted in *La Riforma Liturgica*. I have never claimed to have proof that Archbishop Bugnini was a Freemason. What I have claimed is that Pope Paul VI dismissed him because he believed him to be a Freemason - the distinction is an important one. It is possible that the evidence was not genuine and that the Pope was deceived.

### ***10 - Dossier***

The sequence of events was as follows. A Roman priest of the very highest reputation came into possession of what he considered to be evidence proving Mgr Bugnini to be a Mason. He had this information placed in the hands of Pope Paul VI by a cardinal, with a warning that if action were not taken at once he would be bound in conscience to make the matter public. The dismissal and exile of the Archbishop followed.

In *La Riforma Liturgica*, Mgr Bugnini states that he has never known for certain what induced the Pope to take such a drastic and unexpected decision, even after "having understandably knocked at a good many doors at all levels in the distressing situation that prevailed" (p. 100). He did discover that "a very high-ranking cardinal, who was not at all enthusiastic about the liturgical reform, disclosed the existence of a 'dossier', which he himself had seen (or placed) on the Pope's desk, bringing evidence to support the affiliation of Mgr Bugnini to Freemasonry (p.101). This is precisely what I stated in my book, and I have not gone beyond these facts. I will thus repeat that Pope Paul VI dismissed Archbishop Bugnini because he believed him to be a Mason.

### ***11 - Rumour***

The question which then arises is whether the Archbishop was a conspirator or the victim of a conspiracy. He was adamant that it was the latter: "The disclosure was made in great secrecy, but it was known that the rumour was already circulating in the Curia. It was an absurdity, a pernicious slander. This time, in order to attack the purity of the liturgical reform, they tried morally to tarnish the purity of the secretary of the reform" (p.101-102).

Archbishop Bugnini wrote a letter to the Pope on 22 October 1975 denying any involvement with Freemasonry, or any knowledge of its nature or its aims. The Pope did not reply. This is of some significance in view of their close and frequent collaboration from 1964. The great personal esteem that the Pope had felt for the Archbishop is proved by his decision to appoint him as Secretary to the Consilium, and later to the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, despite the action taken against him during the previous pontificate.

## ***12 - Evidence***

It is also very significant that the Vatican has never given any reason for the dismissal of Archbishop Bugnini, despite the sensation it caused, and it has never denied the allegations of Masonic affiliation. If no such affiliation had been involved in Mgr Bugnini's dismissal, it would have been outrageous on the part of the Vatican to allow the charge to be made in public without saying so much as a word to exonerate the Archbishop.

I was able to establish contact with the priest who had arranged for the "Bugnini dossier" to be placed into the hands of Pope Paul VI, and I urged him to make the evidence public. He replied: "I regret that I am unable to comply with your request. The secret which must surround the denunciation (in consequence of which Mgr Bugnini had to go!) is top secret and such it has to remain. For many reasons. The single fact that the above mentioned Monsignore was immediately dismissed from his post is sufficient. This means that the arguments were more than convincing."

I very much regret that the question of Mgr Bugnini's possible Masonic affiliation was ever raised as it tends to distract attention from the liturgical revolution which he masterminded. The important question is not whether Mgr Bugnini was a Mason but whether the manner in which Mass is celebrated in most parishes today truly raises the minds and hearts of the faithful up to almighty God more effectively than did the pre-conciliar celebrations. The traditional Mass of the Roman Rite is, as Father Faber expressed it, "the most beautiful thing this side of heaven." The very idea that men of the second half of the twentieth century could replace it with something better, is, as Dietrich von Hildebrand has remarked, ludicrous.

## ***13 - Liturgy Destroyed***

The liturgical heritage of the Roman Rite may well be the most precious treasure of our entire Western civilisation, something to be cherished and preserved for future generations. The Liturgy Constitution of the Second Vatican Council stated that: "In faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognised rites to be of equal right and dignity, that she wishes to preserve them in future and foster them in every way."

How has this command of the Council been obeyed? The answer can be obtained from Father Joseph Gelineau SJ, a Council peritus, and an enthusiastic proponent of the postconciliar revolution. In his book *Demain la liturgie*, he stated with commendable honesty, concerning the Mass as most Catholics know it today: "To tell the truth it is a different liturgy of the Mass. This needs to be said without ambiguity: the Roman Rite as we knew it no longer exists. It has been destroyed." Even Archbishop Bugnini would have found it difficult to explain how something can be preserved and fostered by destroying it.

