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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

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IT is a mistake to suppose that Christian worship has developed from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and that the central feature of worship has always been the celebration of the Eucharist. We read in the Acts that in the interval between the Resurrection and Pentecost the apostles went daily to the Temple for prayer, that is to say they continued to observe the ancient Jewish hours of prayer; and if we read later, that they broke bread together on the first day of the week, and broke it "at home"; this is not evidence that the old habits of prayer, fostered by Temple and synagogue worship, were allowed to be displaced. The Eucharist in its earlier stages was a fellowship-meal, accompanied by prayers and praises, intended to conserve the social character of the Last Supper, although hallowed by a marked religious tendency. It was the Agape. In the second century, owing partly to the difficulty of catering for the growing Christian communities, the Agape fell into disuse, and the Eucharist or service of Holy Communion lost much of its original social character, and became solely an act of religious worship. This Eucharist for many decades was celebrated not more than once a week, and a survival of this practice is clearly traced in the habits of the Egyptian ascetics of the fourth and fifth centuries who did not come together for Holy Communion more than once, or sometimes twice a week.

Christian worship in its origin was non-liturgical, non-eucharistic. It sprang from the Jewish observance of regular hours of prayer at stated times of the day. Peter and John went up into the Temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. At Joppa Peter "went up on the housetop to pray, about the ninth hour." The *Didache* provides for prayer three times a day. Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian refer to the third, sixth and ninth hours as times of prayer. By the middle of the third century, in the days of Cyprian, these three hours of prayer were designated the "Apostolical hours," although probably in that era prayer was offered at home, or wherever the worshipper happened to be, and not necessarily or usually in church. Yet it is difficult to conceive that he would have prayed anywhere else if he lived near a church.

The institution of the "Vigils" or night services, by Tertullian's time at the latest, in obedience to the Advent instructions of the Lord, fostered the practice of regular habits of prayer and worship. The *Canons of Hippolytus* show that by the beginning of the third century an attempt was being made in Rome to regulate the hours and the practice of prayer in the churches. The *Apostolical Constitutions* show that a similar attempt was being made in Egypt and

the East in the third and fourth centuries, while at Jerusalem, the Spanish lady Etheria found four daily services or hours of prayer observed—Mattins, Sext, None and Vespers. In Lent Terce was added. Basil of Cæsarea opened the churches of his diocese for the night services. At Constantinople, the capital of the East Roman Empire, where pagan and secular influences were active, prayer and worship played a less prominent part in Christian life. Like ourselves, the people went to church only once a week, as Chrysostom complained.

Gradually the daily practice of non-liturgical or non-eucharistic worship became confined to the Christian ascetics; and in the hermit settlements of Egypt and in the cœnobitic communities of Asia Minor the observance of the daily hours of prayer was not only followed but developed into a wonderful system, which involved not only prayer but the reading of Scriptures, Old and New, and the recitation of psalms. But here also the development of daily worship proceeded slowly. Cassian records that the Egyptian monks met together only twice daily, at dawn and at Vespers, a custom which lasted down to the fifth century. In Syria and the East the monks observed the three ancient "Apostolic hours." Development in the West proceeded more rapidly, and in the Western monastic houses of Cassian's day no less than seven hours of prayer were observed: Nocturns, Mattins and Lauds at night; at daybreak Prime, followed by Terce, None and Vespers, all, be it observed, quite independent of eucharistic worship, and forming the most important part of the life of prayer and worship of the primitive Western monastic communities. It is unnecessary to trace further the influence of the monasteries upon the development of Christian worship. The great Rule of Benedict of Nursia (sixth century), revived by Benedict of Aniane (eighth century), became the foundation of all later European monasticism, and is to be found in operation among Cluniacs, Cistercians, Carthusians and their offshoots alike. The Rule of Benedict did not establish the hours for prayer and chanting and Bible-reading. It only added to the ancient order the office of Compline. Its great contribution to the Rule was the introduction of definite periods of manual labour and cloister study. Even the chanting of the psalms, which under the influence of the Gregorian tones became so popular in the monastery and cathedral, was originally an introduction from the East where, according to Socrates, antiphonal singing dated back to the time of Ignatius. Basil found it in Cappadocia. It seems to have been introduced into the West at Milan, where it was prevalent in the time of Ambrose, and Augustine found it in use at Rome and in Africa. Previous to his era the psalms had been recited in the West, with a slight intonation of the voice, a system said to have been invented by Athanasius.

Under the influence of Cæsarius of Arles and other Gallic bishops the round of daily services was established in the secular or non-monastic churches of Gaul, and from the fifth century in Rome daily musical or antiphonally sung services were established, and the

Roman offices of the next two centuries formed the foundation for the English Breviaries of the Middle Ages, ousting, after the mission of Augustine to Kent, the older Gallican usage which had been maintained there. In the north of England the Celtic method—largely Eastern in form—remained in vogue until the time of Wilfred and Benedict Biscop, who introduced the Roman mode of singing the psalms. It is not to be concluded that the effect of the spread of the Gregorian tones was to establish throughout western Europe a system of daily services which the lay-folk attended in large numbers. Indeed the system only succeeded because of the growth of monasticism and the increase in the number of monastic houses, and even at Rome itself Gregorian chanting was in general use only because the presence of a numerous body of monks or of clergy, trained in monastic houses, enabled the parish churches to be easily staffed with clergy well trained in antiphonal singing. In the country districts the daily services could not have been maintained in their complete form, and even in later medieval days, when every parish priest had his Breviary, it was used almost entirely by himself. If the lay-folk went daily to church, and many of them did, as Dr. Coulton's works show, it was to the early morning Mass.

Apart from the Mass, the only element of worship which found a place in the life of the people, distinct from those who lived in urban centres, where the daily office was no doubt used by some, was the Processional. Processional litanies date from the fifth century in Gaul and the sixth century at Rome. In Gaul they were associated with the earthquakes or volcanic eruptions in the Auvergne. At Rome they appear to have originated with the blessing of the crops at Rogation-tide. Quite early the processional litany in which the people joined was organized on the occasion of any public distress or calamity, such as the fire at Vienne on Easter Eve (*c.* 470); during times of plague or famine, or when the town was besieged by invading armies. Processions were also organized for the dedication of churches, and, in England, on Palm Sunday; and they were used without the Litany on different occasions connected with the Mass. It is however noteworthy that the later popular Corpus Christi processions did not begin until the twelfth century, and were not officially sanctioned until Urban IV issued a regulation in 1264.

The history of the Corpus Christi ceremonies is an indication of the tendency of all medieval worship to concentrate popular devotion more and more around the service of the Eucharist. The monastic hours quickened this process, and any development of monastic worship which took place after the foundation of the Rule of Benedict and the introduction of antiphonal singing was devoted almost entirely to making more and more splendid the pomp and majesty of the service of the Mass. This tendency is clearly marked in Lanfranc's Palm Sunday procession, when the consecrated host was carried on a bier, with special rites.

In tracing the development of eucharistic worship two points are to be observed. Firstly, it was originally confined to Sundays and

the great festivals. Secondly, although none of the popular medieval sacramentaries or Mass service-books issued from the monastery, yet the increasing devotion and elaboration of ceremonial detail encouraged by the monasteries no doubt played a large part in popularizing the service, especially as so many of the parochial clergy were trained in monastic houses, or in the cathedral school choirs where a similar routine was observed. In earlier times the growing list of martyrs and popular saints rapidly increased the number of days when the lay-folk were expected to attend the service of the altar.

The Sacramentaries, whether Roman, Gallican or Mozarabic in the West, did not originate in the monasteries, and their predominant influence reflects the early precedence of the cathedral church over the Benedictine minster, as the centre of eucharistic worship. Even in England at a later date, when monasticism had become widely spread, and when most of the leading secular clergy were trained in monastic houses, the missals of Sarum, York, Hereford and Lincoln, four secular foundations, were in use in most of the parish churches of the country. This is the more remarkable because some of the great cathedrals were organized on monastic lines. It is curious that great minsters like Canterbury, Winchester and Worcester did not succeed in popularizing their missals throughout the country. The phenomenon in England reflects the ancient antipathy of the Saxon clergy to the regular monastic life. In the case of the Gregorian, Gelasian and Leonine Sacramentaries, which ousted the Gallican Missal in Gaul, though never quite the Mozarabic or Gothic Missal in Spain, nor the Ambrosian in Milan, we must probably trace the influence of the Papacy. The traditional respect enjoyed by the Bishop of Rome established the predominance of the Roman Missal throughout continental Europe, and no monastic liturgy ever developed to displace it.

The first trace of an ordered eucharistic service is to be found in Justin Martyr, who records the reading of Gospels and Prophets, a discourse on the lesson, followed by thanksgiving over the bread and wine. Thus, like non-liturgical worship, eucharistic worship was in its origin quite simple and free from ceremonial. Similar features are to be found in the fragments of the Roman liturgy which survive from the second century. The beginning of liturgical formulation can be seen in the use of the Trisagion or Tersanctus in Africa mentioned by the *Acts of Perpetua* (*c.* 202). By the time of Cyprian (*c.* 250) the " Sursum Corda " appears. In the *Mystagagic Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem (*c.* 347) ceremonial action is present for the first time. The deacon offers to the celebrant and other priests water for washing their hands in fulfilment of Psalm xxvi. 6. The kiss of peace is exchanged. We also find the Greek " Epiclesis" or invocation of the Holy Spirit, and a prayer for the world, for kings and their armies, for the sick and needy, together with reference to the departed, all details which are retained in our Prayer for the Church Militant. The Lord's Prayer follows, preceding the administration of the elements.

To this liturgical procedure, the *Apostolic Constitution*, a Syrian document of the second half of the fourth century, added lections from the Old Testament, the chanting of psalms, readings from the Acts, Epistles and Gospels, an exhortation of the people—a kind of address—the bidding prayer, broken by the "Kyrie Eleison" of the people. In the fifth and sixth centuries liturgical development was rapid, and the numerous liturgies can be grouped into five great systems, Syrian (East and West), Alexandrian, Roman and Gallican. Ceremonial during this period also steadily developed, although not yet into extravagance. The preparation of the elements was elaborated, and by the fifth century the procession of the oblation had been introduced.

The history of Western eucharistic worship is the record of the gradual displacement of the Gallican rite by the Roman. The Gallican office, which Duchesne maintains against English liturgiologists sprang from Milan, contained marked resemblance to and yet clear contrasts with the Greek liturgies. Like the Greek liturgies, it possessed the Epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit, which appears to-day in the Scottish liturgy, and was revived in the Prayer Book recently rejected in England. On the other hand, it contained a much larger proportion of variable elements, especially in the form of collects and explanatory prefaces for different occasions. The Gallican Missal maintained its influence in Gaul until its abolition by Pippin the Great (741–68). It was used in Ireland, and was introduced by the Irish missionaries into northern England, where it survived till after the time of Theodore.

Considerable variation characterized the early stages of the Roman Missal. Three Sacramentaries were traditionally associated with the names of Popes Leo, Gelasius and Gregory, but in no case did any of these liturgies secure official recognition or predominant influence in Italy or any part of the West. But the *De Officiis Ecclesiasticis* of Amalry, written about 830, seems to show that the "Ordo Romanus" was more or less fixed by the ninth century, although the order of the Canon or Prayer of Consecration in the Roman Mass had been defined since the beginning of the fifth century. Indeed, no complete Missal was drawn up at Rome until the eleventh century. Before this time the Mass-books included the Sacramentary, the Ordo, the Lectionary or Epistolary, the Evangelarium, the Antiphonary, and the Troper—a book of musical interludes. Thus when the Missal was finally drawn up, a process was followed similar to that adopted by Cranmer when he simplified and compressed the English medieval office-books. There was no Epiclesis in the Greek sense in the "Ordo Romanus," its place being taken by an invocation to the Father to send angels to bear the elements into the Divine presence for blessing.

Throughout the early Middle Ages constant elaboration of the Mass cultus went on. The ceremony of the Fraction of the Bread was introduced before the time of Gregory (604). By the eighth century the use of liturgical vestments became the custom in the Roman service; censers were swung and lighted tapers were carried,

but no censing of the altar, the church or of the clergy and people was yet introduced. Throughout this early period two doctrinal conceptions prevailed in the Western liturgies. In his recent work Geiselmann has drawn attention to the fact that while the earliest interpretation of Ambrose dominated the Gallic and Spanish liturgies, and formed the main strand in the Roman sacramentaries, yet Augustinian symbolism also exerted an influence on the structure of the Roman books. This double current, as it is termed, was emphasized by Batiffol in his edition of 1905, which was afterwards withdrawn by the Roman authorities.[1] During the same epoch widespread attempts were made to quicken the devotion of lay-folk and simple monks by the dissemination of grossly material legends concerning the effect of consecration. These legends can be traced to the East, and were popularized in the West by Gregory the Great. They were repeated by Paschasius Radbert in the ninth century and by Durand of Troarn in the eleventh.[2] We may note that the use of the cup by the laity only began to disappear at the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century, the period when, owing to the excitement caused by Berengar's teaching, the Roman authorities devoted increasing attention to the systematization of eucharistic ideas and practices. Pope Gelasius at the end of the fifth century had condemned the withdrawal of the cup as a " grande sacrilegium."

In England the process of systematization was introduced by Lanfranc, the great organizer of the Cluniac reforms among the abbeys and cathedrals of England, and the renovator of English diocesan life.[3] We have already drawn attention to the fact that in the next period English eucharistic worship was organized for popular purposes along four main channels—the Missals of Sarum, Hereford, York and Lincoln. The Mass with its elaborate customs had for many centuries ousted popular non-liturgical worship. The great achievement of the Reformation, and of Cranmer's work especially, was to restore the balance between non-eucharistic and eucharistic worship in England. Even the radical change from the Latin to the English tongue was a return to primitive custom. The earlier Christian communities, outside Palestine, were in Greek-speaking or Syrian areas. All early liturgies were therefore drawn up in Greek or Syriac. For several generations the Greek liturgy survived at Rome; the Latin liturgy and Bible appear first in North Africa. The Saxon church had its Anglo-Saxon liturgy. So also, when Cranmer, following in the steps of Cardinal Quignon, compressed the medieval service-books into the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer, he restored the ancient and characteristic feature of Christian worship—he re-created the opportunity for non-liturgical worship. We shall do wisely if we hesitate before undoing the wisdom of Cranmer, by making worship again centre in the Eucharist. The modern trend is not in a primitive direction.

[1] Cf. my *Berengar and the Reform of Sac. Doc.* (Longmans, 1930), pp. 227 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 250 ff.
[3] Cf. my *Lanfranc: His Life, Work and Writing* (Oxford, 1926).

It is merely an attempt to undo the Reformation by reviving a system that is merely medieval.

Cranmer's second achievement was to restore eucharistic worship to its primitive place. The Prayer Book clearly contemplates no more than a weekly Eucharist for lay-folk, and the instruction concerning the three annual communions, of which Easter is to be one, shows that even the weekly celebration is only a counsel of perfection. When we glance at the structure of the Prayer Book liturgy we see that while simplification and purification have taken place, no radical breach with medieval usage has taken place. A change has been made in the order of the service, the Prayer of the Canon has been shortened, but no attempt was made to insert the Greek Epiclesis at the point where the rather fanciful Roman invocation for angelic assistance was removed. If, as Swete says, the English liturgy "heads a new liturgical family," yet Cranmer did not refuse to make use of the materials which he found at hand. "There is no reason why English churchmen should regret the fact" that our own Communion Office often does diverge in structure from that of Rome, "or pine for a restoration of the Roman Mass. It was fitting that the Church of England should possess not merely an uniform use, but one which, while in accordance with ancient precedent in things essential, should proclaim her independence of foreign dictation in the order of her worship. It would have been a grave misfortune if the great English race had been tied for all time to customs and forms which rest ultimately upon the local traditions of an Italian Church." [1]

This wise monition of the late Professor Swete may well cause some of the more zealous among us to pause before they launch out into other foreign innovations. "Benediction," even in the Roman communion, is a modern practice which scarcely began before the beginning of the sixteenth century. So recently as 1850 the Roman "Congregation of Rites" left the sanction of its usage to the diocesan bishops. If new forms of popular devotion are necessary, they can be more safely procured by the development or re-adaptation of existing forms of non-liturgical worship. This course will preserve not only Reformation practice, but will tend to quicken the primitive habits of Christian worship—habits which centred worship in regular prayer and in regular reading of the Word of God. This suggestion does not involve the relegation of the Communion Office to the merely occasional status assigned to it by many of the churches associated with the principles of Geneva. Canterbury preserved the due balance between eucharistic and non-eucharistic worship. If a special dignity and reverence are attached to the twice-yearly Presbyterian Communion, there is little doubt that the system of worship in vogue in the Free Churches passes over opportunities for quickening popular devotion by the infrequency of their devotions. If, on the one hand, we must guard against the revival of extravagance by demanding the restoration of daily eucharistic worship, on the other hand we cannot afford to run the risk of reducing the quiet regularity of Anglican sacramental practice by relegating the act of communion to the three great festivals.

[1] *Services and Service Books*, pp. 120 f.