CHAPTER XIV

VARIABLE PRAYERS AT THE EUCHARIST

We turn now to consider an innovation of the post-Nicene period whose effects have been considerable—the introduction of variable prayers at the liturgy. We Anglicans are so accustomed to the fact that in our rite at least one of the prayers, the collect for the day—and on occasions part of the preface also—varies according to the day in the ecclesiastical calendar, that probably few communicants or even celebrants ask themselves why this should be. Yet it is a peculiarity of the eucharist, distinguishing it from the administration of the other sacraments. On whatever day in the year baptism, say, or confirmation is administered, not only the outline of the rite but the actual wording of all the prayers is identically the same.

It is true that the varying of these prayers under the influence of the calendar does not affect the Shape of the Liturgy. Granted that there is to be a prayer before the lections or some sort of introduction to the sanctus, it makes no difference whether these are always the same, or are chosen at will from two or three variants, or whether different ones are provided for each day in the year. The structure of the rite would remain in each case the same. But an essay such as this would be notably incomplete without some discussion of the origins of this practice, even though we cannot do more than touch upon some of the problems it presents.

The influence of the calendar upon the prayers of the rite is only one of the repercussions of that construing of the eucharist in terms of time and history which begins in the fourth century, though it is an important index of the progress of this new idea. Our variable collect and preface are only fragmentary survivals of what in all other catholic rites is a much more extensive system of variation. The elaboration of different variable elements of this kind, and (in the West especially) the mutual interchange of such texts between different churches and regions, make up between them the most important part of the history of the liturgy for more than a thousand years—from the fifth century to the sixteenth. This intricate process must be left to another chapter. Here we are concerned with origins.

It is necessary to be clear as to what we mean by 'variable elements'. The synaxis had from apostolic times contained 'variable elements' in the lections and chants. From an early date certain texts of this kind were appropriated to particular occasions like the Pascha. But the liturgical cycle was still so simple that this recurring element covered only a small part of the year, and we have no evidence of a cycle of lections and chants for the ordinary Sundays in pre-Nicene times, despite the precedent of the three-year cycle of lections and chants in the synagogue. It is not, however,

with lections and chants that we are now concerned, but with the prayers said by the celebrant.

The intercessory prayers at the end of the synaxis appear to have been fixed in their order and content, if not their phrasing, from a very early period; though this doubtless did not exclude the possibility of the offering of special ones on occasion. At the eucharist proper the only possible variable element was 'the' prayer, the only verbal text in the rite; even the dialogue preceding it was 'fixed' because of the need of co-ordinating the celebrant's versicles with the people's responses. The episcopal celebrant was allowed, and even perhaps expected, to extemporise some of the phrasing of this prayer within the traditional outline, in virtue of his prophetic *charisma*. But it is a permanent feature of liturgical history from the second century to the sixteenth that liturgical changes are more usually made by addition to what is already customary than by substitution for it, and it is still a fact that they are much more easily accepted by the laity in this way. The pre-Nicene history of the eucharistic prayer is the history of local additions made to its primitive universal nucleus in different ways by different churches. And (to my mind) pre-Nicene texts like those of the prayers of Hippolytus and *Addai and Mari*, with their perpetuation of archaisms not only of language but of doctrine, suggest that the 'liberty of prophesying' enjoyed by bishops in reciting the eucharistic prayer was in practice a good deal curbed by tradition.

In the fourth century fixity of texts of the prayer definitely begins to set in. As a matter of convenience, the longer prayers produced by successive additions over two centuries now required the use of a MS. by the celebrant. The unique extant MS. of Sarapion's Sacramentary is a later (eleventh century) copy of such a MS. first put together by a bishop for his own practical use *c.* A.D. 340. The use of such MSS. in itself made for still greater fixity. And the prayers themselves had now been expanded to include most of the ideas in circulation about the meaning of the eucharist, and fully expressed the eucharistic action in words, so that there was less need for new additions. The fourth century rise in the level of christian culture had clothed them with an adequate literary form, so that the average bishop at the end of the century was no longer much tempted to think that he could improve on the traditional phrasing. In the second century Irenaeus had appealed to the general sense of the eucharistic prayer in support of his arguments against the Gnostics.[1] In the fourth century christian writers and speakers everywhere appeal incidentally not only to the general sense but to phrases and even isolated words of the prayer used in their own church as something fixed and known, by which they can support their arguments.[2] No doubt it was still easy for an inno-

[1] Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.*, iv. 18 4.

[2] So Cyril at Jerusalem and Theodore at Mopsuestia in their *Catecheses*, Chrysostom at Antioch and Constantinople in his sermons, Ambrose at Milan in *de Sacramentis* and Victorinus Afer at Rome (*adv. arium*, ii. 8). It is a universal tendency.

vating bishop to make changes, and especially to add to the traditional prayer clauses embodying new liturgical fashions, when someone came home from abroad and impressed him with the novel idea of commemorating the saints by name in the canon or of invoking the Holy Ghost to effect consecration. But when the people went to the eucharist on a Sunday morning in the later fourth century they no longer expected to hear the bishop chant a prayer which was even verbally different from that which they had heard last Sunday. At the end of the fourth century it looked as though the prayers at the eucharist would remain as fixed and invariable as those for baptism or ordination.

What changed the course of liturgical history was the immense development of the liturgical calendar towards the end of the fourth century, though it took a little while to have its effect on the liturgy. Just because the eucharistic action is *the* act of the church's life towards God, it could not fail to be affected by this new rhythm and colour given to that life, in a way that baptism and confirmation[1] or other rites like penance would not be affected. The introduction of variable prayers is the result of the impact of the calendar on the liturgy.

Variable Prayers in the Eastern Rites

It is often said that the effect of the calendar on the prayers is confined to the West and unknown in the East.[2] Yet it would seem truer to say that Eastern and Western rites express the same impulse in rather different ways. To take a simple instance: the Byzantine rite has two different liturgies, those of *S. Basil* and *S. John Chrysostom* (besides the Lenten *Liturgy of the Presanctified*). But when we ask the occasions of their use, we find that it is not at all a matter of free choice by the celebrant (as *e.g.* between the alternative rites of the Scottish Episcopal church) but is governed strictly by the calendar. The liturgy of *S. Basil* is always used on the Saturdays and Sundays of Lent, certain vigils and the feast of *S. Basil* (January 1st). Any celebration in an orthodox church on those days is done according to *S. Basil*, not according to *S. John Chrysostom*. On other days *S. Basil* is never used and *S. John Chrysostom* always is. And if we ask how these two liturgies differ, we find that in both the structure and outline are the same; the deacon's part is the same; the people's responses are exactly the same; even the hymns are always the same except for certain chants (*e.g.* the chant between the lections) which always vary with the day. What is different in one from the other is only the text of the prayers said by the celebrant.[3] The

[1] Still administered together normally only on fixed occasions—Pascha and Pentecost, to which Epiphany and even certain martyrs' feasts were beginning to be added in some churches.

[2] The classic statement of this view is by Dom Cagin, *Paléographie Musicale* V (1896), *pp.* 14 *sqq.*

[3] It is hardly necessary to say that the theory which goes back to pseudo-Proclus (eighth–ninth century) that *S. John Chrysostom* is an abbreviation of *S. Basil* and

Byzantine rite thus has variable prayers, and what governs their use is the liturgical calendar, just as in the West. In one respect the variability of the Byzantine rite is much greater than that of some Western rites, *e.g.* the Roman, in which the eucharistic prayer (apart from the preface and two other clauses) never varies on any day in the year. In the Byzantine rite even the whole eucharistic prayer itself is variable according to the calendar, along with all the other prayers of the celebrant, though the choice is always limited to one of two complete sets of prayers.

The same principle somewhat more developed is found in the other Eastern rites. The Abyssinian rite has fourteen different eucharistic prayers for use on different liturgical days; the Coptic rite has three, one of which is used only once a year; the Nestorians have a different three. The Syrian Jacobites have more than seventy different eucharistic prayers, and though not all are assigned to particular days, the great feasts have their assigned prayers; it is only on lesser days that a choice is left to the celebrant (as it was left *e.g.* to the Gallican celebrant to choose which of three or four sets of prayers he would use on an ordinary Sunday). Only, I think, in the Armenian rite is a single set of celebrant's prayers now made to do duty for all occasions; and this is a fairly modern development, for at least four old Armenian alternative eucharistic prayers are known, besides Armenian translations of eucharistic prayers from other churches.

The real points of distinction between East and West in this matter appear to be two: 1. that the Eastern choice of variable prayers is limited to a much smaller number of *sets* of prayers than are found in the Western rites, though variation goes further in that when the prayers do vary, they *all* vary (in this being more like the Gallican than the Roman); 2. that there is as a rule no reference in the text of the prayers to the day in the liturgical calendar, though this is the cause of their varying.[1] Each set of Eastern prayers might be used on any day in the year with equal appropriateness; it is only by an arbitrary traditional assignment that they are associated with particular days in the calendar. But a Western set of variable prayers, *e.g.* for Easter, could hardly be used for Christmas.

The Eastern sets were in fact each of them composed to be a fixed un-

the latter of *S. James* will not survive a comparison of the contents of their prayers. *S. John Chrysostom* is not a shortening of *S. Basil* but a different set of prayers, most of which are shorter and simpler than the corresponding prayers in *S. Basil*, but some of which are rather longer. The relation of the two sets is best described as that of independent compositions on the same themes. *S. Basil* is appreciably the older, probably by some two centuries or more.

[1] This is true of the Byzantine rite and of most Eastern rites, but not of all: *e.g.* the Abyssinian 'Anaphora of our Lady Mary' used on feasts of our Lady would hardly be appropriate on other days (being partly addressed directly to her); and that for use on ordinary Sundays contains a good deal about 'the holy christian Sabbath' (including the appeal to it to 'intercede for us'). Other examples of reference to the day in the text of the eucharistic prayer might be cited from the East. But the above rule is generally true, and represents the old universal practice of the East.

varying liturgy used throughout the year, in the fourth century fashion. Some Eastern churches already had several such sets in the fifth century, which they preserved as genuine alternatives with no connection with the calendar. One set was the traditional rite of that church, and its basis went back to pre-Nicene times; the others were new compositions by fourth or fifth century bishops or scholars. These new products usually embody the old ideas and some of the old phraseology, but recast and made more coherent than was usually the case with the older prayer, formed as this had been by the gradual accumulation of several strata of additions. These later re-workings of the old tradition did not invariably oust the old text altogether. Either the old text or the new was relegated to special seasons or occasions, such as Lent or the feast of the supposed author of the text, to make sure that it was kept in occasional use. Thus the alternative sets of prayers arose in the East quite independently of the calendar; but after the fifth century the calendar comes to regulate their use, even though it does not as a rule affect their contents.

Variable Prayers in the Western Rites

There is evidence that in the first half of the fifth century the system now found in the East, of *alternative* eucharistic prayers containing no special reference whatever to the day in the liturgical calendar, was coming into force in some places in the West also.[1] But a different system prevailed in the end all over the West, perhaps because the Western churches did not at first so readily adopt alternative versions of their old fourth century fixed prayers as the Eastern churches had done, and so when changes did come to be made in the end the influence of the calendar had become sufficiently strong to dominate the whole process.

The special characteristic of the Western variable prayers is that they not only refer to but are actually based upon the liturgical commemoration of the day in the calendar. The question of the date when the Western rites first began to adopt this kind of variation is one of the most obscure in the whole subject of the liturgy; but since a right estimate of this, and the related questions of where and how it came about, seems the best basis for a clear understanding of the influences which have made all the later history of the Western rites for the next 1,000 years and have been potent in the formation of our own, I propose to discuss it a little more closely.

We can say with certainty that this special Western principle of variation had been fully developed by *c.* A.D. 500 all over the West, except perhaps in Africa where we have no evidence at all as to whether it ever developed or not. (In what follows Africa is therefore intended to be excluded from all generalisations about 'the West', except where it is specifically included.) There is some evidence that it was being developed in Gaul by *c.* A.D. 450.[2]

[1] *Cf. pp.* 536, 540 *sqq.*

[2] *Cf. p.* 558.

In Spain we have good evidence that it was already fully operative by *c.* A.D. 500.[1] We have positive evidence of its acceptance in Italy also by *c.* A.D. 500 in the shape of the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, a book the first compilation of which can be placed with some confidence at about that date,[2] and in which the Western system of variation according to the calendar is already fully operative. If we could be more certain of the origins of the document known as the *Leonine Sacramentary* we might be able to push the question further back at Rome. But for reasons given later[3] the *Leonine* book does not with any certainty enable us to get behind the *Gelasian* one. One may hope and suspect that certain texts in it go back into the fifth century, perhaps even to the time of Pope S. Leo himself (*c.* A.D. 450); but I am not aware that this could be actually proved in the case of any individual item in it.

Taking *c.* A.D. 500 as the lower limit for the Western development of the principle of variation by the calendar, can we find an upper limit for its origin? The scholar who has most patiently sought to do this is the German F. Probst, who came to the conclusion that this kind of Western prayer began in the time of Pope S. Damasus (A.D. 366–384), whom he credits personally with the invention of the noble Roman collect style.[4] Probst's thesis seems to have been accepted without further investigation by later scholars. It may be true. One would like to think it was. Damasus is a not unsuitable figure for such a part, with his love for the martyrs and the history of his own great church. Yet the case when it is examined seems far from secure. It rests on no single item of solid evidence, but only on inferences and probabilities, and on assigning an earlier date to some of the material in the *Leonine Sacramentary* than now seems possible.[5] I must confess to doubts not only as to whether Damasus himself is the inventor of the Roman collect style or the Western variable prayers in general, but whether his period is the right period or Rome is the right church in which to look for their origins.

First, the older portions of the Roman canon, which unquestionably come from the fourth century and are therefore our only measure of Roman liturgical style about the time of Damasus, are much less terse and more flowing in their Latinity than the lapidary collect style. If one must associ-

[1] *Cf. p.* 558.

[2] See the very useful art. by Mr. J. S. Sinclair, *The Development of the Roman Rite during the Dark Ages* in *Theology*, xxxii. (1936), *pp.* 142 *sqq*, which argues convincingly for a date between *c.* A.D. 475 and 510, with 525 as an extreme lower limit. I accept *c.* A.D. 500 as a useful middle date, without prejudice to the further question of any connection of the book with Pope S. Gelasius (A.D. 492–496) or any other individual Pope.

[3] *Cf. p.* 568.

[4] *Liturgie des vierten Jahrhunderts, usw.* (Münster, 1893), *pp.* 455 *sqq.*, summarising arguments at greater length in *Die altesten römischen Sacramentarien, usw.* (Münster, 1892), *passim.* R. Buchwald, *Das sog. Sacr. leonianum* (Vienna, 1908), *pp.* 23–4 finds further arguments to the same effect (some of which are very erratic).

[5] *Cf. p.* 568.

ate the name of a particular Pope with the latter, that of Leo would present itself to anyone with a feeling for style much more readily than that of Damasus. The products of Damasus' pen which we can with certainty identify as the work of his own mind without the assistance of the Papal chancery—the metrical epitaphs he composed for the tombs of the Roman martyrs—do not by any means suggest the possession of such literary gifts as could create the Roman collects. They are frequently execrable and never better than second-rate. It is true that Damasus would not be the last liturgical author whose attempts at poetry were less happy than his prose; Cranmer would furnish a case in point. But the taste which enabled Cranmer to write liturgical prose of the first order was quite sufficient to warn him of the unwisdom of publishing his verses; whereas Damasus inscribed his in the exquisite lettering of Philocalus on every famous pilgrim-shrine in Rome for all the christian world to read. His authorship of these *Epigrammata* may not be a decisive argument against his capacity to invent the austere and delicate collect style; but I am inclined to think his perpetuation of them tells against it, nevertheless.

Secondly, one would not *a priori* look for the beginnings of so great an innovation first of all in the somewhat rigid conservatism of the Roman church. The basing of the prayers of the eucharist on the liturgical commemoration of the day is an idea which is a response, I should say, to sheer poetic feeling—of a kind which the more prosaic genius of that church rarely compassed for itself, though it could on occasion give magnificent expression to such ideas when they were presented to it from outside.[1] It is true that this is a specifically Western idea, and that Rome is still in the fourth–fifth centuries the heart of the West. But it was hardly the brain. Again and again during the remaking of Europe—from say, the fifth century to the twelfth and even later—we are confronted by the fact that the *creative* centre of new 'specifically Western ideas'—in theology, in poetry and architecture, in liturgy (which is related to all these arts), in law and political theory, in military tactics—in the things of the mind generally—is never at Rome and always in Gaul. This is true of the origins of ideas in all departments, even though the final application of them is often Italian rather than French.[2] I pass over the fact that the composition of variable prayers seems to be actually attested in France some forty or fifty years before it is attested at Rome;[3] that may perfectly well be a mere chance of the survival of evidence. But the Roman rite adopted the idea of variable prayers with a good deal of reserve. Except for the preface and two (originally three) of its clauses, the eucharistic prayer—the most

[1] *Cf. e.g.* the Roman office for the last three days of Holy Week, which embodies in a wholly Roman form ideas originally derived from the Jerusalem church of the fourth century.

[2] *E.g.* the Lorraine canonists and Pope Gregory VII; the troubadours and Dante; Abelard and S. Thomas Aquinas.

[3] *Cf. pp.* 558 *sqq.*, 535.

important prayer of the rite—was always verbally the same on every single day in the year at Rome, as all eucharistic prayers everywhere seem to have been in the fourth century. But there is another type of Western rite found in South France and also in Spain, which shewed no such hesitation about applying the new Western idea. These Gallican and Mozarabic rites are the most mutable in christendom, varying every word of every prayer said by the celebrant, including the whole eucharistic prayer (except the single paragraph containing the account of the institution) on every liturgical day in the year. If thoroughness of application be any criterion, the varying of the prayers of the eucharist according to the calendar is a principle more fundamental to the Spanish and French liturgies than to the Roman. Accordingly it is not at Rome that I should look for its origin but in the more supple and nimble genius of the French churches and peoples.

Thirdly, the period of Damasus (A.D. 366–384) seems too early for the elaboration of variable prayers *based on* the liturgical year. It is the conception of the christian year as an already accepted and completed notion regulating the liturgy which is the actual inspiration of the Western variable prayers. They presuppose it and embody it, which suggests (to my mind) a later period than that of Damasus, in whose time the christian year was still only in course of formation. Rather one would look to a period after the calendar which he helped to develop had become an entirely familiar conception to the worshipping church. One would expect, too, that the collect—closely associated with the ever-varying lections—would be among the earliest prayers to vary with the day. But we have seen[1] that there is evidence that a generation after Damasus' death there was still no collect at all, fixed or variable, before the lections at Rome. It is—in the Roman rite at least—the prayers of the 'second *stratum*' in the liturgy—collect, prayer 'of the day', offertory prayer, thanksgiving, which, besides the preface, exhibit the impact of the calendar. But with the doubtful exception of the offertory prayer, all these make their first appearance in the Roman rite in the fifth century, not the fourth. And even after their acceptance, we may have to allow for a period during which they were still fixed and unchanging like the corresponding Eastern prayers, before the Western principle of variation was allowed to affect them.

No one can be better aware than I am of the fact that this argument rests only on inferences and probabilities, like that of Probst to which it is opposed. But on a question about which solid evidence is wholly lacking we can none of us do more than weigh inferences and probabilities and make our guess according to our lights (stating plainly that it is a guess and why we have come to our particular opinion).

On the whole, taking the usual Roman slowness to adopt liturgical novelties into account, I should not expect to find prayers varying with the calendar in the Roman rite much before A.D. 450, and I should not be greatly

[1] *Cf. pp.* 452, 457 *sq.*

surprised if it were one day shewn that they made their first appearance there only in the latter half of that century. For what its evidence is worth, the first Pope to whom the *Liber Pontificalis* assigns the composition of what look like such prayers is Gelasius (A.D. 492–496), who, it is said, wrote *praefationes* and *orationes* of the sacraments *cauto sermone* (? 'in a sober style').[1] Since we must guess on this matter, all things considered, the fifty years from *c.* A.D. 430–480 seem to me a much more likely period than that from *c.* A.D. 380–430 for the beginnings of the Roman variable prayers.

Some other Western churches may well have been beforehand with Rome in this matter. But there is another stage in the West of which we have evidence to be taken into account. This is the stage now represented by the Eastern rites, of *alternative* sets of prayers which contain no reference to the day in the calendar, but are simply alternatives to be used at choice, suitable in themselves for any day in the year.

We have noted the possibility that in Africa the bishop's blessing before communion was already a variable formula in Augustine's time.[2] Though the evidence in this particular case is weak, we can trace considerable activity in the field of new liturgical composition in Africa round about A.D. 400. In A.D. 397 the Council of Carthage had felt obliged to lay down in its twenty-fourth canon '(*a*) That no one in prayers should address the Father instead of the Son or the Son instead of the Father. (*b*) And when standing at the altar, the prayer shall always be addressed to the Father. (*c*) And if any one copies out prayers for himself from some source, he shall not use them unless he have first shewn them to his more instructed brethren.'

(*a*) here seems to refer to the appending of doxologies to any prayers; it is still easy enough forgetfully to end a collect addressed to the Father with the words 'Who livest and reignest with the Father . . .', and so on. (*b*) refers to the eucharistic prayer, and is a new restriction on an older liberty.[3] (*c*) may refer to private prayers, but from the context is probably to be taken as referring to bishops borrowing prayers from all sorts of sources to use in the public liturgy of their churches. In those days not all bishops were reckoned to be *ex officio* liturgical experts or even wary theologians. With the amount of Arian and other heretical literature then in circulation the council might reasonably feel nervous about the indiscriminate adoption into the official rites of their churches of everything which might happen to catch some bishops' fancy.

[1] Even this is ambiguous. I take it to mean liturgical compositions arranged in the form of 'address, pause and collect' of the old Western type (*cf. p.* 489). *Praefatio* never means 'preface' in our sense (of an introduction to the sanctus) but an 'address' to the people, in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (*ed.* Wilson, *pp.* 53, 57). This statement of the *Lib. Pont.* could mean that Gelasius composed only 'homilies and discourses about the Sacraments', and not liturgical pieces at all, though I do not think that is what is intended.

[2] *Cf. p.* 517.

[3] *Cf. p.* 180.

Five years later the African Council of Milevis had to return to the charge, and this time there is no beating about the bush. 'It was resolved . . . that the prayers and collects or masses (*preces vel orationes seu missae*) which have been approved of in council, both "prefaces" and "commendations" or blessings (*sive praefationes sive commendationes seu manus impositiones*) shall be used (*celebrentur*) by all. Nor shall any others at all be said in the *ecclesia*, save such as shall have been drawn up or approved by the more prudent in synod, lest by chance anything should have been composed contrary to the faith, through either the ignorance or the deliberate purpose of any individual.' It is difficult to be sure of the exact distinction of meaning between some of the technical terms used here, or of the force of the conjunctions. But the canon is clearly provoked by the incapacity of some bishops as guardians of the liturgy in their churches. The position is sufficiently serious for the council to set about restricting the ancient liberty of every church to order its own rite, by issuing an official collection of prayers for use throughout the province. Evidently new prayers are making their appearance in some numbers; and this is expected to continue, since provision is made for the censorship of future episcopal compositions. The new official collection (from the fact that all the terms are in the plural) seems to have provided more than one formula for the same purpose, at least in certain cases. But there is nothing to suggest that the use of these alternative forms is to be regulated by the calendar.

This African book *c.* A.D. 400 seems to be a class of compilation midway between the Egyptian *Sacramentary of Sarapion c.* A.D. 340 and the Italian *Gelasian Sacramentary c.* A.D. 500. Sarapion gives the celebrant's prayers (and only the celebrant's) at all the rites of the church. It is a manual for fulfilling the bishop's 'liturgy', and nobody else's, at those rites. It represents the tradition of a single local church, enriched to some extent by borrowings from elsewhere (*e.g.* Alexandria),[1] but given the form in which it is set down by the single church of Thmuis. And it gives one formula for each purpose.[2] The prayers are fixed and invariable; there are no variations for feasts and fasts, no special forms for special occasions.

This African book of the Council of Milevis *c.* A.D. 400 seems to be still a collection of celebrant's prayers; but it represents a comparison and sifting of the local traditions of *a number* of individual churches. There may have been a certain amount of re-writing and editing before publication. The very fact that it draws on the liturgical tradition of more than one church may be one reason why, unlike Sarapion's book, it contains more than one formula for some purposes, none of which are necessarily to be used on any particular day.

The *Gelasian Sacramentary c.* A.D. 500 is still chiefly a collection of cele-

[1] *Cf. p.* 165.

[2] Some of the intercessory prayers at the end of the synaxis in Sarapion may be intended as alternatives; at least they duplicate each other's contents to some extent. But I see no way of being certain of this.

brant's prayers for all sacramental rites; and for some of these (*e.g.* confirmation, ordination) it still gives only a single set of prayers to be used whenever needed, just like Sarapion. But at the eucharist all is now different. Certain prayers of the rite (collect etc.) have a large variety of alternatives; but each one is assigned to a particular day in the calendar or a particular 'intention', and is chiefly about the commemoration kept on that day, or concerned with that intention. (There is the 'pool' of prayers for 'green' Sundays, and a small amount of repetition, but that is the principle.) The calendar has taken almost complete control of the variable prayers. Only for days when the calendar contains no special commemoration does the Gelasian book provide a number of variable prayers for different 'intentions', for the sick, for a barren wife desiring children, and so on. This domination by the calendar is the special characteristic of all extant Western books from *c.* A.D. 500 onwards. And its development is (to my mind) the special mark left by the fifth century on the history of all the Western rites.

The Preface and Sanctus in the West

I am encouraged to believe that this is a true account and dating of the Western 'variability according to the calendar' by what little can be made out of the development of a Western 'variable' of which we have hitherto said nothing—the 'preface' in the modern sense of an introduction to the sanctus. In all Western rites alike, whatever their treatment of the body of the eucharistic prayer, the first paragraph of that prayer leading up to the sanctus is variable to some extent, and I happen to have come upon some hitherto unused evidence as to how and when this came to be so.

Hippolytus' prayer *c.* A.D. 200 has no sanctus and strictly speaking no 'preface' in the later sense, *i.e.* no description of the angelic worship leading up to the words of the angelic hymn. Instead it opens with a 'thanksgiving series' like all such pre-Nicene prayers. The present Roman canon and all Gallican eucharistic prayers have no such 'thanksgiving *series*', but instead open with a 'thanksgiving' in quite general terms, leading up (on festivals or other special days) to a commemoration of the day. This is followed by a description of the worship of heaven with a climax in the earthly church's participation in the song of the angels, 'Holy, holy, holy'. The prayer then proceeds somewhat abruptly to what corresponds to the 'second half' of the pre-Nicene prayers. The preface and sanctus have thus replaced the pre-Nicene 'thanksgiving series' in all the Western rites, somewhere between Hippolytus (*c.* A.D. 200) and—at the latest—S. Gregory I (*c.* A.D. 600). How has this happened?

We have seen that the sanctus, preceded by an account of the angels' worship, is to be traced at Alexandria in the works of Origen *c.* A.D. 230 and probably goes back in the Alexandrian use to a period well before that

date.[1] But we have also seen that at Alexandria it originally formed not the introduction before but the conclusion after the 'thanksgiving series'; *i.e.* it was the climax of the doxology after the most ancient part of the Alexandrian prayer.[2] The description of the heavenly worship and the sanctus make their appearance for the first time in Syria in Cyril of Jerusalem in A.D. 347, in a form clearly borrowed from Egypt. But in Syria they are no longer in the Egyptian position *after* the 'thanksgiving series'. Where the 'thanksgiving series' has been retained (as at Antioch) the preface and sanctus have been placed before them; where the 'thanksgiving series' has been lost (as at Jerusalem) the preface and sanctus have been substituted for them. In Syria in the fourth century the preface and sanctus thus appear for the first time as an 'introduction' to the eucharistic prayer, as they appear in the Western rites during the fifth–sixth centuries.

The suggestion that the preface and sanctus in the Western rites are one more importation from Syria is borne out by a curious piece of evidence. In Origen and the Egyptian rites, in all the Greek rites and in Greek authors generally, the text of the liturgical sanctus runs, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth', following the text of Is. vi. In the Syriac liturgies alone of the Eastern rites, it runs 'Lord *God* of Sabaoth'. And all the Western rites have this Syrian interpolation, 'God'. Nor do I think that anyone who compares the ordinary non-festal form of the preface in the Roman rite with that found in *Ap. Const.*, viii.[3] will have any doubt as to where this particular Western preface comes from; it is a simplified form of the ordinary 'lead up to' the sanctus in the Syrian rite.

We can most conveniently begin the consideration of the history of the adoption of this Syrian custom of prefixing the preface and sanctus to the eucharistic prayers of the West with the third canon of the South French Council of Vaison in A.D. 529: 'At all masses, whether early masses (*matutinis*) or in Lent or in those which are offered for the commemoration of the dead, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* should be said in that arrangement (*eo ordine*) in which it is now said at public masses'. Here the sanctus is already a part of the South French rite, but it is customary to omit it at requiems and in penitential seasons, and also apparently at what we should call 'low' or 'private' masses, *i.e.* supplementary masses said in the early morning before the bishop's 'stational' mass (or at all events before the 'public' or 'high' mass, to use the later term). The sanctus is in fact a special feature of the stational liturgy on Sundays and saints' days, precisely as the *Gloria* in the contemporary Roman rite was restricted to the bishop's 'stational' liturgy on such days, and was omitted in penitential and other non-festal masses and also in the supplementary masses said by presbyters. And since the main tenor of this third canon of Vaison in other matters is the bringing of South French custom into conformity with what it has become customary to do elsewhere and especially in what it calls 'the Apostolic see',

[1] *Cf. p.* 165. [2] *Cf. p.* 221. [3] Brightman, L.E.W., *p.* 118, *ll.* 24 *sq.*

it would not be surprising if the use of the sanctus indiscriminately at all masses was then a fairly recent modification at Rome of a previous practice of using the sanctus only at the 'stational' liturgy on Sundays and saints' days. But on this we have no Roman evidence.

When did the use of the sanctus at all in the Western rites first begin? S. Ambrose at Milan just before A.D. 400 in describing the opening of the eucharistic prayer to the catechumens in *de Sacramentis* uses the following phrase: 'All the other things which are said in the earlier part (of the prayer) are said by the priest—praises are offered to God (*laudes Deo deferuntur*), prayer is asked for kings, for the people and the rest; when it comes to the consecration of the venerable sacrament, the priest no longer speaks in his own name, but he uses the words of Christ'.[1] Were it not that these 'praises' are said specifically to be 'said by the priest' it would be natural to take them as referring to the people's hymn of the sanctus. As it stands, and taken in conjunction with other evidence about to be produced, we must, I think, take it as referring to the initial 'thanksgiving series', still standing intact at the opening of the Western eucharistic prayer *c.* A.D. 400. After all, this is precisely the way in which Justin had spoken of that 'thanksgiving series' standing at the opening of the Roman prayer *c.* A.D. 150: the bishop 'sends up praise and glory to the Father'.[2] The sanctus does not appear to be mentioned by Ambrose.

The same seems to be the case with the African rite as described by Ambrose' convert, S. Augustine (d. A.D. 430). Again and again he reminds his people in his sermons of the preliminary dialogue and cites its exact words. Never once does he hint that it leads up to a hymn sung by themselves, though one would have thought that he had left himself no option but to allude to it, if it then stood in the African rite.[3] Nor is there any allusion to the sanctus in the rite of Rome or Gubbio in the letter of Pope Innocent I to Decentius *c.* A.D. 415, though it deals specifically with just this part of the service.

Chance has, as a matter of fact, preserved for us the opening paragraphs of two Latin eucharistic prayers of this period which explain the whole situation (and incidentally, I think, shed light on the meaning of Innocent I). They have been unaccountably neglected by all the liturgists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but they shew us what the opening of the Latin eucharistic prayers was like before the adoption of the Syrian preface and sanctus. They thus enable us on this particular matter to get behind the later divergence of the Franco-Spanish and Italian groups of liturgies, to the basic 'Western' type. In 1827 Cardinal Mai published from a Milanese MS. some fragments of a controversial work which has the almost unique distinction of being written by a Western Arian. This author's argument is that the catholics do in practice subordinate the Son

[1] S. Ambrose, *de Sacramentis*, iv. 4. 14.
[2] Justin, *Ap.*, I. 65, cited on *p.* 222.
[3] *E.g. Serm.*, liii. 14.

to the Father just as much as do the Arians themselves; witness the texts of their own official catholic prayers. After quoting from the exorcism of the catechumens, the baptismal creed and the formula of confirmation, he continues: they do the same 'in their oblations saying:

*A*1. "It is meet and right that we should here and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord holy, almighty God; nor is there any other through whom we can have access unto Thee, make prayer unto Thee, offer sacrifice unto Thee, save by Him Whom Thou hast sent unto us etc."

'And again:

*B*1. "It is meet and right, it is just and right, that we should above all things give thanks unto Thee, O Lord holy, Father almighty, everlasting God, Who hast deigned to shine on our darkness by the incomparable light of Thy goodness, sending unto us Jesus Christ the Saviour of our souls:

2. "Who humbling Himself for the sake of our salvation subjected Himself even unto death, that He might restore us to that immortality which Adam had forfeited (and) make us heirs and sons to Him.

3. "We cannot worthily give thanks to Thy great mercy for such loving kindness nor praise Thee; but we pray Thee of Thy great and merciful love to hold accepted this sacrifice which we offer unto Thee, standing before the face of Thy divine love, through Jesus Christ our Lord and God: through Whom we pray and beseech . . ." ' (here the quotation breaks off).[1]

The date of this document can unfortunately only be fixed vaguely, between *c.* A.D. 380 and 450 (or even a little later). It probably comes from N. Italy as Mai suggested.[2] The Arian has evidently got hold of the sacramentary of the local church. This contains only one set of formulae for baptism and confirmation (like Sarapion and the *Gelasian Sacramentary*) but *alternative* eucharistic prayers (like the Eastern rites and (?) the African collection of Milevis). Both of these N. Italian prayers are related to the Roman canon, but probably as 'brothers' rather than as ancestors. They are specimens of Italian local rites, much as Sarapion is a specimen of an

[1] A. Mai. *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio. t.* iii. (1827) pt. ii., *p.* 208 *sq.* (As these texts are difficult of access I give them for the convenience of students.) '. . . *in oblationibus suis dicentes*: (A)(1) *Dignum et iustum est nos tibi hic et ubique gratias agere, Domine sancte, omnipotens Deus; neque est alius per quem ad te aditum habere, praecem facere, sacrificationem tibi offerre possimus nisi per quem tu nobis misisti etc. Item* (B) (1) *Dignum et iustum est, aequum et iustum est nos tibi super omnia gratias agere, Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, aeterne Deus, qui incomparabili tuae bonitatis* ⟨*luce*⟩ *in tenebris fulgere dignatus es, mittens nobis* J. *Xtm suspitatorem animarum nostrarum* (2) *qui nostra*⟨*e*⟩ *salutis causa humiliando se ad mortem usque subiecit ut nos ea quae Adam amiserat immortalitate restitutos efficeret sibi heredes et filios.* (3) *Cuius benignitatis agere gratias tuae tantae magnanimitati quibusque laudibus nec sufficere possumus petentes de tua magna et flexibili pietate accepto* (*l. acceptum*) *ferre sacrificium istud, quod tibi offerimus stantes ante conspectum tuae divinae pietatis per* J. *Xtm. Dnm. et Dm. nostrum: per quem, petimus et rogamus . . .*'

[2] G. Mercati (*Studi e Testi*, vii., 1902, *p.* 55) suggested the Danubian provinces as an alternative. But comparison of the baptismal texts it cites with those later published in Dom Wilmart's *North Italian Services of the 11th Cent.* (H.B.S., 1931) leaves no doubt that these are from the same region, though much earlier.

Egyptian local rite, from the period before the influence of the great sees had overwhelmed the local traditions. Of the first fragment nothing need be said save that it still represents the eucharist as the *parousia* of the church 'in Christ' before the Father in the old eschatological style, and that one or two other small points suggest that it may be rather older than the second. In the latter the remains of the old 'thanksgiving series' are plain in (1) and (2). And it is continued far enough for us to be sure by a comparison with the Roman prayer that it has reached the equivalent of the *Te igitur* paragraph without any 'preface' (in the later sense) or sanctus at all.

It is possible that we are not wholly without information about the transformation of this kind of opening into the preface and sanctus in the Western rites. It has always been the tradition of the church of Milan that its bishop, Eusebius (A.D. 451–465 or 6) was responsible for a wholesale rebuilding of the churches of his diocese devastated by the Gothic invasion, in the course of which he renewed their burned service books; he is also traditionally credited with the authorship of the Milanese 'proper' prefaces for the greatest feasts of the year. A recent examination of these has revealed an agreement in a rather unusual use of the *cursus* (prose rhythm of the *clausulae* of Latin sentences) between these texts and the only extant epistle of Eusebius, and also the use in one of them of a life of S. Nazarius traditionally ascribed to his authorship.[1] The arguments are not absolutely decisive; in the circumstances that is hardly to be expected. But so far as they go, they definitely support the tradition of his authorship of these, the oldest of the Milanese prefaces. And Ennodius, who knew him, tells us that he was a Greek from Syria.[2] Once more we are pointed towards Syria as the source of the Western preface and sanctus, and about the middle of the fifth century as the date of its introduction. And the preface is one of the Western variable prayers.

Milan in S. Ambrose' day had followed 'the customs of the Roman church in all things', even though he felt that this need not exclude the addition of local Milanese customs.[3] Eusebius may have been imitating a recent Roman innovation, or he may equally well have been showing the Roman church the way. The Syrian hymn could not be inserted into the old Latin prayers without some readjustment, and a clause leading up to it. If its use was at first restricted to festal occasions, the simplest way was to substitute some commemoration of the particular feast which was the occasion for the use of the sanctus that day, for the old 'thanksgiving series' as it now stood, telescoped to some extent, as in the Italian prayers on *p.* 540. And this is precisely what all the oldest Italian proper prefaces,

[1] A. Paredi, *I Prefazi ambrosiani*, Milan, 1937. (On the date and origin of the later Milanese prefaces see Dom Wilmart, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, L (1936), *pp.* 169 *sqq.*)

[2] Ennodius, *Carmina*, II. 86.

[3] S. Ambrose, *de Sacramentis*, iii. 1. 5.

Roman or Milanese, do—leaving the equivalent of paragraphs (1) and (3) in that Italian prayer (B) intact. All this suggests that the 'proper' prefaces are older than the 'common' form, since it was only on special days that the sanctus, and therefore an introduction to it, were needed.

The extension of the use of the sanctus from festivals to all celebrations without exception (contemplated by the Council of Vaison only in A.D. 529) raised the question how it was to be introduced on non-festal occasions, when there was no special commemoration obviously suggesting itself to replace the general 'thanksgiving' for the saving work of Christ. The Gallican and Mozarabic rites, followed in this respect by the Milanese, solved the problem by providing a 'proper' introduction to the sanctus for every occasion for which they provided other 'proper' prayers—*i.e.* for every liturgical day or occasion in the year. The Roman rite, equally characteristically, solved it by providing a single form of preface for all occasions except those great feasts, on which alone the sanctus had at first been used in the West, and which therefore already had their own 'proper' forms. And it found this common form in a simplified and abbreviated version of the single invariable introduction to the sanctus in the Syrian rite from which the use of the sanctus had originally been borrowed in the West.[1]

The East and the West

We have here, in this little matter of the preface and sanctus, something which is singularly representative of the relations and contrasts of the various types of rite which are growing up in the fifth century. The Syrian rite of the fourth century had borrowed the preface and sanctus from the old pre-Nicene Egyptian tradition, but it had put it to a new use. And it is the new Syrian usage, not the original Egyptian one, which spreads all over christendom in the fifth century, so that it soon presents the appearance of a custom so universal as to be taken for something very ancient if not apostolic. But though they accept the new custom from Syria the Western churches at once transform it to their own mind and spirit, whereas the other Eastern rites preserve it, not in its original Egyptian form or position, but very much in the form in which they have borrowed it from Syria.

The variable preface is something more than an expression of the peculiarly Western influence of the calendar on the prayers of the rite. Over against the single invariable lengthy Eastern preface, the shorter mutable Western ones are the product of something different in Western *history* from that of the East. The Eastern pattern of religion is something

[1] Of the Roman books the *Leonine Sacr.* has 267 'proper' prefaces, the *Gelasian* 54 and the *Gregorian* 13. This looks like a steady diminution of the Roman use of 'proper' prefaces. But Dom P. Alfonzo, *L'Uso dei prefazi nei Sacramentari Romani, Eph. Lit.*, liii. (1939), *pp.* 245 *sqq.*, has shewn from other evidence that the large number of prefaces in *Le.* and *Gel.* represents Italian provincial not local Roman usage, and that the restraint of *Greg.* continued traditional Roman custom. (I am not sure *Greg.* did not increase the Roman proper prefaces by one.)

immutable, hieratic, timeless, seeking always to transcend temporal life. The Western idea of religion on the contrary is something more supple and practical, which seeks always to pervade the temporal with the spiritual, and clings closer to the things of time in the certainty that time has been and is being redeemed. It is inevitable that such differences of approach should express themselves in the different fashion of their prayers.

And in the slighter differences between the various Western expressions of the common Western principle, too, we can discern something which is the product of difference of history. Despite certain superficial approximations to the Eastern rites due to deliberate later borrowings, the French and Spanish rites in their perpetual mutability are at the opposite extreme of spirit from the unvarying Eastern rites. And the Roman rite which geographically stands between them, is between them, too, in the fashion of its prayers, with its relatively fixed and unchanging canon like the Eastern rites, and its ever changing lesser prayers like those of the other Western churches. Right down to the eighth century, even in some measure down to the eleventh, Rome is not, properly speaking, a truly 'Western' church. The Greek emperor at Constantinople is still its temporal ruler, and though an absentee, by no means always a mere distant figure-head—as several Popes, dragged to Constantinople as prisoners and there bullied or murdered, were to find. In the city itself a large Greek-speaking population served by Greek clergy followed Eastern rites with a wholly Eastern way of devotion; and there were Greek and Syrian and Egyptian monasteries in Rome. Some of these orientals were from time to time elected to the throne of S. Peter (*e.g.* Zosimus, Hormisdas, Sergius I) just as the Spaniard Damasus and the Sardinian Hilary or the Tuscan Leo I could be chosen by the Roman clergy and people as the most suitable cleric of that church available, no less than the Romans Gregory or Hadrian. Despite the breakdown of easy communications in the fifth century, the subsequent Popes are as unavoidably involved in the interminable theologico-political wranglings of Eastern patriarchs and the successive attempts of Byzantine emperors to enforce new heresies upon their subjects, on the one hand, as they are concerned on the other with the evangelisation of Kent or Frisia, or the establishment of the new national kingdom of the Franks with its promise of a more stable and peaceful government in France. Rome is still not only the heart of Western christendom, but the meeting point of East and West. And its liturgy reflects the fact.

Yet we should be mistaken if we took this to mean that it was merely a passive centre where foreign traditions converged and fused of their own native force without assimilation. The action upon all these foreign ideas of the local Roman liturgical tradition, with its special gifts of terseness and sobriety and the old Roman *gravitas*, is unmistakable and potent. What Rome took over from Syria or Gaul it took in its own way and remoulded to its own mind, just as (in the case of the preface and sanctus)

Syria had made a new use of a custom borrowed from Egypt, and the West in turn gave a new twist to the borrowed Syrian introduction to the sanctus by subjecting it to the influence of the calendar. But it was of incalculable importance that throughout the dark ages Rome kept a foot in either world, and was concerned with both, as neither East nor West was then concerned with the other. East and West had been drifting apart since the third century, though the universal empire and the oecumenical catholicism of the fourth century had done much to draw them together again. The break-down of communications in the fifth century which accompanied the collapse of the Western empire, and the break-down of ecclesiastical intercommunion in the fifth and sixth centuries through the repeated breaches between Constantinople and Egypt, and Constantinople and Syria, and Constantinople and the West, are twin signs and causes of the break-up of the old oecumenical catholicism. Behind them all is the steady endeavour of 'the royal church' (as Constantinople proudly called itself) to assert the theocratic power of the Byzantine emperor—the baptised Diocletian—over the faith of the universal church. Perhaps the most fatal of all these breaches in its final consequences, though not the most remarked, was that which involved the virtual exclusion of Alexandria from christendom after the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). Ever since the days of Athanasius his church had been the link between Rome and the real East. It was a tragedy for christendom that Rome was forced to side with Constantinople on the point of orthodoxy at Chalcedon by the heresies of the Alexandrian patriarch Dioscorus. The dropping out of Alexandria—excommunicated by both churches—left Rome and Constantinople face to face. The sundering of christendom into Eastern and Western fragments behind these two centres was inevitable after that; and the later development of each half suffers badly from one-sidedness.

Yet for centuries the old understanding of christendom as a single body persists even across the barriers of excommunication, and men feel the unity of worship and an interest in each other's liturgy, even while quarrelling most violently about dogma. Just as there are for many centuries Syrian monks in Rome, so there are Frankish monks at Jerusalem; and it is typical of the difference in receptivity of the two churches that while the Papal rite adopted the Syrian *Agnus Dei* from the former, the Greeks made a riot and ultimately a schism about the use of the *Filioque* by the latter. Despite the break-down of communications (which affects the West much more than the East) and the rending of christendom (which, through the Monophysite and Nestorian schisms, affects the East much more than the West) liturgical documents and customs continue to travel unpredictably like thistledown throughout the dark ages, carried by scores of anonymous pilgrims and monks and traders and refugees. The purest extant MSS. of the Alexandrian liturgy of *S. Mark* were copied in Sicily and Calabria; the Roman mass turns up in Georgian and Armenian translations (with the

addition of an Egyptian invocation) in the Caucasus in the eleventh century, having travelled by way of Albania and Mt. Athos and Thessalonica, and been put into Greek on the way; the first appearance in the West of Greek litanies of the saints from Asia Minor is in the monasteries of Anglo-Saxon England.

The break-up of the old imperial world in the fifth century, and the break-up of christian unity in the sixth, do result in real liturgical divergences between East and West, and between regions within the larger fragments. But this curious impalpable web of liturgical transmissions does something to keep the lines of demarcation from growing hard and rigid. And the peg upon which this was hung was the surviving oecumenical position and interests of Rome, which all men still recognised in East and West alike as part of their own inherited tradition. The re-establishment of a Western emperor in the person of Charlemagne in A.D. 800 was a blow to the tenderest point of Byzantine pride. The Pope's share in this weakened many of Rome's Eastern contacts, and henceforward Rome becomes increasingly a Western church. Thereafter these 'underground' liturgical transmissions grow fewer, and Eastern and Western worship develops in isolation for more than two centuries. Yet it is no accident that when the East and West met again face to face in the Crusades, after a virtual separation of 300 years, they thought and spoke of each other respectively as 'Franks' and 'Byzantines', but each still thought and spoke of themselves (and still do to this day) as 'Romans'.[1]

The admission of the new influence of the calendar on the prayers is perhaps the greatest single innovation in the liturgy which the West ever made for itself. As a rule it had hitherto been the East which had innovated and the West which had followed. But a new state of affairs is beginning, in which East and West go their separate ways. The rise of this new and Western peculiarity in the fifth century is only a sign that divergence has begun. It is upon this background that we must set the later developments.

[1] *Ekklesia roumike* still means in the Near East a Byzantine or Orthodox church, not a Latin one.