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WHEN THE
PEOPLE SANG

MARIE PIERIK

Nihil Obstat

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Archbishop of Boston

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WHEN THE PEOPLE SANG

Marie Pierik

Author of

THE SPIRIT OF GREGORIAN CHANT
THE SONG OF THE CHURCH

McLAUGHLIN & REILLY

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FOREWORD

Greatest of all elements in the apostolic task of bringing God to the people and the people to God is the Holy Mass, a rendezvous designed by God Himself. Piety and zeal have surrounded this Action with all manner of adornments. Closest to the heart of things is the actual participation of the people in the Divine Liturgy and, in the course of this, "he who sings prays twice."

Hence I am glad to welcome to a useful and honorable place in literature Miss Pierik's small volume nostalgically titled "When The People Sang" which is a simple treatise on the Gregorian Chant, its history and use. It was from the spontaneous outpourings of the devoted hearts of all the faithful that these ancient chants ultimately arose and thus when we sing them today we speak a language known to our predecessors of long ago "When The People Sang."

May the people sing again in cathedral, church and chapel in preparation for the great day when their melodies will blend with those of the cherubim and seraphim in unceasing praise of the thrice-holy Lord of Hosts!

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BOSTON.

November 4, 1949.

INTRODUCTION

GREGORIAN CHANT

Gregorian Chant, the official music of the Church, is a sacred musical language whose origin stems from the beginning of the Church itself. St. Gregory the Great (d. 604), from whom the chant takes its name, inherited an already existing and developed liturgical music. The title "plainchant" (*cantus planus*) was employed for this musical art in the twelfth century, at the time when proportional notation (*ars mensurabilis*) and harmony (the concordent superposition of melodies) had come into existence, in order to distinguish Gregorian Chant which is monodic in character (a one-voiced melody) and of equal notes from many-voiced music of proportional notation.

St. Gregory's particular contribution to the chant which bears his names lies principally in the power of his direction of the reform which brought to perfection the chants already in use and the addition of certain pieces adapted to liturgical changes which Pope Gregory himself made.

Gregorian Chant has been termed "a doctrinal music in that it is by destination a radiation of truth, of which the Church is depositor." Through various causes this beautiful traditional music was for many centuries either disfigured or lost to the Church completely and it was not until our own epoch that it was "rediscovered."

After many valiant attempts on the part of liturgical musicians to restore Gregorian Chant to its pristine purity, these efforts were finally crowned by the discoveries of two Benedictine monks of Solesmes, France, Dom Paul Jausions

(d. 1870) and Dom. Joseph Pothier (d. 1923), as a result of intensive study and archeological research labors.

The ultimate restoration of Gregorian Chant to the universal Church is due primarily to the initiative of Pope Pius X, who, in his *Motu proprio* of November 22, 1903, imposed the obligation upon all—clergy as well as laity—that “this chant proper to the Roman Church, the only chant that she has inherited from the ancient Fathers, which she has jealously guarded for centuries in her liturgical codices, which she directly proposes to the faithful as her own and which she prescribes exclusively for some parts of the liturgy” be restored to the Church. “And,” the Holy Father adds, “special efforts are to be made to restore Gregorian Chant to the *people*, so that the faithful may again take a more active part in the ecclesiastical offices as was the case in ancient times.” (Sec. 2)¹ It was because of this cherished desire on the part of Pope Pius X—return to congregational singing—that the Vatican edition of the *Kyriale* was brought out two years before (1905) the *Gradual* (1907).

Succeeding Popes have reinforced the obligations stressed in the *Motu proprio* of 1903: “So that the faithful may take a more active part in divine worship, let Georgian Chant be restored to popular use in the parts proper to the people. Indeed it is very necessary that the faithful attend the sacred ceremonies not as if they were outsiders or mute onlookers, but let them fully appreciate the beauty of the Liturgy and take part in the sacred ceremonies, alternating their voice with the priest and the choir, according to the prescribed norms. If, please God, this is done, it will not happen that the congregation hardly ever or only in a low murmur answer the prayers in Latin or in the vernacular.” (Pope Pius XI, *Divini cultus*, IX.)²

¹ Catholic Education Press, Washington, D. C.

² *The White List*, The Society of St. Gregory of America, Philadelphia.

“As regards music, let the clear and guiding norms of the Apostolic See be scrupulously observed. Gregorian Chant, which the Church considers her own as handed down from antiquity and kept under her close tutelage, is proposed to the faithful as belonging to them also. In certain parts of the Liturgy the Church definitely prescribes it; it makes the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries not only more dignified and solemn, but helps very much to increase the faith and devotion of the congregation.” (Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, IV, 2.)¹

Pope Pius X has termed Gregorian Chant “the sung prayer.” Take notice that the Holy Father did not say that it is “a song that is *prayed*” but “a *prayer* that is *sung*.” A Trappist monk of our day (Thomas Merton) has summed it up in the following sacred tribute: “For the magnificent and holy plainchant is the voice of Christ, and the psalms are His songs of love and praise.”²

The official rules for the interpretation of Gregorian Chant, those binding upon the universal Church,³ are found in the Preface of the Vatican Gradual. Herein are expressed in simple and lucid terms the principles which guide the interpretation of Gregorian Chant from the standpoint of the triple alliance of the word, the melody and rhythm, whose combined elements constitute a *living whole*. The rules of the Vatican edition make manifest that it is practically impossible to consider any one of these three factors apart from the inter-dependence of all three in a musical art which, in the last analysis, remains always “the sung prayer.”

In this present short narrative of the early Church we shall discover that not only the pieces of the Ordinary of the Mass, with certain reservations for the Gloria and the Credo,

¹ Translation, Vatican Library, Rome, 1948.

² *Exile ends in glory*, p. 47.

³ Decree of February 18, 1910, Prefect of S. C. R.

but those of the Proper as well, other than the Tract, were sung, at their origin, by the *congregation*, either in responsorial form, the most ancient manner, wherein the people answered each clause or verse chanted by the reader with some acclamation or ejaculation, or, from the fourth century on, in antiphonal manner, alternating chanting of the psalm verses by two choirs.

When later the music of the Church became more florid, the educated voices of the *scholae cantorum* (singing schools) in the various basilicas took over the singing of the Proper and this has been their function ever since. From about the tenth century on, congregational singing of the Ordinary likewise disappeared. The composers now started to write more difficult music and the people could not arrive at executing it, so the educated voices of the *scholae* appropriated to themselves *all* the songs of the Mass. The advent of polyphony (super-imposed melodies sung simultaneously) completed the course already begun. The congregation let itself be swayed by the charm of the new music and gradually abandoned its inherited and traditional right.

Not until the advent of Pope Pius X to the pontifical throne did the Church furnish a pontiff who considered it his sacred duty to restore the lost heritage to the Church. Pope Pius X was especially qualified for drawing up laws pertaining to liturgical music because of his natural talents and experience in the field of Church music. This saintly Vicar of Christ inaugurated not only a new era in the life of Gregorian Chant, but, at the same time, he gave an impetus to the life of the Church which continues to make itself felt throughout the entire Catholic world.

So it is that today serious students of Gregorian Chant seek also a comprehensive knowledge of the history and liturgy of the Church—the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Divine Office. This is not difficult to procure in our day which has

furnished magistral works on the liturgy, to be found in English as well as in foreign languages.

To our knowledge no condensed history of the entire Mass—Proper and Ordinary—which concentrates particularly on participation of the *people* in the early songs of the Church has yet been presented in English. It may then prove of interest to pastors who are striving to fulfill the unanimous desire of recent pontiffs that congregational singing be restored to the Church, to see for themselves what an integral role the people played in the formation of the musical liturgy of the Church, and we hope that in turn this may serve as a means of encouragement to their own present day efforts.

“. . . Surely We are aware of the zeal and labor demanded by all these matters [pertaining to the restoration of the musical liturgy of the Church] which We have just ordained. Yet who does not know how many works and how very artistically accomplished our ancestors, undeterred by difficulties, have handed down to us because they were imbued with the zeal of piety and the spirit of the musical liturgy? And it is not to be wondered at, for whatever proceeds from the interior life of the Church lives, transcends the most perfect things of this world. Let the difficulties of this most holy undertaking stir and rouse, and in no wise weaken, the spirits of the Bishops of the Church, all of whom by harmoniously and constantly obeying Our wish will accomplish a work for the Supreme Bishop, most worthy of their episcopal office.”
(Pope Pius, XI, *op. cit.*, XI.)

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE

Jesus has been called "the first Christian cantor." He must frequently have chanted the Jewish liturgy as soloist. The Gospels furnish us with certain examples. St. Luke recounts the occasion when Our Lord read aloud in the synagogue the text from the prophet Isaias: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . ." (IV, 18.) Jesus was chosen from the congregation by the hazzan (cantor) to fulfill this rite. The reading, on which He next preached, was actually a modulation wherein He conformed to the custom of His time in observing the musical accents and punctuation markings of the phrases, as was the case with all Israelites who were invited to read passages from the Law and the Prophets. When Jesus sang at the Last Supper (Matt. XXV, 30) He acted as cantor in the responsorial chant of the Hallel (psalms 112-117) with His apostles.

The coming of the Holy Ghost left in its wake Christian life with liturgical prayers at fixed hours: "Peter and John went up to the Temple at the ninth hour of prayer." (Acts, III, 1.) As soon as the Church was detached from Jerusalem and radiated in the world, the people continued with public prayer analogous to that in the Temple. The new-born Church, as St. Jerome points out, avoided innovations among her Jewish converts which might have scandalized the first faithful. Like a benevolent mother she retained certain liturgical practices which were in no way contrary to, but rather in keeping with, the spirit of the Church.

THE STORY OF THE MASS

PART I

PROPER OF THE MASS

Gradual

St. Justin in his first Apology (c. 155) gives us the following description of the early Eucharistic Sacrifice: "On the day of the Sun all who dwell in the cities or in the country come together in one place. The narratives of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read as long as time will permit. When the reader finishes, the president (the bishop or his representative) verbally instructs and exhorts all to follow the beautiful example just cited. Then all rise and prayers are said; finally, at the termination of the prayers, bread and wine and water are brought. The president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgiving, according to his ability, and the people respond with the acclamation 'Amen.' Each person receives a part of the Blessed Bread which is distributed and is sent to the absent by the ministers of the deacon." (ch. 67.)¹

This account reveals then that the primitive Eucharistic Sacrifice started with readings of Holy Scripture, as in the synagogue ritual of the Sabbath and as still exists in the Roman Mass of the Presanctified. The first readers of the Holy Books in the Church were laymen chosen from the congregation just as was the case in the synagogue. They were designated by the bishop or by his representative to

¹ Ante-Nicene Library, 1,186.

serve in this capacity. In the third century these scriptural readings were confided to certain chosen faithful, who, little by little, were consecrated as clerics. In the fifth century the function of lector marks the first degree of the priesthood, and today the lector is considered with the three other orders: the porter, the exorcist and the acolyte.

The psalms accompanied all the circumstances of the Christian life of the people in the first centuries of the Church. The Apostolic Constitutions (c. 380), in describing the Syrian liturgy derived from Jerusalem, give the first testimony of responsorial psalmody, rendered by a soloist and the people. (Bk. VIII.)¹ It can be supposed, however, from this description that the same manner of rendition had been practiced from the third century, or even before, and was used earlier than antiphonal chant. Responsorial form came from the Mosaic cult. In the synagogue every reading of Holy Scripture was followed by a song.

The Apostolic Constitutions also indicate three groups of readings in the early Church: 1) From the Old Testament. 2) The Acts or the Epistles of St. Paul. 3) The four Gospels. The same document states that the readings were interspersed with chants of the psalms.² After each couplet of readings from the Old Testament (in these groups of readings it seems they had many couplets) the people sang as far as the acrostic, the pause marked at the middle and end of the psalm verse. At this epoch one entire psalm was sung and this practice continued until the fifth century. St. Jerome (d. 420) alludes to this custom. (*Brev. in ps.* 145.)³ St. Augustine (d. 430) speaks of the same: "We have heard the first lesson from the Apostles, then we sang a psalm. After that the lesson of the Gospel showed us the ten lepers healed." (*Sermon.* 176)⁴ St. Augustine adds that the psalms were

¹ *Ib.*, 7, 486.

³ *Patrologia Latina*, 26, 1249.

² *Ib.*, 487 ff.

⁴ *Ib.*, 38, 950.

fixed by the bishop for the Mass of the day and the people responded with a refrain which was a constant repetition of the central thought, as in psalm 135: *quoniam in aeternam misericordia ejus.*

The Holy Doctor insists, as does St. Paul (Eph., V, 19), that the song must come from the *bottom of the heart* and that the voice should be in full harmony with one's life and works. (Serm. 198.)¹ He considered as one of the principle duties of his preaching that the psalms be explained to the people in accordance with their intentions. (Dom A. Dohmes.)² The psalms should be an echo of that which was taught by the readings and often had a close relation with them. That is why the Fathers attached the greatest importance to the fact that the Christian people *understand* what they sing.

Eventually participation of the people in the chant of the psalms after the reading disappeared. From the second half of the fifth century the *schola* of educated voices in the Church took over the singing of the refrain and it in turn became quite as elaborate as the soloist's verses. The rendition now proved so beautiful and of such inspirational value that the bishop and his assistants did not proceed with the liturgical ceremonies but listened to the singing. By the middle of the sixth century the music of the *responsorium* was so elaborate that only one psalm verse was sung after the introductory passage (refrain) was repeated. At the close of the psalm verse the refrain was sung once again. The immediate repetition of the refrain was not rigorously maintained after Gregory I, during which time the length of the Mass was shortened. Permission for this repetition is now given, if so desired. (Vatican Gradual, *De ritibus servandis in cantu missae*, IV.)

¹ *Ib.*, 39, 2115.

² Material from Dom A. Dohmes of Maria Laach is taken from 1939 issues of *Revue du chant grégorien*, Grenoble.

The first Roman Ordo (c. 770, but founded on a similar document of the sixth century) employs the name *responsorium* for this early chant of the Mass, but some time in the Middle Ages the title Gradual (from *gradus*, the step of the ambo on which the reader chanted the psalm) was given to this song to distinguish it from the *responsorium* of the Office.

Alleluia

The second responsorial song of the Church is likewise an inheritance from the Jewish liturgy. Its Hebrew prototype existed in the Temple of Solomon and continued to be used in the synagogue as a liturgical acclamation or refrain to the psalm verses chanted by the soloist. The word "Alleluia" is derived from the imperative plural of the Hebrew verb *hillel* (to praise), *hallelu-yah* (abbreviation of Jehovah). The Church continued to use this ejaculation in Hebrew even as she did the words "Amen", "Hosanna" and others, even though they could have been translated into the prevailing liturgical language, in order to preserve unchanged certain traditional Jewish customs, as already pointed out.

"Alleluia" was one of the most popular ejaculations of the early Church. St. John's vision in the Apocalypse of the "voice of a great multitude . . . singing Alleluia" presupposes a terrestrial liturgy at that time with the voice of *all the assembly*. (D. Dohmes) This Hebrew ejaculation, modulated on all forms, became the refrain of gladness which accompanied the daily occupation of the peaceful populations converted to the faith. It was the Christian's cry of victory emerging from two and a half centuries of persecution and oppression and in reunions of the cult was the most frequently used of the musical acclamations by which the entire assembly united in the chant of the Church. (St.

Jerome, *Epist.* 107, 1.)¹ Christians used it at Easter time to salute one another as a means of mutual encouragement in the realization of that which they had to accomplish. (St. Augustine, *Ennar. in ps.* 148.)² Sailors at sea saluted one another from afar with the cry "Alleluia."³ Rowers used it for the cadence of the refrain of a canticle which they sang to Christ. Venerable Bede recounts that St. Germain, Bishop of Paris, commanded the soldiers to sing it before battle, so that with this cry they might march to combat and win victory without bloodshed. (*Hist. Eccles.*, 1, ch. 20.)⁴

The Alleluia, especially with its character of refrain, constitutes the most venerable and the most ancient representation of the sung prayer of the people at the Mass during the first ages of Christianity. St. Augustine speaks several times of the Alleluia of Pentecost as an ancient tradition of the Church heard *everywhere* during the fifty days after Easter. (*Ennar. in ps.* 106; *Serm.* 252.)⁵

In the early Christian church the Alleluia was sung by the people as a refrain to the psalm verses and probably in simple syllabic setting. At its origin it accompanied an entire psalm but later only a single psalm verse was used. When the *jubilus*, or long vocalization, was added to the last syllable, it was probably the soloist who sang this melismatic ornament. Both the east and the west used the song of the Alleluia before the Gospel prior to the fourth century. (D. Dohmes.) St. Augustine alludes to the participation of the faithful in the Alleluia of the Mass: "The Holy Spirit have exhorted us by the voice of the psalms, we *all* answered with one voice 'Alleluia.' Just as [after the resurrection] we shall contemplate truth without fatigue and with everlasting delight . . . and we shall be united to truth in a sweet

¹ P. L., 22, 868.

⁴ *Ib.*, 95, 49.

² *Ib.*, 37, 1938.

⁵ *Ib.*, 37, 1419; 38, 1176.

³ Gerbert, *De cantu*, I, 57.

and chaste embrace, so shall we render it praise with as untiring a voice in singing 'Alleluia.' For all the citizens of this city, in their exultation, will sing 'Alleluia.'" (*Serm.* 362.)¹

St. Gregory's assertion that the Alleluia was introduced into the Roman Mass by Pope Damasus (366-84) after it had been made known to him by St. Jerome² has been questioned by liturgists.³ St. Gregory extended its use to all the Sundays of the year except Lent.

Since *all the people* participated in the song of the Alleluia at the Mass in Africa, it must have been the same in Rome during the same epoch. (D. Dohmes.) The participation of the people in the rendition of the Alleluia ceased probably about the middle of the fifth century, the same time that they relinquished their singing of the first responsorial chant of the Mass, the Gradual. During the fifth century the three initial readings of the Mass, Prophecy, Epistle, Gospel, were reduced to the two latter, but the psalms remained two although both were now joined together between the Epistle and Gospel. The first of the two psalms was reduced to the two verses of the Gradual and from the second psalm the single verse of the Alleluia resulted.

Introit

The Eucharistic Sacrifice comprises three processions: 1) the entrance of the pontiff into the church, Introit. 2) The procession of the faithful carrying their offerings for sacrifice, Offertory. 3) The communicants going to the Eucharistic Banquet, Communion. The chants which accompanied these processions appeared nearly at the same time as the processions themselves. At their origin these three chants

¹ *Ib.*, 39, 1632.

² *Ib.*, 77, 956.

³ Cf. *Cath. Ency.* (1936), *Alleluia*.

were antiphonal in character (Gr. *anti*, against+*phone*, sound), the men stationed on one side of the church, the women and children on the other, alternating at the octave. This practice of the Greek church came to the eastern church from the synagogue, where the men's voices alternated with a chorus of women's and children's voices. In the principal centers of life in the Church the people knew the psalms by heart. Since they were the really substantial basis of the daily prayer of the faithful, there was no difficulty for the whole assembly to participate in the chanting of the psalms in antiphonal manner.

One of the first accounts of antiphonal singing comes to us from a certain Sylvia (or Egeria), possibly a nun of Gaul or Spain, who heard the psalms sung at Jerusalem (385-88) by two alternating choirs: monks and nuns, and laymen (women and children).¹ St. Basil also writes of this practice in the east: "Our people collect in the church at night . . . ; from prayer they proceed to the chant of the psalms, and, separating into two parts, they psalmody in alternate choirs, fortifying themselves in this way not only in meditation of the word of God but likewise by concentration, and in banishing distractions from the heart. One side alone intones the piece and the other side then unites with them. The night is passed in psalmodizing in this manner, interspersed also by prayer, to the break of day. As one man, as one mouth, as one heart all intone one of the penitential psalms, applying to themselves these words of sorrow and of penance."² (*Epist.* 207.)

The antiphon was a little melody which served as an exposition of the melody of the psalm verses themselves. The antiphon was sometimes sung by one voice, the first

¹ Msgr. L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien*, 469.

² Taken from the Italian translation of Dom P. Thomas, *Storia del Canto Gregoriana*, p. 51.

cantor, or again, either of the two choirs might sing it. It was also intercalated between the verses, a refrain sung by the combined choirs; at the close it was repeated by all. Sylvia's account of her pilgrimage in the Holy Places is the most ancient document in which the antiphon and psalms are separately enumerated. The term antiphon is not used by St. Ambrose, St. Jerome nor St. Augustine. St. John Chrysostom, knowing the psalms for two choirs at Antioch, introduced them at Constantinople. This style was imitated by St. Ambrose (d. 397), who had the hymns and psalms sung "in oriental manner", *secundum morem orientalium partium*. (St. Augustine, *Confess.*)¹ St. Ambrose introduced antiphonal singing of the psalms at the nocturnal Vigils (to which the name Matins was later given) at Milan, and Rome must have adopted this custom about the same time. (D. Dohmes.) Peter Wagner suggests that antiphonal singing may have come to Rome in 382 during the period of a council under Pope Damasus, and that the eastern bishops may have introduced this style into the Roman Vigils, from which it passed a half century later into the Roman Mass.²

During St. Augustine's time reading still constituted the beginning of the Eucharistic Sacrifice at Carthage. At the start of the fifth century an entrance chant was unknown. A contemporary of St. Augustine seems to have introduced this practice at Rome. *The Liber Pontificalis* attributes to Pope Celestine (d. 432) the prescription of alternating chanting of the psalter by *all* before the Mass,³ that which had not been done before, only the Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospels having been read just prior to this time. (cf. p. 14, par. 3.) However, the thought of the pontiff must have been that the one hundred and fifty psalms were to be dis-

¹ P. L., 32, 770.

² *Origines et dével. du chant liturgique* I, 106.

³ Duchesne, 230-1.

tributed between the Sundays and feast days throughout the year.

The conclusion is that an entire psalm, or at least series of verses of a psalm, were sung by *the people* at the entrance (*introitus*) of the pontiff into the church. According to a ninth century Ordo, the psalm started as the celebrant and his assistant left the sacristy at the side of the principal entrance of the church and terminated with the *Gloria Patri* at a sign from the pontiff after his arrival at the altar.

At Rome the singing of the Introit was taken by the *schola* at an early age. By the time of St. Gregory it was already a developed choral chant. The first Roman Ordo describes it as a chant of the *schola*,¹ but in Gaul there is evidence of the participation of the faithful in the rendition of the Introit until the ninth century although their part in it may have been reduced to that of the Doxology alone. Charlemagne ordained that "the *Gloria Patri* should be sung by *all* with reverence." (*Admonitio generalis*, 789.)

As the preliminary ceremonies of the Mass became shortened the number of psalm verses was cut down. By the ninth and tenth centuries the Introit was reduced to its present form, as given in the eleventh century Roman Ordo: antiphon, psalm verse, *Gloria Patri* (with *sicut erat*) and a closing repetition of the antiphon, A-B-C-A. The first verse is marked Ps., a souvenir of its origin as an entire psalm.

The Introit acts as a "herald" for the sentiment of the feast which the Mass celebrates.

Offertory

According to the testimony of St. Augustine the Offertory was born at the time when antiphonal singing reigned everywhere, a fact which supports the supposition that it came into existence about the same time as the Introit and at its origin

¹ E. G. Atchley, *Ordo Romanus* I, 58.

was an antiphonal chant. St. Augustine says that at Carthage before the oblation (*ante oblationem*) and during the offerings of the people they started to sing "hymns drawn from the book of psalms." (*Retract.* II, 11.)¹ He defended this practice against the Catholic Tribune which protested against this innovation, from which is implied that until that time a song at this place in the Mass was unknown and that St. Augustine probably introduced it into his church as a novelty. The description suggests that these psalms *ante oblationem* were sung by the people. By *oblatio* is understood the central part of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the prayer of offering properly speaking, which corresponds to what we call the Preface and Canon. Thus psalms sung *ante oblationem* correspond to what we know today as the Offertory. (D. Dohmes.) Dr. Wagner thinks it is probable that Africa adopted a Milanese or Roman custom (*Origines, loc. cit.*), which means that this practice should have existed at both Milan and at Rome at the beginning of the fifth century, or at least at Rome, from which latter place Milan may have borrowed it.

Dom Dohmes suggests that since it must have been difficult for the people to sing and carry their gifts to the altar at the same time, this circumstance may account for the fact that the Offertory was the first of the antiphonal chants to be taken over entirely by the *schola*, which from then on transformed it into a responsorial piece for soloist and choir. Dr. Wagner adds that since the choir members themselves had to carry their offerings to the altar the execution of the verses was confided to but one or two singers, cantors, and the choir sang only the refrain. This produced a very interesting cyclical structure. It started with the antiphon, or refrain, sung by the *schola*, followed by one, two or at most three psalm verses sung by the cantors. After each

¹ P. L., 32, 634.

verse the *schola* repeated the last part of the antiphon. At the end the entire antiphon was sung by all: A·Ba·Ca·Da·A.¹

From the time when the Roman *schola* fixed the melody there is disagreement between the designation of the Offertory chant and its musical character. The most ancient documents call it *antiphona ad offerendum* and it is placed on the same plane as the *antiphona ad introitum* and *antiphona ad communionem*. In fact, its original melodies were simple, like those of the first Introits and Communions. But in the transmitted manuscripts it is melismatic, florid in character, more on the order of the Tract, Gradual and Alleluia.

When the ceremony of congregational offering at the altar ceased the psalm verses were eliminated and the antiphon, or refrain, stood alone. From the thirteenth century the Offertory everywhere was a song of but a single piece. The Requiem Mass with its verse is the only reminder of the ancient usage.

From the reaction exercised on music by liturgical things it thus resulted that the Offertory became a very developed song of the soloist, as is found in the Gregorian Offertory. Accordingly, this piece became the artistic central point of the Mass in taking over the function formerly filled by the *Gradual responsorium*.

Communion

The first information we have regarding the Communion comes to us from St. Cyril of Jerusalem (347-8), which indicates that the first half of verse 9 of psalm 33, "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet" was used as the text of the Communion. (*Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril*, 5, 20.) The Apostolic Constitutions give all of psalm 33 for the Communion: "Psalm 33 should be sung while all the others

¹ *Geschichte der Messe*, Preface.

communicate." (VIII, 13, 1.) St. John Chrysostom relates from his journeys in Antioch (386-97) that those initiated into the mysteries (*the faithful*) repeat assiduously: "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season." (ps. 144, 15) sung as a refrain. This takes place while they savor the Body and Blood of Him Who regenerated the faithful." (*Expos. in ps. 144.*)¹ St. Jerome speaks of the song in Bethlehem (408-10) which was evidently a collective one: "Associated each day with the Celestial Bread *we* sing 'Taste and see . . .'" (*Comment. in Is.*)² St. Augustine in his sermons always returns to "Approach the Lord and you will be enlightened" as well as to verse 9 of psalm 33. (*Serm. 225. Ennar. in ps. 33.*)³

In Africa the Communion psalm was sung like the Offertory, by *the people*. At Rome antiphonal singing of the Communion by the people must have prevailed at the same time as that of the Introit, since the antiphons of both pieces seem to be from the same period. Each had its origin in antiphonal singing of a psalm, one at the beginning of the Mass, the other at the end. Thus the structure of each must have been the same. (A. Baumstark, quoted by D. Dohmes.) At Rome the chant of the Communion was evidently assigned to the *schola* at an early age because the first Roman Ordo speaks of its rendition by the subdeacons and *schola*,⁴ to whom it had already passed a long time before. At this early period also, psalms other than 33 were chosen for its rendition. The Roman Mass uses verse 9 only for the eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

In the Middle Ages the giving out of Holy Communion at High Mass gradually went out of practice, so there was eventually no necessity for a long accompaniment. Accord-

¹ *Patrol. Graeca*, 51, 464.

² *P. L.*, 24, 86.

³ *Ib.*, 38, 1098; 36, 311, 315.

⁴ Atchley, *op. cit.*, 160.

ingly, the antiphon lost its psalm verses, and by the ninth or tenth century stood alone as the Communion piece. The Requiem Mass with its single Communion verse reminds us of the ancient usage. The Communion antiphon is less melodically developed than the Introit, which, as previously stated, announces the character of the feast which the Mass celebrates.

Dom Abbot Ferretti speaks of the Introit and Communion as the prelude and postlude of the entire euchological and eucharistical drama of the Mass.

PART II

ORDINARY OF THE MASS

Kyrie

The word "Kyrie" (Lord) like the word "Sanctus" (holy) and other acclamations was popular before becoming liturgical. (Dom F. Cabrol.) "Kyrie" with the added supplication "eleison" (have mercy) was probably in former times a litany sung before Mass. With time this litany of introduction underwent a double transformation, of matter and of form. A rubric of the Sacramentary of Pope Gelasius (d. 496) placed *after* the Introit reads: "After a little interval *all* start the *Kyrie eleison* with the litany." In a letter to St. John of Syracuse, St. Gregory writes: "We never sing the *Kyrie* like the Greeks. They all sing it together. We clerics [around the altar] intone and the *people* respond."¹ The introduction of the "Christe" was

¹ P. L., 77, 956.

one of the liturgical changes of Gregory I. The Greek church does not include the "Christe." In 529 St. César of Arles introduced the song of the *Kyrie eleison* into the Gallican Mass, following the example at Rome.

Like the psalm pieces of the Mass, the *Kyrie* was at first fitted to the needs of the liturgical ceremony and the singers ceased at a sign from the pontiff. It was soon after Pope Gregory's time that it became customary to sing nine im-
plorations.

The *Kyrie eleison* is the only piece in the Roman Mass that is sung in Greek. Liturgists offer two solutions for this peculiarity. One is that the Greek text is not a fragment of the early Roman Mass which was said in Greek but that this term was adopted about the fifth century in Greek, prior to which time it was said in the litany of general petition before Mass but in the Latin tongue. Dr. Wagner concludes, on the other hand, that since even at Rome Greek was the liturgical language until at least the end of the third century, by that time the song of the *Kyrie* must have become so much a prayer of the people that on the occasion of the first codifying of the Latin liturgy the Church was reluctant to change the term from Greek to Latin. We find here an example of the powerful influence attributed to participation of the *people* in the early liturgy of the Church.

During the seventh and eighth centuries congregational singing of the *Kyrie* ceased at Rome. At this epoch the Ordinary was sung by the clerics assembled around the altar but the people continued to join in the singing of the acclamations and answers, *Amen*, *Et cum spiritu tuo*, etc. Outside of Rome, however, congregational singing of the Ordinary continued and in Gaul this custom obtained until the end of the tenth century.

The *Kyrie* is the first of the five-piece series, the Ordinary

of the Mass, whose rendition has been restored to the people by Pope Pius X.

Gloria

This hymn of praise, built upon the acclamation *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, sung by the angels at the crib in Bethlehem, was interchangeable with the hymn *Te Deum* in the ancient liturgies. One or other of these songs was sung at the nocturnal Vigils or else served as an early morning hymn in preparation for the Holy Sacrifice. The Greek Church still uses the *Gloria* hymn of praise at the morning office.

The Christians came together each morning at the same hour to render praise and glory to God because of His goodness. The church of Milan followed this early Greek custom until the sixteenth century. The presence today of the *Gloria* at the Roman Mass of Holy Saturday, wherein there is no Introit, Offertory nor Communion, fulfills its original function as a morning hymn of praise.¹

The *Gloria* was introduced into the eastern Mass in the fourth or fifth century. It came into the Occident in the sixth century and was sung for quite a long time in Greek, like the *Kyrie*. It is found in manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries in Greek but written in Latin letters.²

An old document says the *Gloria* formed part of the early Christian Mass. Pope Symmachus (d. 514) extended its use to Masses said by bishops on Sundays and feasts of Our Lord and of the Martyrs; the ordinary Priest was permitted to intone it only on Easter Sunday. Use of the *Gloria* in the Roman Mass was not general until the eleventh century. There are still many days of the liturgical year when it is omitted, including all days of penance. It has

¹ Dom H. Leclerq, *Dict. d'archéologie, Gloria*.

² *Idem*.

never arrived at a place in the Mass equal in importance to that of the other pieces.

Unlike the other Mass songs considered to this point, the song of the *Gloria* was intoned by the celebrant and not by the cantors nor by the clergy assembled about the altar, as was the *Kyrie* in the Roman Mass. The celebrant was privileged to permit that it be sung or omitted. After its intonation the assembled clergy, not the *schola* nor the congregation, continued it. This was a natural procedure in view of the alertness demanded for the continuation of a song whose presence or absence in the Mass had not been previously determined. The intonation of the *Gloria* has always remained with the celebrant.

The Latinization of the *Gloria*, its psalmodic character, the brevity of its phrases, like those of the litany, destined it to the Ordinary.

The *Gloria* is the second of the Mass songs which the congregation is chosen to render.

Credo

The Creed formula used in the rites of Baptism and in daily prayer is called the Apostles Creed because it represents the summary of the apostolic doctrine which, according to tradition, was preached by the first disciples of Christ in twelve articles, one attributed to each of the apostles (Matthew replacing Judas). The second Creed formula is the Nicean version, used at the Mass, and which, in 325 at the Council of Nicea, established the doctrine of the Son equal to the Father in refutation of the Arian heresy. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit equal to the Father and the Son was subsequently established at Constantinople in 381.

The Creed was introduced into the Mass at Antioch in

the fifth century and at Constantinople, Spain, Gaul and elsewhere in the sixth century. Its Greek title, *Symbole*, signifies synthesis or summing up. The Mass Creed was bestowed upon the faithful as a more detailed and explicit symbol of the one used anteriorly at Baptism. Its nature was confirmation in and affirmation of the true Catholic doctrine against all heretical infiltration. In the sixth century the priest intoned and the clerics *with all the people* continued.¹ It is evident that they sang it by heart since they had no books of music.

In Gaul, Amalarius of Metz (d. 850) writes: "After Christ [in parable] has spoken to the people, they apply themselves with greater fervor and devotion to confess the object of their faith; for it is proper that after the Gospel is read the people express with resounding voice the truths of the faith in which their spirit is confirmed. (*De ord. antiph.*)"²

From the sixth century the Gelasian Sacramentary anticipates the song of the *Credo* both in Latin and in Greek. From the ninth century the Roman Ordo includes the *Credo* for certain feasts in imitation of that done in other churches. In the eleventh century, at the express wish of St. Henry II, Roman Emperor, the *Credo* was incorporated into the Roman Mass by Pope Benedict VIII. This late insertion of the *Credo* as an established part of the Roman Mass is attributable to the fact that the Roman Church was not impaired by heresies in the early centuries as was the Eastern Church, so the faithful at Rome were not obliged to make an explicit profession of faith as were their eastern brethren.³

The *Credo* is not a direct conversation like the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*, but an affirmation of fundamental truths, an act of *personal* faith and charity: *Credo*, (*I believe*) the Constantinople version, is used in Rome,

¹ Gerbert, *De cantu*, I, 426.

² P. L., 105, 1323.

³ Dom L. David, *Revue du ch. grég.*, 1937.

Milan and in the oriental churches. The Mozarabic liturgy of Toledo, Spain, still uses the Nicean version: *Credimus*, (*we believe*). Here the *Credo* is said at the end of the Canon before the *Pater*, the only liturgy wherein it is so placed. Milan, and the other churches which follow the same rite, sing it at the end of the Offertory, as do most of the eastern liturgies. The Roman liturgy uses it as the last act of preparation before the direct preparation of the Holy Sacrifice started at the Offertory.¹

The *Credo* comprises three great mysteries: the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the Redemption and the mystery of the Church. The rubrics of an old Roman Sacramentary state that the bishop intoned the *Credo* if he did not wish to preach. Accordingly, at that time the *Credo* and the sermon, or homily after the reading, excluded one another as each was a composition in shortest summation of that which can be preached as principles of faith. The presence today of both the sermon and the *Credo* in the course of the Mass is therefore not of Roman origin.²

As in the case of the *Gloria* the *Credo* also was not included in all the daily Masses used throughout the liturgical year. There are many days on which it is omitted. For the same reason then which attributed the rendition of the *Gloria* in the Roman Mass to the clergy, the *Credo* also was sung by the clerics assembled about the altar after its intonation by the celebrant.

The original melody of the *Credo* is the authentic one, number I in the Vatican Gradual. The origin of this melodic recitative is very ancient even in the Roman liturgy. Amadée Gastoué asserts that this melody was undoubtedly composed for a Greek text and it probably comes from Constantinople.³

¹ *Idem*.

² P. Wagner, *Gesch., Pref. and Einführung*.

³ *Revue du ch. grég.*, 1933.

The *Credo* is the third piece of the Roman Ordinary whose rendition has been restored to the people. "If there is a song in the Church which merits active participation of the *people* it is the *Credo*." (D. David.) "There can scarcely be anything more sublime than the participation of the whole congregation, men and women, boys and girls, in the song of the *Credo*!" (P. Wagner.)

Sanctus

The *Sanctus* of the Jewish Sabbath liturgy is a song of officiant and choir. The part which interests us directly is the following phrase in the present Jewish rite of the Sabbath: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. All the earth is full of Your Majesty." The text of the *Sanctus* of the Mass up to the *Hosanna* has undoubtedly come from the Jewish liturgy. The first part of the *Sanctus* is formed from the same verse of Isaias (VI, 3): "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. All the earth is full of His glory." The Church added the word "heavens" and changed "His glory" to "Your glory."

The first testimony of the *Sanctus* as a liturgical prayer sung by the faithful in chorus is found in a letter of Pope Clement to the Corinthians (c. 97): "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood around Him and thousands of thousands administered unto Him (Dan. VII, 10) and cried, 'Holy, holy, holy [is] the Lord of Sabaoth; the whole creation is full of His glory.' And let *us* therefore conscientiously gathered together in harmony cry to Him earnestly, as with one mouth, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises."¹

According to the *Liber Pontificalis* (Duchesne, 128) Pope

¹ Ante-Nic. Libr., 1, 14.

Sixtus I, at the beginning of the second century, ordains that "at the moment when the priest starts the Sacrifice (*actionem*) the celebrant intones and the *people* continue: "Holy, holy, holy" The Fathers of the Church insist upon the same. Tertullian (d. 220) says: "Let us render to Him the glory which the angelic choirs do not cease to proclaim: 'Holy, holy, holy.' That is why we also, in order to merit association with the angels, learn from here below to sing forever His glory." St. Gregory Nazianzen spurs the catechumens on their way with: "May you hasten to receive Baptism in order to sing *with the faithful* that which the seraphim sing." St. John Chrysostom returns to the same subject (as does St. Cyril of Jerusalem, d. 386): "This hymn was first sung in heaven And the pontiff, after having spoken of the cherubim and seraphim [in the Preface] exhorts us *all* to proffer the same canticle" ¹ The Apostolic Constitutions prescribe formally the intervention of *all the faithful*: "Let *all the people* say with the cherubim and seraphim and ten thousand times ten thousand angels 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, the heavens and the earth are full of His glory. Be Thou blessed forever. Amen.'" VIII, 12.) ²

The Apostolic Constitutions contain as the first liturgy the *Benedictus qui venit* (ps. 117, 26) *Hosanna in excelsis*, but this part is used as a song before the Communion. ³ Bishops contemporaneous with St. Athanasius (d. 373) offer the *Sanctus* alone without the *Benedictus*. Thus until at least the end of the fourth century the *Sanctus* ended with *gloria tua*. ⁴ At the time of the fixation of the Greek, Gallican and Mozarabic liturgies in the fifth or sixth century, they added the acclamations of the Jewish children at Our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. ⁵

¹ Gastoué, *Revue*, 1935.

² Ante-Nic. Libr., 7, 488.

³ *Ib.*, 490.

⁴ Atchley, *Ordo Rom.* I, 91.

⁵ Gastoué, *loc. cit.*

Accordingly, the *Benedictus* was not at first destined to be sung before the consecration. During this period of liturgical history indecision as to its place and definitive form reigned in the different churches. Little by little it moved from the neighborhood of the Communion to proximity with the consecration, no doubt by the intermediary of the piece sung during the *Fractio panis*. When fusion of the two parts took place the celebrant and his attendants in the Roman rite, as well as in other liturgies, bowed their heads in silence until the end of the second *Hosanna* before starting the *Te igitur* and all the Canon.¹

A capitulary of the Frankish kings states that St. César of Arles ordains that the priest should not start the Canon before the *Sanctus* is achieved, and it seems he sang it habitually *with the faithful*.² From the tenth century the melodies of the *Sanctus* developed, and from that time on the celebrant continued the Canon in a low voice timing it so that the song of the *Benedictus* concorded with the Words of Institution.³ The second Roman Ordo (ninth century) says to sing the *Hosanna* twice, but in certain churches it was sung but once. This form has remained with the Armenians.

Although the *Sanctus* comes to us from earliest Christianity, it was not contained in the daily and habitual liturgical redactions. However, from an early hour it is found in the Sunday and feast day Masses. In 560 the Council of Vaison (France) extended its use to the daily Masses as for Sundays. The *Liber Pontificalis* (Duchesne, 128) alludes to an early pontiff who made its use obligatory.

It seems that at first the *Sanctus* was sung by the celebrant as a continuation of the Preface. This is portrayed in the

¹ *Idem*.

² David, *Revue*, 1937.

³ Gastoué, *loc. cit.*

melodic setting of the Roman ferial Mass. We have seen that at the time of Pope Sixtus I the celebrant intoned and the people continued. However, at an early hour his ministers must have assisted him because the first Roman Ordo reserves this song to the subdeacons who encircle the altar (Atchley, 90), but in Gaul it remained a song of the people until at least the ninth century. Charlemagne ordained that the priest sing the *Sanctus* in union with "the angels and the people of God." (*Admonitio generalis.*) Bishop Hérard of Tours prescribed (858) that the *Gloria Patri* (of the Introit), *Kyrie*, *Credo* and *Sanctus* should be sung by *all* with reverence. (HARDONI, *Acta Concil.* V, 451.) Furthermore, the word "dicentes" at the close of the Preface calls for the *people to continue*.

The *Sanctus* is the fourth piece of the Mass Ordinary whose rendition has reverted to the congregation.

Agnus Dei

The text of the *Agnus Dei* was used in a processional chant at the same time that it was introduced into the Mass. Its original text is found in the *Gloria* of the Mass. The ejaculation "Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi" came from St. John Baptist at the time when he revealed to his disciples the Divine mission of Christ and its expiatory and redemptory character, namely to purify and save the souls of humanity. (John, I, 29-36.)

At its origin the *Agnus Dei* was sung or omitted *ad libitum*. Pope Sergius I (d. 701) prescribed its incorporation into the Mass: "He ordained that at the moment of the fraction of the Body of Our Lord the *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis* should be sung by the clergy and people."¹ Today, since the simplification of

¹ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.*, 381.

this ceremony, the *Agnus Dei* is sung after the priest breaks the large Host over the chalice.

In certain churches in Gaul, such as Arles for quite a long time and at Lyon, the phrase was sung but once, but in general it would seem to have been sung twice, once by the clergy and once by the people. In Gaul this manner of rendition was the rule until the thirteenth century.

In Rome, where the *Agnus Dei* was repeated three times, its three terminations were the same until the twelfth century. Pope Innocent III (d. 1216) states that some time in the twelfth century the third invocation was changed to *dona nobis pacem* in supplication for the cessation of troubles and strifes then desolating the Church.¹ In one basilica, St. John Lateran, Mother Church of Rome and papal church of the Middle Ages, the custom still remains of singing *miserere nobis* three times. This explains why Mass composers of the polyphonic age often close with *miserere nobis* instead of with *dona nobis pacem*. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the words *dona eis requiem* had been substituted for *miserere nobis* in the Requiem Mass.

As previously stated, at the time of its insertion into the Roman liturgy by Pope Sergius I the *Agnus Dei* was a song of clergy and people. Dr. Wagner observes that this pontiff of Syrian birth may have had a taste for the florid melodies used in the Greek Church at the time, for in Rome the rendition of the *Agnus Dei* was taken from the clergy and the people by him and given to the educated voices of the *schola*.² Elsewhere, however, the people continued to sing it until the late Middle Ages, at which time the rendition of the entire Ordinary, in addition to the Proper, was taken over by the *schola*, as pointed out in the Introduction of this study.

¹ P. L. 217, 908.

² *Gesch.*, Pref.

At the beginning and end of the Holy Sacrifice humility imposes itself—with the *Kyrie* at the start and the *Agnus Dei* at the close. It is certain, says Dom David, that the *Agnus Dei* was inserted in the sung prayer of the Mass to permit the assistants, clergy and faithful, to better prepare themselves for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament in this last act of contrition and charity.

The *Agnus Dei* is the fifth and last piece of the Ordinary of the Mass whose rendition has been restored to the people by papal decree.



EPILOGUE

“. . . Therefore is the Church with the inpouring of the faithful through all its portals like the undulations of ocean waves. For the sonorous voice of the people, men, women, virgins and children, rings out in the psalmody of responsorial song like the sound of surging billows. I dare so to speak, for does not this wave wash away sin and give place to the life-giving breath of the Holy Ghost?”

ST. AMBROSE.

