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On the Origins of Christian Worship:

“The Problem of the Origin of the Ordo”

[i.e., of the Church’s Liturgical Typikon]

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1

If we are correct in seeing the basic structure or ‘form’ of the Ordo in the connection of the Eucharist with the liturgy of time, then the first question which we must attempt to answer is the question of the origin of this form. Contemporary liturgical scholarship does not give a simple and unanimous answer. The genesis of what we have called the ‘liturgy of time’ presents the main difficulty. Some historians simply deny its primitiveness in the liturgical tradition of the Church. They even deny the presence of the daily cycle in this tradition. The early Christian cult, in their opinion, was limited to the Eucharistic assembly, and all its other ‘expressions’ (preaching, Baptism, the Laying on of Hands) were simply bound up with the Eucharist as its indispensable elements. ‘The early Church,’ writes O. Cullman, ‘knows only the following two forms of cult: the common meal, after which there follows always the preaching of the Gospel and Baptism.’¹ G. Dix is even more radical. In his opinion even the night vigils, whose existence in the pre-Nicene Church was never before open to any special doubt, are nothing but the ‘invention of liturgical textbooks.’² Duchesne³ and Battifol⁴ also deny the presence of the daily cycle in the early Church.

How then did this liturgy of time arise and how did it become the all-embracing framework of the Church’s prayer? The historians mentioned above connect its beginning with the rise of monasticism in the second century, which is described as

¹ O. Culmann, *Le Culte dans l’Eglise primitive*, Neuchatel and Paris, Delachaux, 1944, p. 30.

² G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Westminster, Dacre Press, 1945, p. 325; cf. p. 319f.

³ L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chretien*, Paris, E. de Boccard, 1925, p. 469.

⁴ P. Battifol, *Histoire du Breviare Romain*, Paris, Gabalda, 1895, pp. 28ff.

nothing less than a 'liturgical revolution.'⁵ No one, of course, has denied the existence of prayer connected with fixed hours of the day, as a kind of distant forerunner of the daily cycle, in the early period of Christianity. The evidence for it among pre-Nicene authors is too clear. But before the fourth century, according to Duchesne, these were exclusively private prayers. The significance of the 'liturgical revolution' of the fourth century lies precisely in the fact that through monasticism these private prayers were incorporated in the official cult of the Church. From the prayers of separate individuals or groups in the Church they became the prayer of the Church. 'Once sanctioned in the Church, private prayer,' writes Duchesne, 'will never again depart out of her life.'⁶ The early pre-Nicene worship is thus contrasted with that which begins to take shape

41

after Constantine. The development and proliferation of the other cycles of the liturgy of time is also connected with this same epoch. This means that the Ordo in its present form is not just something which did not exist in the early years of the Church's life, it is in fact the product of a profound transformation, a genuine metamorphosis of the liturgical tradition.

This theory has a two-fold foundation. Such 'pillars' of liturgical scholarship as Duchesne and Battifol were limited by the fact that in their day the study of early Christian worship was in its very earliest stages. The absence of sound and reliable evidence of the liturgy of time in the memorials of that period seemed a sufficient argument for its denial. G. Dix bases his views on entirely different grounds. He believes that the early Church did not and could not have any 'liturgy of time' because by its very nature her cult was eschatological and consequently incompatible with that acceptance and sanctification of the natural 'times and hours' which is characteristic of the worship of a later epoch. 'The worship of pre-Nicene Christians,' writes Dix, 'in its official and organized form— the synaxis and the Eucharist— was an overwhelmingly world-renouncing cult, which deliberately and firmly rejected the whole idea of sanctifying or relating to God the life of human society in general, in the way that catholic worship after Constantine set itself to do.'⁷ There could be no liturgy rooted in time, having reference to the times and hours of human 'life, because the Church herself regarded herself as a departure out of time, as the renunciation of that world which lives wholly in time and is subordinated to it and measured by it. At the basis of Dix's theory there is therefore the affirmation of the purely eschatological nature of the Church and the Eucharist. Indeed her eschatology is equated with world renunciation, with the rejection of any attempt whatever to

⁵ Battifol, *op. cit.*, p. 29; cf. Dix, *op. cit.*, pp. 317ff .

⁶ L. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

⁷ Dix, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

'Christianize' the world. Dix explains the development of worship after Constantine, therefore, as primarily a departure from eschatology. He believes that the eschatological experience of the Eucharist was so profoundly modified in this epoch that it is even possible to speak of its 'collapse.'⁸ Constantine's world gave birth to a new idea in the Church, the idea of the sanctification of time, something completely alien to the early Church. The rise of the liturgy of time and its gradual transformation into the norm of the Church's liturgical life was tied up with this change in outlook.

But the theory which denies that the liturgy of time existed in the Church from the beginning is now contradicted by another theory which traces it back to the very origin of the Church. The English liturgiologist, P. Freeman, defended this thesis as early as the last

42

century, in a now-forgotten book entitled *The Principles of the Divine Office*.⁹ In our own time it has received full treatment in C.W. Dugmore's book *The Influence of the Synagogue on the Divine Office*.¹⁰ The theory may be summarized as follows: the structure of Christian worship originates in the worship of Judaism, primarily in its synagogue variation. Hebrew worship can be definitely characterized as a liturgy of time; it is set up in relation to the daily, weekly and yearly cycles. It is only natural therefore to assume the same structure in the worship of the early Christians. Reviewing in the light of this hypothesis all that is known to us now about the earliest stratum of Christian worship, Dugmore comes to the conclusion that all three of the contemporary cycles of the liturgy of time may be traced ultimately to the apostolic period and constitute an organic part of the unchanging *lex orandi* of the Church. 'From the very beginning,' writes Dugmore, 'the daily services, modelled on the synagogue ritual, were common to both East and West, although in certain areas there could also be deviations from the general custom of the Church.'¹¹

This is where we now stand in the question of the rise of the liturgy of time, i.e. in the problem of the origin of the Ordo. Must we accept one or other of these theories unconditionally? It seems to us that in spite of the tremendous value of the work of Dix and Dugmore, both of the theories which they have advanced are still really only

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 265.

⁹ P. Freeman, *The Principles of the Divine Office, Vol. 1, 'Morning and Evening Prayer*, London, James Parker, 1893.

¹⁰ C.W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue on the Divine Office*, Oxford University Press, 1944; cf. I. Dalmais, 'Origine et constitution de l'Office,' *Maison-Dieu*, 21, pp. 21-39; J. M. Hanssens, 'Nature et Genese de l'Office des Matines,' in *Analecta Gregoriana*, Vol. LVII, Rome, 1952.

¹¹ Dugmore, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

hypotheses, requiring much further study. In the first place, is Dix right in equating early Christian eschatology with 'world renunciation,' and drawing the conclusion that the liturgy of time was impossible in the early Church? Or that it was incompatible with the eschatological nature of the Eucharist? Does not the whole distinctiveness and uniqueness of the cult lie precisely in the fact that within it various 'affirmations' which seem incompatible and contradictory are actually transformed in a cultic synthesis which removes and resolves these contradictions? And is it not just this synthesis which a genuine liturgical theology is seeking, as the goal of all its efforts to understand and explain worship? So then that eschatology which Dix rightly considers to be inherent in early Christian worship must itself be defined in the light of all the elements of this worship, is itself something yet to be discovered, yet to be found; and then not by way of denying *a priori* those elements which do not happen to come under one possible definition of eschatology. But at least in Dix there is a clear presentation of a basic principle which determined the merging of the Hebrew into the Christian cult, which made the old new, marking the beginning of the already independent development of the new. This principle Dix rightly sees in the exclusive and central place of the Eucharist in the

43

life of the early Church, in the Sacrament which from the beginning Christians regarded as the expression of the whole fullness of their faith. Dugmore, who of course does not deny the importance of the Eucharist, does not make dear the connection between the Eucharist and the worship inherited from the synagogue. Behind the facts in the early Church Dix sees a definite liturgical theology which would explain these facts. With Dugmore, however, there is no clear presentation of a liturgical theology as the unifying principle of the structure and development of early Christian worship. One may therefore ask: Are these two theories really as contradictory as it might seem at first glance? Is it really impossible, after having tested the truth in each of them, to reconcile these truths in such a way that, taken together, they will give us a more complete answer to the question of the origin of the Ordo?

2

No matter what disagreement may exist between the historians of the Christian cult, they all agree on the acceptance of a genetical link between this cult and the liturgical tradition of Judaism as it existed in that period. The study and evaluation of this link has been hindered for a long time by a myth which has been central in liberal theology, the myth of the rebirth of the Church under the influence of the Hellenistic world, According to this myth, the organized catholic Church, as we see her from the middle of the second century on, with her doctrine, worship and discipline, was separated by a deep gulf from her Hebrew beginnings, and was the fruit of the Hellenistic metamorphosis which the

original teaching of Christ underwent, it is said, some time prior to the Church's emergence as an organized structure. And it is precisely in the area of worship, above all in the area of 'sacramentalism' (as if this were something completely alien to the Hebrew consciousness), where the major symptom of this Hellenistic metamorphosis is to be seen. As for more traditional and confessional liturgical study, we have already pointed out that here the question concerning the beginnings or early sources of Christian worship was not even posed. As strange as it may seem, the problem of the liturgical connection between the Church and Judaism has for a long time been simply unnoticed.

To-day we may assume that this Hellenistic myth in its pure form has finally been laid to rest. There is no need for us to dwell here on that careful re-examination to which the hitherto generally accepted theories about early Christianity have been subjected over the past

44

several decades. It is enough to point out the general significance and chief results of this re-examination. There has been a restoration to its proper place of the fundamental principle of Judaism in the Church, the *interpretatio judaica* and its acceptance as a decisive factor in the historical 'formulation' of Christianity. The question of the Hebrew origins of Christian worship has been raised once again in historical liturgics in connection with this general reappraisal. The works of Oesterley,¹² Jeremias,¹³ Dix,¹⁴ Gavin,¹⁵ Baumstark,¹⁶ Dugmore,¹⁷ and after them the study of the new material discovered at Qumran,¹⁸ have all shown clearly the general dependence of Christian prayer and cult on the cult of the synagogue, and this in turn has begun more and more to attract the attention of Hebrew liturgiologists.¹⁹ This comparative study of early Christian worship and the liturgical forms of Judaism, although it is by no means

¹² W.O.E Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, Oxford University Press, 1925.

¹³ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1955.

¹⁴ G. Dix, *The Jew and the Greek: A Study in the Primitive Church*, Westminster, Dacre Press, 1953.

¹⁵ F. Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, London, S.P.C.K., 1928.

¹⁶ Baumstark, *Liturgie Comparee*, Monastère d'Amay à Chevetogne, 1939.

¹⁷ Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue on the Divine Office*.

¹⁸ *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, M. Burrows, ed., Vols. I and II, The American School of Oriental Research, New Haven, 1950-1.

¹⁹ Cf. F. C. Grant, 'Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy' in *Zeitschrift f. alttest. Wissensch.*, 65 B, 1953, 1/2, pp. 59-77; J. Shirman, 'Hebrew Liturgical Poetry and Christian Hymnology,' *Jewish Quarterly Review*, October 1953, 2, pp. 123-61.

finished, leaves no doubt about the formal dependence of the former upon the latter, 'No one studying the pre-Christian forms of Hebrew worship and the prayer of the Church,' writes Oesterley, 'can fail to notice the similarity of atmosphere or fail to see that both are cast in the same form.... In spite of all the differences they are undoubtedly one and the same type of worship.'²⁰ It is impossible to cite all the material which has been gathered and studied thus far. We shall only emphasize the fact that this dependence is by no means restricted to that biblical terminology or to those biblical linguistic forms and constructions which are common to both Hebrew and Christian worship. We are dealing here, above all, with a structural dependence, a similarity in plan of whole service—, with what Baumstark has called 'great liturgical units'; in other words, with those basic elements which in both cases determine the formation of the liturgy, its content and general movement. Thus, for example, if such things as the blessing of the name of God, praise, confession of sins, intercession and finally the glorifying of God for His work in history— as elements set in a definite order and relationship— if these constitute the normal structure of the prayer of the synagogue,²¹ it is to be noted that the same elements, in the same order and relationship, make up the structure of early Christian prayer. We have here a dependency of order, not simply a similarity of separate elements, but an identity of sequence and of the relative subordination of one part to another, which defines from within the liturgical significance of each part. Let us repeat that this comparative study has really only just begun; and yet what has been discovered so far fully confirms Oesterley's conclusion. 'The early Christian communities,' he wrote, 'continued and preserved the traditional form of synagogue worship to which the people who made up these communities were

45

accustomed.... So that when the time came for the creation of an independent Christian worship it was only natural that it should be influenced— both in form and spirit— by that traditional worship which was so close to the first Christians.'²²

It should be noted here in passing that the confirmation of this structural dependence of Christian upon Hebrew worship destroys the argument of those who are inclined to deny the existence of any 'order' whatever in the early Church. The opinion has been held that early Christian worship was 'charismatic' by nature, and had a sort of ecstatic, fluid character which excluded the possibility of any fixed structure, of any unchangeable liturgical Ordo. This worship has been described as an inspired, 'prophetic' manifestation, which only later, in the era of a diminishing of charismatic gifts, was cast

²⁰ Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 52ff.

²² *ibid.*, p. 90.

in fixed and established forms. There is a religious philosophy which considers every rule a symptom of the weakening of the spirit. But it is just here that the comparative study of liturgical forms has led to the conclusion that the charismatic gifts did not exclude 'rule' and that an Ordo, in the sense of a general structure, was indeed adopted by Christianity from Judaism.

This is especially clear in the case of the Eucharistic assembly. There was a time when the Christian Sacraments in general, and the Eucharist in particular, were considered to be the direct product of the pagan mysteries, of that Hellenistic metamorphosis which has already been discussed. But, as the famous Swedish liturgiologist Brillioth has written, 'the attempts to derive the Sacraments directly from the pagan mysteries are now regarded as one of the distortions of historical scholarship, a symptom of a childhood illness which is common to all youthful sciences.'²³ We now know that no matter how much was absolutely new in the content of the Eucharist, and no matter how much the charismatic manifestations of early Christianity were connected with it in the beginning, still, in its general structure, it derived from a Judaistic prototype, and this prototype determined the whole future development of the Eucharistic 'rite.'

Summarizing the results of this work which has been going on now for many years, Dugmore writes: 'We can and must conclude that from the days of the Apostles the synagogue worship was the norm for Christian worship.'²⁴

3

But we must go further and ask: How should this norm be understood? Or, better: What meaning did the Christians of that time attach

46

to it? Research has firmly established the connection between the Hebrew and Christian liturgical traditions. But the establishment of a connection is not yet the explanation of its significance. Surely we fail to take sufficient account of the sense of the absolute newness of life and faith which marked Christianity from the beginning (even in its Judeo-Christian form) if we simply say— with certain historians— that since all early Christians were Jews they naturally and in a sense automatically preserved the structure and spirit of their old worship. 'The old has passed away, now all things are become new' (2 Cor. 5:17). These words of the Apostle Paul express the sense that a profound break had occurred with the coming of Christ. It can hardly be doubted that even before Paul, in the first Jerusalem community, Christians were fully aware of this newness. If in

²³ Y. Brillioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, London, S.P.C.K., 1930, p. 50.

²⁴ Dugmore, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

spite of this newness Christians continued to regard Jewish worship as a norm even after the rupture with Judaism, we also have evidence to show that this norm did not contradict the newness of Christianity, but on the contrary had to include this newness within itself in some way, had to find its 'level' within this newness.

From the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles there is no doubt that Christ Himself and His disciples not only did not reject the Temple and the synagogue, but took part regularly in the traditional worship. It is no accident that the one 'harsh' action in the life of Christ—the whipping and eviction of the merchants—is connected precisely with His zeal for the Temple. Christ observed the religious prescriptions of the Law, accepted the divinely instituted priesthood, the sabbath, the feast days. The Book of the Acts also emphasizes the faithfulness of the Jerusalem Christians to the traditional Hebrew cult. Before the persecution stirred up against them by the Sanhedrin, the Apostles and all who 'continued in their teaching' did not cease also to pray in the Temple (2:46), to observe the fixed hours of prayer (3:1), and the feasts (20:16). Their faithfulness to the Jewish cult, maintained in Jerusalem up to the catastrophe of the year A.D. 66, was so evident that they could call themselves 'zealots of the Law' (21:20), and considering the hostility expressed toward them by the official leaders of Judaism, it is remarkable that there is no mention in the charges brought against them of their infringement of the cultic law.

But another motif runs just as clearly through the whole of the New Testament. Over against the old traditional cult Christ set up a new one— 'in Spirit and in Truth' (John 4:23-4). The religious community which He formed in His disciples was not only united by His teaching, but also had its own 'rule of prayer' (Luke 11:1) and its own cultic assemblies. There is evidence also in the Book of the Acts that

47

Christians already had their own exclusively Christian worship alongside their participation in the traditional Hebrew worship. This included Baptism, the Eucharistic breaking of bread, and common prayer. In fact it was precisely this worship which distinguished them outwardly from other Hebrews. The Christian community could be entered only by way of the Baptismal washing; one could be a member only by participating in the Eucharistic assembly and in the common prayers of the brethren. Although in its outward forms this independent Christian worship clearly derives from specifically Hebrew 'Prototypes,' no one would deny its newness in relation to the cult of the Temple and the synagogue.

The history of Christian worship does not begin as the simple continuation of the traditional cult with the inclusion of a few new elements. It begins rather with a situation which can best be described as a liturgical dualism. It is a participation in the old cult and at the same time the presence— from the very beginning— of the cult of the new. Let us

stress again that the newness of this new cult comes not from non-Hebrew sources (it is Hebrew both in form and spirit) but consists rather in its new relationship to the old traditional cult.

'In the Temple and from house to house....' It is just this liturgical dualism which constitutes the original basis for Christian worship, its first 'norm.' The study of the early Christian *lex orandi* must begin with the discovery of its meaning; and of course its meaning must be sought in the faith of the first Christians. At the centre of the Judeo-Christian view stands the faith in the long-awaited and now accomplished coming of the Messiah, the faith that Christians belong to the Messianic society. There is no need to dwell here on all the various aspects of this messianic consciousness, which in recent years has been subjected to exhaustive study. For our purpose it is sufficient to recall that from the point of view of this messianic consciousness the 'logic' of the faith of early Christians was the opposite of our own. 'The modern Christian accepts the Old Testament because he believes in the New. But they believed in the New because they had seen, experienced and perceived the fulfilment of the Old. Jesus was the Christ; the Messiah; the One in whom all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. They experienced Christianity as the beginning of the 'Lord's Day,' toward which the whole history of the chosen people was moving. 'So then let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus Lord and Messiah' (Acts 2:36). But this means that Christianity, was for them— as 'Hebrews after the flesh'— not a new religion to which they were converted through a rejection of the old (as pagans were converted later on) but the fulfilment and ultimate

48

perfection of the one true religion, of that one sacred history of the Covenant between God and His people. That newness in Christianity which the early Christians felt so keenly was for them (as Hebrews) not something new in the sense of something completely unexpected, but precisely the fulfilment of what had been promised, the coming of what was expected. Everything was contained in the words 'Jesus is the Christ,' 'Jesus is the Messiah.' But for this reason also the newness of Christianity could not be felt and experienced in any other way than in relation to the old, to that which it was fulfilling and consummating, to that which it was renewing. The Church is the New Israel, Judaism renewed in the Messiah and spread through all mankind; it is the renewed Covenant of God with His people. How well Dix puts this when he writes: 'Christianity appeared in the world not as a clergy performing rites without a doctrine for the benefit of any one they could attract, like the eastern cults... not as a digest of intellectual assertions for discussion, like Greek philosophy, but as the Israel of God, renewed in Jesus. Above all as a life (a 'way'), a life determined by God in all its aspects:

religious, moral and social; a life which could really be lived only in the 'Covenant' with God and, therefore, in the society instituted through this Covenant by God Himself.²⁵

All this is well known. But it had to be mentioned once more since only in the light of this fundamental messianic standard of early Christian faith and consciousness is it possible to explain correctly the liturgical dualism referred to above. The Messiah came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it; to consummate it; to fill it with ultimate meaning. He came to make it effective, to make it Law in the deepest sense of the word; the Law established by God to bring people to an acceptance of the Messiah. Only in Him, only in the Messiah, therefore, do all the ordinances of the Old Testament acquire their true significance. 'Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me' (John 5:39). We may apply this principle also to worship, since the whole divinely instituted life of Israel is given meaning by its fulfilment and renewal in the Messiah. The Jewish Christians did not simply continue to take part in a cult which had become unnecessary and outmoded for them, they kept this cult as their own, in exactly the same way as when they read the Old Testament they understood it as Scripture about Christ. 'The Scriptures of the Old Testament,' writes Dix, 'remained the Scriptures of the New, because they contained that revelation which He, the Messiah, had proclaimed as His own and which He had fulfilled. Without them not only the Messiah but also the Church herself and all her life would be incomprehensible. In other respects too the Jewish Christians preserved the Law of Moses.... As He fulfilled

49

it they too lived the life of God's people, since they were Jews just as He was. What distinguished them from the Jews after the flesh was the fact that in Jesus the Messiah they were now, in Him, the New Covenant with God, while the Old Israel was not....²⁶

In the light of this Judeo-Christian faith the attitude of Christ Himself to the official cult, as reflected in the Gospels, also becomes understandable. His acceptance of it on the one hand, and on the other hand His insistence on its limited nature, its inadequacy and, most important, His condemnation of that legalistic, external, ritualistic interpretation of the cult which had spread out in the traditions, regulations and explanations of the rabbinical *haggada*. The whole point of Christ's condemnation was that such explanations of the cult obscure and distort the meaning of the cult, turn it into an end in itself, while its true purpose was that through it people might be able to recognize and accept the Christ. The cult must be subordinated to the common destiny and purpose of the Law and the Old Israel. Outside this destiny and purpose it becomes a stumbling block and even a sin. Only by taking all this into account can we understand the

²⁵ Dix, *The Jew and the Greek*, p. 28.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 29.

meaning of that new cult which from the very beginning constituted the central liturgical act of the Christian community and was the line which divides the Church from the Israel 'after the flesh.'

Where is the essential difference between this new cult and the old? We have already said that from a purely formal point of view the new cult— Baptism and the Eucharist— was derived from the Jewish tradition. It is not in form that we must seek its absolute newness. This newness is found rather in its content: in the fact that these liturgical acts were connected wholly and exclusively with the fact of the coming Of the Messiah and the events, of His messianic ministry: His preaching, death and resurrection. We have just said that in the light of their faith in the accomplished coming of the Messiah Christians experienced the 'old' cult in a new way, saw in it a meaning which was hidden from the rest of the Jews. But even looking at it in this new way the old cult could only be a prophecy of the Messiah, a figure of the Messiah, an affirmation of the need for His coming; it could not be a witness to the Messiah as having already come, or a manifestation of the messianic Kingdom now coming into being. By its very nature and purpose this old cult revealed and proclaimed a doctrine of God, the world and man which in a way provided all the 'conditions' of the messianic faith, all the 'premises' for the coming of the Messiah. One thing only it could not give— the affirmation that what had been announced in the past had now become a fact. just as the Scriptures of the Old Testament found their 'key' in the apostolic preaching of

50

the Word, in the *kerygma* of the messianic community so the 'old' cult needed to be fulfilled in the new, and only in and through it did it receive its true significance, a significance hidden from those who thought they were preserving and expounding it.

We need not examine here all the countless theories which have been and are still being advanced as explanations for the appearance of the new Christian worship, i.e. Baptism and the Eucharist. Studies of this sort may be found in every textbook on liturgics. Whether the Eucharist can be traced to the simple *kiddush* or passover supper; whether in this connection it is possible to regard the society of Christ's disciples as a *shabburoth* or religious brotherhood, which were quite common at the time and within whose life a shared sacred meal occupied an especially important place; how and when the early Church adopted 'the rite of Baptism?... the answers to these and many other similar questions (upon which the recently discovered Qumran documents are shedding new light) do not alter the basic meaning of this new cult. Its significance was the affirmation and 'actualization' of the coming of the Messiah as an accomplished fact the actualization of the beginning— in Him— of salvation and new life. There can be no doubt that the new cult has its historical foundation in that 'private' cult which united Christ and the little group of disciples whom He had chosen, in the prayer, the meal and

the communion which He had with them. But precisely because Jesus was not just one of many teachers or prophets, but the Messiah Himself, this private cult becomes the cult of the messianic community, its central and so to speak 'constitutive' act. In addition, because Christ Himself instituted this cult as a remembrance of Himself— 'Do this in remembrance of me'— it has no content other than Himself, His coming, the work which He accomplished. The disciples understood this cult as the *parousia*, the presence of Christ. In it they 'proclaimed the death of the Lord and confessed His resurrection.' Outside the faith in Christ as Messiah, outside the faith in His *parousia* in the Church, it has no meaning. For this reason also it is inevitably a secret cult, the worship only of those who are already in the Messiah, who are through Him 'in the Spirit and the Truth,' of those who through faith in Him and unity with Him have already entered into the New Covenant with God, and as sharers in the 'aeon of the Kingdom' have received and actually possess the new life.

We come therefore to an explanation of the liturgical dualism of the early Christian community. This is not just a co-existence of the 'old' and the 'new,' to be explained by an incomplete understanding of their faith on the part of the first Christians, as something which will

51

soon change as the 'old' dies out and they become more fully aware of the 'new.' It is rather the inevitable liturgical expression of that relationship between the Old and New Covenants outside of which the preaching of the Christ-Messiah is impossible. Just as the New Testament does not replace the Old, but fulfils and completes it, so also the new cult, if it is to be the cult of the New Covenant, does not replace or abolish the old, but appears as its necessary fulfilment. The permanent revelation of the Old Testament concerning God, creation, man, sin and salvation, lives in all fullness within the New, and it is impossible to understand the work of Christ outside this revelation. Everything to which the old cult bears witness is presupposed by the new. For this reason the new has meaning only on condition that the old is preserved. Only in relation to the old is it both revealed and actualized as something eternally new. We must see the liturgical dualism of Judeo-Christianity not as the accidental phenomenon of a passing era, but as the primary and fundamental expression of the Christian *lex orandi*.

4

Was this *lex orandi* preserved when the Church finally broke away from Judaism, when the Judeo-Christian period in her history came to an end? And if it was preserved, then in what form? The rest of our study will be an attempt to answer these questions. The centuries immediately following the apostolic age deserve our special attention. While not denying the 'liturgical-dualism' in Judeo-Christianity, Dix flatly denies its existence in

that period when the Church broke all direct ties with the Temple and the synagogue. According to the theory which he and others have defended, everything that the Church inherited from her Hebrew origins entered into the 'new' cult, above all into the Eucharistic assembly, which then became the only form of regular Christian worship. The liturgical dualism found its expression in the two-fold structure of the Eucharistic assembly—in the conjunction of the synaxis and the Eucharist in the real sense of the word. The synaxis— according to the generally accepted theory—preserved the structure of the synagogue assembly, in which the reading of Scripture and its explanation in preaching occupied the main position. The Eucharistic part preserved the form and order of the *kiddush*. In this way the liturgical dualism was transposed into a unified Christian cult, and the determining principle of this unity was the content of the new cult, the cult of the messianic community of the New Covenant.

This is the hypothesis which can be found in almost every textbook on the history of the liturgy. In its positive assertion, that is, in what

52

it says about the relationship of the synaxis to the Eucharist, this theory is undoubtedly right. But does it really answer the whole question of the 'liturgical dualism' in the Gentile Church which took the place of Judeo-Christianity? Does it answer the question of the origin of the liturgy of time (as distinct from the Eucharist) which later on occupied such a large place in the Church's liturgical tradition? We may begin testing this theory by indicating just one of its obviously weak points. Any one familiar with the history of the Eucharistic rite knows that the question of how the conjunction of the synaxis (the 'liturgy of the catechumens' in our terminology) and the Eucharist came about still represents, for liturgiologists, a kind of *crux interpretum*. 'How and why did they become a single liturgy?' asks the respected English liturgiologist Srawley. His answer: 'It just happened.'²⁷ It is hardly possible to accept this as a scientifically satisfactory answer. Dix, on the other hand, having insisted so much on the absence in the early Church of any form of worship other than that which was sacramentally eschatological, admits that before their combination into a single organic whole— a process which he considers was not completed until the fourth century— the synaxis and the Eucharist could be and indeed frequently were celebrated separately. But does this not mean that besides the Eucharist in the early pre-Constantine Church there existed at least one service which was not of a 'sacramental' character? And if so, it could then be asked: When and why was it celebrated, what did it signify and express in the liturgical tradition of that era? We shall not dwell on this question here, since we shall be returning to it later on. At this point we need only emphasize, first, the obviously synagogical character of that part of

²⁷ J.H. Srawley, *The Early History of the Liturgy*, Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 3949, p. 14.

the Eucharist called the pre-anaphora, still evident to-day and acknowledged by all liturgiologists. Here is one indication of the preservation in the 'Gentile' Church of a direct link (at least in one point) with the pre-Christian Hebrew cult. And second, it should be noted that the place of the synaxis in Christian worship is not fully explained by its conjunction with the Eucharist. After all, the synaxis also existed apart from the Eucharist. The early Christian 'synaxis' is really the first and most important evidence for the preservation by the Church— even after the break with Judaism— of a liturgical dualism, if only in its basic form, or the preservation of elements of the old and the new within a kind of biform liturgical structure.

But here again the real meaning of this preservation of a liturgical dualism in the post-apostolic period can be understood only by way of a more general appraisal of the relationship between the Judeo-Christian period and that which followed just after. What is the major

53

difference between the two? As we have already said, modern studies are showing more and more clearly that in spite of all its uniqueness Judeo-Christianity was not a prolonged 'misunderstanding,' but rather a genuine and basic principle of the Church which she has never renounced. The one essential difference between the Judeo-Christian Church and the 'Gentile' Church lay in the fact that the Judeo-Christians did not break away from their people and believed in the possibility of the conversion of all Israel to its Messiah. They thought of themselves as the forerunners of this conversion, the nucleus of the New Israel, called first to renew the Israel 'after the flesh.' The Jerusalem community believed in this way, and so did Paul, who has been regarded as a rebel against Judeo-Christianity only as the result of some incomprehensible misunderstanding. 'His epistles show that he remained a Jew who preached a "Hebrew" Gospel to the Greeks based on purely Hebrew presuppositions.'²⁸ Paul's dispute with his opponents over circumcision was a dispute within Judeo-Christianity, within a certain general agreement of principles. Nobody denied the worldwide mission of the New Israel nor the necessity of preaching to the Gentiles. The disagreement touched only on the place of the Law within the Church, which was the New Israel for the Gentiles too. In defending the Gentiles' exception from the law of circumcision, Paul was defending not the independence of Christianity from the Jewish Law, but the true nature of the New Israel, the New Covenant in the Messiah and, therefore, the true meaning of the Law. Circumcision was not obligatory because it was a sign of the Old Covenant, while Baptism was now the sign of its renewal, in which the separation of the Gentiles and the Hebrews 'after the flesh' was being broken down, in

²⁸ Dix, *The Jew and the Greek*, p. 32.

which all could be one in the New Israel. Later on we find a similar argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the question of sacrifices. Here again we find not a rejection of sacrifices altogether but a reminder that after the Sacrifice of Christ they have become unnecessary, since they were the prophetic forerunners of this complete and perfect sacrifice. This was not the negation of the 'old' cult as a whole, but simply of those elements in it which were overcome and fulfilled in the new cult, in the life of the New Israel. There was nothing essentially false or mistaken in the Christians' faith in the Possibility of the conversion of Israel. Indeed very many were converted, and the first century was marked by the rapid expansion of Christianity within the sphere of Judaism. But this faith was not destined to be justified by events. The Old Israel, as a whole, 'hardened its heart' and rejected Christianity. In Romans 11:28 Paul accepts this as an accomplished fact: 'As concerning the good news they (the

54

Jews) are enemies....' But this change in the mind of Jews changed nothing in the essence of the Church, even at the moment when it took place. Even with the comparatively rapid disappearance from the Church of Jews after the flesh, the Church was and remained the New Israel, the sole inheritor— in the eyes of believers— of the calling of and promises to the Old Israel. 'The transfer of the Church into the hands of the Gentile Christians,' Dix writes, 'can be considered as completed by the end of the '60s. But it was completed only when it became clear that the Gentile Church was flesh of the flesh and bone of the bone of the Church of the Circumcision, that her faith was the same faith, her life was that life which had been promised in the Old Testament, and that all her members were children of Abraham, "who is the Father of us all" (Rom. 4:16) and the "inheritor of the world" (Rom. 4:13-16).'²⁹

But if this general position is true, is it not reasonable to suppose that it should be demonstrated in the development of the liturgical life of the Gentile Church, that it should find expression in her cult? If the 'rule of prayer' of Judeo-Christianity expressed the essence of the Church, her faith and her life, then certainly it must have defined the formation and development of Christian worship when the Israel after the flesh withdrew from the Messiah and locked the doors of the synagogues and the Temple against the Christians. The first clear proof that this was indeed the case is seen in the preservation by Gentile Christians of the synagogue assembly, which by its combination with the Eucharist maintained the 'liturgical dualism' of Judeo-Christianity. But is this all? Could the whole meaning, the whole content of this original *lex orandi* be expressed and embodied in this combination? Or could all the rest of the wealth of Christian worship

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 61.

have grown out of some other foreign, alien root? The whole problem of the origin of the Ordo demands some answer to this last question.

Here we must return to the theme of the eschatological character of early Christian worship. The whole theory which denies the existence of any special liturgy of time in the early Church is based on the supposed impossibility of the combination of such a liturgy with the eschatological content of the Eucharist. In the meantime there can be no doubt that the 'old' Hebrew cult in its combination with the Eucharist represents a basic feature of the Judeo-Christian *lex orandi*, and must be defined in fact as a liturgy of time. It is not only divided up into hours, days, weeks and months, a great part of it is also devoted to prescriptions connected with time, and its very content can be defined as a kind of liturgical expression and sanctification of time. It is just this 'organic' bond between liturgy and time which the

55

Judeo-Christians accepted, to the extent that they adopted Jewish worship as their own. This bond entered into the original Christian liturgical tradition. But then its absence or denial in the following period could only be the result of a profound change in this tradition, its actual 'metamorphosis.' Indeed if the 'liturgical dualism' which constituted a characteristic feature of the liturgical life of the first Christian community was retained after this only within the Eucharistic assembly, while the Eucharist, in turn, was by its 'eschatological' nature the negation of any connection between the Church and the natural cycles of time, then in order to explain this change we shall have to admit a new beginning of liturgical tradition at the time when the Church passed into the hands of Gentile Christians, an actual exchange of one liturgical theology for another. This is the dilemma which confronts any one who follows Dix in his understanding of the liturgy of time as being opposed to the eschatological nature of the Eucharist and the 'sacramental' cult in general. This question, as we shall soon see, is not limited to the early Church, but cuts like a knife right down through the whole history of worship and is certainly one of the basic questions not just of liturgical history but also of the theology of liturgy.

Within the limits of the history of early Christian worship the question can be posed in the following terms: Is what has been defined as the 'eschatology' of the early Church (and therefore the eschatology of the Eucharist) really compatible with the idea of the sanctification of time, as it was expressed, first of all, in Hebrew worship? To answer this question we must first make a more careful analysis of the two concepts involved: 'eschatology' and 'the sanctification of time.'

Quite recently O. Cullman has dealt with the biblical concept or theology of time in his well-known book *Christ and Time*.³⁰ In it he very clearly presents the fundamental distinction between the linear Hebrew understanding of time and the cyclical Hellenistic concept. Without entering here into a detailed analysis of the Hebrew conception, it is important to emphasize that within it eschatology does not signify a renunciation of time as something corrupt, nor a victory over time, nor an exit out of it. On the contrary, within this conception time itself can be described as eschatological, in the sense that in it those events develop and happen by means of which time is given its meaning, which make it a process or history, and which direct it toward an *eschaton* and not just toward an ending or precipice— not toward that which would render it meaningless but toward its consummation in a final event revealing its whole meaning: *eschaton* is therefore not simply an ending, but the fulfilment of that which has developed in time,

56

that to which time has been inwardly subordinated as means is to end, that which fills it with meaning. The cycles of time (of 'natural' time) are not self-sufficient for the Jew, since they are wholly subordinated to Yahweh, to a personal God. They always constitute the revelation of the living God who has created the world and who 'holds all things in His hand.' Time in this sense is defined by its movement toward the fulfilment of God's plan or design for the world, which will come about in and through time, by its movement in the direction of the 'Lord's Day.' The 'liturgy of time' in Judaism is the expression of this biblical and in fact 'eschatological' theology of time. It begins with the blessing of the Kingdom of Yahweh, toward which time it is directed; it is entirely a cult of the God of history, the God of salvation. It 'sanctions' human life in all its aspects, gives it a religious sanction, again not as something self-sufficient but always connecting it with the *eschaton*— comprehending it in the light of the ultimate truth about the world, man and history. Morning, evening, day, the sabbath, feast days— all these have an 'eschatological' significance, as reminders of the ultimate and great 'Day of the Lord' which is coming in time. This is the liturgy of time; but not natural or cyclical time, not that time which is, so to speak, 'immanent' in the world, determining and containing it within its own self-sufficient, cyclical rhythm. It is time that is eschatologically transparent, time within which and over which the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is constantly acting, and which discovers its real meaning in the Kingdom of Yahweh, 'the Kingdom of all ages.'

But this same understanding of time, as Cullman demonstrated very well, lies also at the basis of the Christian New Testament concept, and without it it is impossible to

³⁰ O. Culmann, *Le Christ et le Temps*, Paris, Delachaux et Nestle, 1947 (English trans. Philadelphia, Westminster, 1951).

understand either early Christian eschatology or what we call the eschatology of the early Christian cult. 'Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.' The centre of the Christian *kerygma* is this, that the Messiah has come. That event has been accomplished toward which the whole history of Israel (and in the light of this history— in relation to it— the history also of the whole world) was directed. The difference between Christianity and Judaism is not in their understanding or theology of time, but in their conception of the events by which this time is spiritually measured. Judaistic time is eschatological in the sense that it is still directed toward the coming of the Messiah and the messianic Kingdom. In Christian time the Messiah has already come, is already revealed, the Kingdom of Yahweh is at hand. If eschatology is to be understood only in the futuristic sense, then, as Cullman says, 'the unconditional affirmation of the eschatology of early Christianity' is wrong— 'the norm is not

57

something which is still coming in the future, but that One who has already come...'³¹ The new element in Christianity is not its conception of time or of the world living in time, but in the fact that the event which even in the old Judaistic conception constituted the 'centre' of time, and which defined its meaning, has already begun. And this event, in turn, is eschatological, since in it is revealed and defined the ultimate meaning of all things— creation, history, salvation.

The advent of the 'Lord's Day' signifies therefore neither the ending, nor the rendering absurd, nor the emptying of time. Indeed the whole meaning, the whole point and uniqueness of early Christian eschatology is just this, that in the light of the coming of the Messiah and the 'drawing near' of the messianic Kingdom, in the light of its manifestation in the world, time becomes truly real, acquires a new and special intensity. It becomes the time of the Church: the time in which the salvation given by the Messiah is now accomplished.

It is in the light of this eschatology (as not simply identical with 'world renunciation') that we must understand the eschatological character of the new Christian cult and, above all, the Eucharist. The event which is 'actualized' in the Eucharist is an event of the past when viewed within the categories of time, but by virtue of its eschatological, determining, completing significance it is also an event which is taking place eternally. The coming of the Messiah is a single event of the past, but in His coming, in His life, death and resurrection, His Kingdom has entered into the world, becoming the *Pew* life in the Spirit given by Him as life within Himself. This messianic Kingdom or life in the new aeon is 'actualized'— becomes real— in the assembly of the Church, in the *ekklesia* when believers come together to have communion in the Lord's body. The Eucharist is

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 108.

therefore the manifestation of the Church as the new aeon; it is participation in the Kingdom as the *parousia*, as the presence of the Resurrected and Resurrecting Lord. It is not the 'repetition' of His advent or coming into the world, but the lifting up of the Church into His *parousia*, the Church's participation in His heavenly glory. Later Christian thought will begin to interpret the nature of the Sacrament— of this repetition of the unrepeatable— in concepts borrowed from Greek philosophy. It would be wrong to ascribe such a theological interpretation in its full form to Judeo-Christianity and the early Church. But there can be no doubt that even at that time, and perhaps more strongly and clearly than at any time after, all the elements of this future theological development were alive in the faith and experience of the Church. The Church belongs to the new aeon, to the Kingdom of the Messiah, which in relation to this world is the Kingdom of the age to come.

58

It is therefore not of this world; and yet the Church does exist in this world, in this aeon. In Christ the Kingdom has entered this world and exists in it in the Church. From the perspective of this world it is something in the future; in God it is eternal and actual, as well as future. Christians live wholly by the life of this world, they are flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone, yet at the same time their life as new beings is 'hid with Christ in God' and will be manifested in glory in the second coming of Christ, that is, when the dualism of these two aeons is concluded and 'this world' comes to an end. The Eucharist or Lord's Supper is also the actualization of the new aeon within the old, the presence and manifestation in this age of the Kingdom of the Age to Come. The Eucharist is the *parousia* the presence and manifestation of Christ, who is 'the same to-day, yesterday and forever' (Heb. 13:8). By participating in His Supper Christians receive into themselves His life and His Kingdom, i.e. the New Life and the New Aeon. In other words the eschatology of the Eucharist is not 'world renouncing,' not a turning away from time, but above all the affirmation of the reality, the certainty and the presence of the Kingdom of Christ which is 'within,' which is already here within the Church, but which will be manifest in all glory only at the end of 'this world.' This is a conquest of time not in the sense of rendering it empty and valueless, but rather in the sense of creating the possibility of being made partakers of or participants in the 'coming aeon,' in the fullness, joy and peace that is found in the Holy Spirit, while still living in 'this world.'³²

So we come to the final meaning and 'justification' of the liturgical dualism of early Christianity. We have said that the new cult, being by nature a witness to the already accomplished coming and manifestation of the Messiah as the fulfilment of the images and promises of the Old Testament, thereby postulated the existence of the old cult,

³² Cf. essays collected in *Le Jour du Seigneur*, Paris, R. Laffont, 1948.

without which it could not in fact be new— new eternally, and by its very nature not just something new in the chronological sense. We may now go further. We can say that it is precisely the eschatology of the new cult which in turn postulates the old cult as the liturgy of time. Since this eschatology is itself in relation to time, and only in relation to time can it be ultimately and truly an eschatology, i.e. a manifestation and actualization (*eschaton*).

The Church is set in the world in order to save it by her eschatological fullness, by the *parousia* of Christ, by His coming and presence, by the waiting for Him to illumine, judge and give meaning to its life and time. If the Church were a salvation from the world, then her new cult would be sufficient; moreover, it would be the sole content

60

and goal of the whole life of the Church. A so-called 'world renouncing' eschatology has perhaps been held by individual Christians (cf. 'let thy Kingdom come and let this world pass away ...' in the *Didache*). But even these not so much eschatological as apocalyptic expressions have not extinguished among Christians the consciousness that the Church is set in this world with a mission, and that it is precisely to this mission 'to proclaim the Lord's death and confess His resurrection' that the Sacrament of the Church bears witness. This Sacrament 'consecrates Christians to this mission, and it is within the Church that this mission is actualized as the manifestation of the new aeon, the new life in the *parousia* of the Lord. 'This world' will pass away, the Lord will reign in full glory. The Church is expecting this fulfilment of time, is directed toward this ultimate victory. But this expectation is not a passive state, it is a responsible service— it is to 'be as He was in this world.' This is the time of the Church. Only now, as we see it coming to an end on the one hand, and on the other hand as we see it penetrated by the light and power of the Kingdom, does time acquire its full significance. Only thus does the world, 'whose image is passing away,' cease to be reduced to a meaningless disappearance into the stream of non-existence. Just as the Church, although she is 'not of this world,' exists within the world and for its sake, so too the Sacrament (in which the oneness of the Church with the New Aeon is eternally created and actualized) does not abolish or strip time of meaning. While it is by nature a victory over time and a departure out of it, it is also performed within time, and it fills it with new meaning.

The liturgy of time (now recognized as the old Jewish cult preserved by the Church) was therefore preserved in a way by necessity— as the completion of the Eucharist, without which the application of the Eucharist to time or any real sanctification of the life of this world would be incomplete. The Eucharist does not replace the liturgy of time, since by nature it is the manifestation in this aeon of another Aeon, it is the communication of the faithful in eternal life, in the Kingdom of God already 'come in power.' It cannot abolish 'the liturgy of time, because then time would be really emptied and deprived of meaning,

would be nothing but 'intervals' between celebrations of the Eucharist. Thus the new cult, an eschatological cult in the deepest sense of the word, required for its real fulfillment inclusion in the rhythm of time, and its combination within this rhythm with the liturgy of time, as the affirmation of the reality of the world which Christ came to save. But, it can be objected all this is simply theological 'interpretation.' Is it possible to find support for what has been said in the fact, of the early Christian liturgical tradition?

60

5

We must first see how well grounded is the idea of the liturgy of time on which we have based our notion of the structure of the early Christian 'rule of prayer.' We find support in the obvious link between the Eucharist and time expressed from the very first days of the Church in the Christian celebration of the Lord's Day. This was the day of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, His manifestation of the new life, and this day became in the Church the day of the Eucharist. For an understanding of the place of the 'Lord's Day' in the liturgical life of the early Church it is important to clarify its relationship to the Hebrew sabbath. Christian thought has so ignored this relationship that the whole week has been simply 'advanced,' and the day of resurrection (the first day of the week, the *prima sabbati*) has gradually become another sabbath. All the Old Testament prescriptions and definitions touching the seventh day were little by little transferred to Sunday, and the seventh day has been converted into a kind of 'prototype' of the Christian day of rest. This displacement of the week became especially apparent when the emperor Constantine gave the 'day of the sun' an official state sanction, and made it a generally obligatory day of rest. But even before the end of the fourth century the memory still lived in the mind of the Church of the original relationship of the 'Lord's Day' with the sabbath and the whole Old Testament week. It is still possible to find evidence of this, although in a rather unclear form, in our contemporary Ordo.

For the early Church the Lord's Day was not a substitute for the sabbath; it was not (so to speak) its Christian equivalent. On the contrary the real nature and significance of this new day was defined in relation to the sabbath and to the concept of time connected with it. The key position of the sabbath (and all its related prescriptions) in the Old Testament law and Hebrew piety is well known. From whatever source the weekly cycle of time may have been acquired by Israel, its religious interpretation and experience was rooted in a specifically biblical theology of time. The Seventh Day, the day of complete rest, is a commemoration of the creation of the world, a participation in the rest of God after creation. This rest signifies and expresses the fullness, the completion, the 'goodness' of the world, it is the eternal actualization of the word spoken about the world by God from the beginning: 'it is very good.' The sabbath sanctions the whole natural life of the world unfolding through the cycles of time, because it is the divinely

instituted sign of the correspondence of the world to God's will and purpose. On this day the Law prescribes joy: 'thou shalt eat and drink

61

and give thanks to Him who created all things,' since 'He who created all things honoured and sanctified the sabbath day and commanded that it should be so' (2 Macc. 15:2-4). Faithfulness to the sabbath was bound up with the ultimate mystical depths of the people of Israel, and only by understanding it as something for which men were prepared to die is it possible to comprehend the significance of the new day introduced by the Church.

The appearance of this new day is rooted in the expectation of salvation, in that striving toward the future and in those messianic hopes which were just as characteristic of the theology of the Old Covenant as the cult of the Law. If in the sabbath the Hebrew honours the Creator of the universe and His perfect Law, he knows too that within this world created by God hostile forces are rebelling against Him, that this world is spoiled by sin. The Law has been broken, man is sick, life is poisoned by sin. The time which is included in the weekly cycle is not only the time of a blessed and God-pleasing life, but also the time of a struggle between light and darkness, between God and all that has rebelled against Him. This is the time of the history of salvation which is founded in an eschatological. Realization— the Day of the Messiah. And again, no matter what may have been the original content and genesis of Hebrew Messianism and the apocalypticism connected with it, the important thing for us is that the time of the manifestation of Christianity coincided with the ultimate limit of intensity of these expectations, with their growth into a universal eschatological outlook. It was precisely in connection with or as a result of this eschatology that there arose the idea of the Lord's Day, the day of Messianic fulfilment, as the 'Eighth Day, 'overcoming' the week and leading outside of its boundaries.³³ In the eschatological perspective of the struggle of God with 'the prince of this world' and the expectation of the new aeon, the week and its final unit— the sabbath— appear as signs of this fallen world, of the old aeon, of that which must be overcome with the advent of the Lord's Day. The Eighth Day is the day beyond the limits of the cycle outlined by the week and punctuated by the sabbath— this is the first day of the New Aeon, the figure of the time of the Messiah. 'And I have also established the eighth day,' we read in the book of Enoch, a characteristic example of late Hebrew apocalypticism, 'that the eighth day be the first after my creation, that in the beginning of the eighth (millennium) there be time without reckoning, everlasting, without years, months, weeks, days or hours.' The concept of the eighth day is connected with

³³ Cf. J. Danielou, 'La Theologie du dimanche' in *Le Jour du Seigneur*, pp. 120ff.

another idea characteristic of Jewish apocalypticism : the cosmic week of seven thousand years. Each week is thus a figure of all time, and all

62

time, that is the whole of 'this age,' is one week. So then the eighth day and the eighth millennium are the beginning of the New Aeon not to be reckoned in time. This eighth day (coming after and standing outside the week) is also, therefore, the first day, the beginning of the world which has been saved and restored.

Christ rose not on the sabbath, but on the first day of the week (*mia sabbatôn*). The sabbath was the day of His rest, His 'en-sabbathment' in the tomb, the day which completed His task within the limits of the 'old aeon.' But the new life, the life which had begun to 'shine out of the tomb,' began on the first day of the week. This was the first day, the beginning of the risen life over which 'death has no dominion.' This day also became the day of the Eucharist as the 'confession of His resurrection,' the day of the communication to the Church of this risen life.³⁴ And here it is quite remarkable that in early Christianity, up to and including the time of Basil the Great, this day was often called in fact 'the eighth day.' This means that the symbolism of Hebrew apocalypticism was adopted by Christians and became one of the theological 'keys' to their liturgical consciousness. There is no need to dwell especially on the first epistle of Peter, in which there seems to be a hint of the significance of the number eight (3:20-1). In the Gospel according to John, undoubtedly the most 'liturgical' of all the Gospels, the risen Christ appears after eight days (John 20:26). Later the 'mystery' of the eighth day is explained by Christian authors in application to the Eucharistic Day of the Lord, which points to a dear tradition. These numerous texts on the eighth day have been collected by J. Danielou.³⁵ Their meaning is clear: Christ rose on the first day, i.e. on the day of the beginning of creation, because He restores creation after sin. But this day which concludes the history of salvation, the day of victory over the forces of evil, is also the eighth day, since it is the beginning of the New Aeon. 'So the day which was first,' writes St. Augustine, 'will be also the eighth, so that the first life might not be done away, but rather made eternal.'³⁶ And even more clearly St. Basil the Great writes: 'The Lord's Day is great and glorious. The Scripture knows this day without evening, having no other day,

³⁴ Cf. H. Chirat, 'Le Dimanche dans l'antiquite chretienne' in *Etudes de Pastorale Liturgique*, Paris, Cerf, 1944, pp. 127-48; H. Callewaert, 'La synaxe eucharistique a Jerusalem, berceau du dimanche' in *Ephemerides Theolog. Lovanienses*, 15, 1938, pp. 34-73; Dom H. Dumaine, art. 'Dimanche' in *Dict. Archeol. Lit. Chret.*, 4, 1, 858-994.

³⁵ Danielou, 'La Theologie du dimanche,' pp. 120ff., and also a special issue of *Vie Spirituelle* ('Le Huitieme Jour'), April 1947.

³⁶ Epist. 5 5:17.

a day without end; the psalmist called it the eighth day, since it is outside of time measured in weeks. Whether you call it a day or an age, it is all the same. If you call it an aeon, it is one, and not a part of a whole....³⁷ In this way the eighth day 'is defined in opposition to the week,' writes J. Danielou. 'The week is related to time. The eighth day is outside time. The week stands within the sequence of days, the eighth day has nothing coming after it, it is the 'last one.' The week involves multiplicity; the eighth day is one....³⁸

63

In the Church this first-eighth day (the Lord's Day: *kyriakê hêméra*) is the day of the Eucharist. The early Christian tradition bears uniform witness to this fact. The Eucharist has its day, Christians gather together on a *statu die*³⁹— on an established day. We know that the 'Day of the Sun' was not a holy day of rest in either the Jewish or the Roman calendars. Nonetheless the Eucharist 'became so firmly connected with this day that nothing has ever been able or will be able to undermine this connection.⁴⁰ But then this is the whole point: though the Eucharist is celebrated on a *statu die*, though it has its own day and thus reveals a connection with and is set in the framework of time, still this day is not simply 'one out of many.' Everything that has been said above about the first and eighth day shows that this connection of the Eucharist with time emphasizes the eschatological nature of the Eucharist, the manifestation in it of the Lord's Day, the New Aeon. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Church. It is the *parousia*, the presence of the Risen and Glorified Lord in the midst of 'His own,' those who in Him constitute the Church and are already 'not of this world' but partakers of the new life of the New Aeon. The day of the Eucharist is the day of die 'actualization' or manifestation in time of the Day of the Lord as the Kingdom of Christ. The early Church did not connect either the idea of repose or the idea of a natural cycle of work and rest with the Eucharistic Day of the Lord. Constantine established this connection with his sanction of the Christian Sunday. For the Church the Lord's Day is the joyful day of the Kingdom. The Lord's Day signifies for her not the substitution of one form of reckoning time by another, the replacement of Saturday by Sunday, but a break into the 'New Aeon,' a participation in a time that is by nature totally different.

In this connection of the Eucharist with the Lord's Day, so well supported by evidence from the liturgical tradition of the early Church, we have therefore a confirmation of that

³⁷ Migne, *Patr. Graec.*, 29, 49.

³⁸ Danielou, 'La Théologie du dimanche,' p. 126.

³⁹ Pliny, *Epist.* 10:96.

⁴⁰ Danielou, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

eschatological theology of time of which we have been speaking. The eschatology of the new Christian cult does not mean the renunciation of time. There would have been no need for a fixed day (*statu die*) in a 'wholly world-renouncing' cult, it could be celebrated on any day and at any hour. Nor does this eschatology become related to time through the sanctification of one of the days of the week, like the sabbath in the Old Testament law. The 'Lord's Day' actualized in the Eucharist was not 'one of the ordinary sequence of days.' just as the Church herself while existing in 'this world' manifests a life which is 'not of this world,' so also the 'Lord's Day,' while it is actualized within time on a given day, manifests within this sequence that which is above time and belongs

64

to another aeon. Just as the Church though 'not of this world' is present in this world for its salvation, so also the Sacrament of the Lord's Day, the Sacrament of the new aeon is joined with time in order that time itself might become the time of the Church, the time of salvation. It is precisely this fulfilment of time by the '*Eschaton*,' by that which overcomes time and is above it and bears witness to its finitude and limitedness, which constitutes the sanctification of time.

But if the connection of the Eucharist with a 'fixed day' and the nature of this day as the 'Lord's Day' point to a definite theology of time, and if they confirm our first hypothesis concerning the early Christian rule of prayer, they do not yet prove the existence in the early Church of what we have defined as the liturgy of time, i.e. of a form of worship distinct from the Sunday Eucharistic assembly and immediately connected with the natural cycles of time. We have already said that the opinions of historians differ as to the origin of this form of worship, which will occupy such a large place in the liturgical life of the Church in the following epoch. We have also expressed our conviction that to the extent that the 'liturgical dualism' of Judeo-Christianity represented something essential and basic in the Church's faith, it had to be preserved in one form or another after Christianity's final break with Judaism. Are we now able to point out the facts which support this hypothesis?

Let us note first of all that the disagreements of historians on this point are to be explained frequently by an inadequate grasp of the question itself. Until quite recently the attention of liturgiologists has been concentrated almost exclusively on questions connected with the history of the sacramental Christian cult— the Eucharist and Baptism. The other aspects of the liturgical life of the early Church have been left in shadow. Their study is only just beginning: 'too many problems remain unresolved, too many hypotheses unproved.'⁴¹ From the purely historical point of view, therefore, every unconditional 'yes' or 'no' in this matter of the early existence of a Christian liturgy of

⁴¹ Dalmais, 'Origine et constitution de l'Office,' p. 21.

time must be regarded as premature. Yet even on the basis of the material which has been gathered and studied so far the inadequacy of the hypothesis which insists on the late and specifically monastic origin of the liturgy of the daily cycle is becoming more and more evident. As we shall see shortly, the opinion concerning the post-Constantine origin of the idea of the 'yearly cycle' is also untenable.

We must be able to furnish unanimous evidence from pre-Nicene tests for the hours of prayer, for the connection of prayer with definite times of day. And in fact in the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians we read: 'We must do all things in order... at

65

fixed times... not haphazardly and not without order, but at definite times and hours'.⁴² Three hours of prayer are indicated in the *Didache*,⁴³ by Tertullian,⁴⁴ by Cyprian of Carthage,⁴⁵ by Origen,⁴⁶ in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus.⁴⁷ 'We should pray in the early morning,' writes Cyprian, 'that by means of our morning prayer the resurrection of the Lord might be recalled; also at the setting of the sun and in the evening we should pray again....' The tradition of hours and times of prayer can certainly be accepted as a tradition common to the whole of the early Church. We know that some historians of worship explain this tradition as referring to private prayer rather than to prayer in the Church. But even this would indicate a definite interest in prayer within time, an understanding of time as the necessary 'framework' of prayer. Quite early we find a reference (in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus) to the theological significance of these hours and times. Therefore if we have nothing more in the tradition of the pre-Nicene Church than these prescriptions to say prayers at fixed hours, this would be enough to infer the subsequent development of the daily cycle of worship. Nor would this be a 'liturgical revolution,' but simply the development and ordering of the early tradition.

In fact we can go further. First, the texts which are usually used to defend the exclusively private nature of the prayer of hours and times very plainly show that this prayer could and actually did have an ecclesiological character, was offered in the assemblies of the community. Thus, in the *Apostolic Tradition*, immediately following the prescriptions to pray each morning, it is said: 'but if there is instruction by the word (*catecizacio*) let every

⁴² *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 60.

⁴³ *Didache*, 8.

⁴⁴ *De Oratione*, 15.

⁴⁵ *De Oratione*, 35.

⁴⁶ *In Rom.*, 9, 1.

⁴⁷ *Apost. Trad.*, 35, 1, 2.

one prefer to attend that, since when he has said prayer in the assembly, he will be able to avoid the evil of the day.⁴⁸ We do not know whether these assemblies with 'instruction by the word' and prayer were daily occurrences. But if we take into account the whole spirit and 'ethos' of the early Church, this prayer will have to be defined as 'ecclesio-centric,' having its basis in the experience of the assembly or communion of the *ecclesia* and at the same time being directed to this end.⁴⁹ 'Strive to be together as often as possible,' writes St. Ignatius of Antioch;⁵⁰ and St. Cyprian of Carthage echoes his words : 'The Lord of unity did not command that prayer be offered to Him individually and in private.'⁵¹ Origen,⁵² Tertullian,⁵³ and others⁵⁴ insist on the value of being 'together as often as possible,' in the assembly of common prayer and fellowship. We repeat that it is impossible to make categorical assertions about a regular daily worship on the basis of these texts alone. But they do point, first of all, to a firm tradition of times of prayer in the early

66

Church, and second, to the existence of assemblies (although perhaps not in all places) devoted to prayer and sermons. Finally, they point to the acceptance of this prayer of the Church as something necessary, and indeed superior to private prayer. They point therefore to the inclusion of this form of worship in the *lex orandi* of the Church.

Comparative liturgics, whose principles and method were developed so brilliantly by Baumstark, has delivered an even more serious blow to the hypothesis of the monastic origin of the daily cycle. This study has shown that the epoch of the development of the daily cycle after Constantine was marked by a rivalry and even conflict between two types of daily service: 'corporate' and 'monastic' in Baumstark's terminology. We will have occasion to dwell on this rivalry in greater detail in the following chapter. Here it is sufficient to say that this fact clearly demonstrates the preservation in the Church of daily services and a daily cycle which were not only distinct from their monastic types, but even appeared before the rise of monasticism. But what is still more important, there can

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Cf. H. Chirat, *L'Assemblée chrétienne à l'Age apostolique*, Paris, Cerf, 1949, pp. 15ff.; G. Bardy, *La Théologie de l'Eglise de St. Clement de Rome à St. Ireneé*, Paris, Cerf, 1945, pp. 19ff.; N. Afanassiev, *Trapeza Gospodnya (The Lord's Table)*, Paris, 1952.

⁵⁰ *Eph.*, 3.

⁵¹ *De Oratione*, P.L. 4, 541.

⁵² Cf. J. Danielou, *Origine*, Paris, La Table Ronde, 1948, pp. 41ff.

⁵³ *Apol.*, 1, 39.

⁵⁴ Bardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-53.

be no doubt about the connection between the daily services of the 'corporate type with synagogue worship, about their structural dependency on Jewish daily worship. C. W. Dugmore devoted a special work to the study of this dependency, and has demonstrated the synagogical structure of the two basic services of the daily cycle— Vespers and Matins. On the days when the Eucharist was celebrated the daily service (on the pattern of the synagogue worship) preceded the Eucharist, as its first part (*missa catechumenorum*), while on other days it constituted an independent service, assigned usually to definite hours of the day.⁵⁵ In the third century, as is evident even from the very partial texts which reflect this epoch, Vespers and Matins 'already occupied their present honoured position in the cycle of daily services.'⁵⁶ The existence of these daily services, devoted (according to Tertullian) 'to common prayer... to the reading of Divine Scripture, to exhortations and instructions,' explains the cause and manner of combining the synagogue 'synaxis' with the Eucharist. Srawley's answer— 'it just happened'— acquires greater significance.

In any case the universal acceptance in all *Ordos* of the cycle of Vespers and Matins as liturgical services, i.e. as presupposing an assembly of the Church (cf. the participation in these services of the bishop, the presbyters and deacons, in the *Apostolic Constitution*), and consequently as existing apart from the purely monastic services (Compline, etc.), confirms the theory that they belong to the Church's liturgical tradition, to the Church's *lex orandi*. The clearly synagogical elements which have been preserved in them even down to the present

67

day— in spite of extensive monastic reworking— also point to their early inclusion in this *lex orandi*.

So then the liturgy of time which we saw already embodied and expressed in the liturgical dualism of Judeo-Christianity, and later in the cycle of the eschatological 'Day of the Lord,' is also confirmed by the preservation by the 'Gentile Church' of the worship of the daily cycle. From the very beginning the Church's liturgical tradition included the idea of the day as a liturgical unit, in which definite hours and times— evening, morning and night— should be devoted to prayer; and not just to private prayer, but also to prayer in the Church. It may be supposed that not all believers had the opportunity to gather twice each day, and that from the beginning it was a minority which participated in these services. Tertullian's distinction between *coetus* and *congregationes* is possibly a reference to this situation; also the exhortations to attend these assemblies which we find, for example, in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and in the *Order*. But this does not alter

⁵⁵ Dugmore, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ M. Skaballanovich, *Tolkovy Typikon*, p. 87.

the ecclesiological, liturgical character of these services. The Church is praying 'in order to surround God with common prayers as with an army, gathered together in a single place....'⁵⁷ This idea of the praying Church, *ecclesia orans*, clearly corresponds to the whole spirit of early Christian ecclesiology, to the liturgical piety of the pre-Nicene Church.

6

Finally, we must also trace the basic principle of the Church year back to the apostolic beginnings of the Church. We see this basic principle in the preservation by the early Christian *lex orandi* of Passover and Pentecost.⁵⁸ The Church's adoption of these two basic Hebrew festivals is evidenced not only by the New Testament epistles but also by other early Christian writings. Not long ago an attempt was made to discover the Christian 'adoption' of a third great Hebrew festival connected with the Old Testament *heilsegeschichte*— the Feast of Tabernacles. This attempt is still so much in the realm of hypothesis that we will not dwell on it here. There are no doubts, however, about Passover and Pentecost. The Church preserved these feasts not out of any 'inertia' but because they represented the necessary biblical liturgical premise of the Church's faith. Christ died as 'our Passover,' while in the 'last and great day' of Pentecost, which had already acquired an eschatological character in late Judaism, the descent of the Holy Spirit was accomplished. This was the actualization of the Church, marking the beginning of the time of the Church. We need not enter

68

here into a review of the complicated problems connected with the New Testament texts concerning the Passover celebrated by Christ on the eve of His death, or with the 'Paschal controversies' of the second century. The various solutions to these problems do not disturb the one fact which is important for us at this point: the presence in the early Christian liturgical tradition of two annual festivals dedicated to the commemoration (*mnêma* in Origen's works) of Redemption and Salvation. This fact demonstrates the preservation by the Church of the idea of the year as a liturgical unit, and it is perhaps here more than anywhere else that the connection between the Christian and Jewish *lex orandi* is made plain, since the liturgical year would seem to stem least of all from the nature of the liturgical life of the Church. Everything that we know about the way Christians at that time experienced the Eucharist and the Lord's Day points to a constant Paschal theme, just as Baptism with the laying on of hands was felt by them to be a

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 1, 39.

⁵⁸ Cf. Allan McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, London, S.C.M., 1953; Baumstark, *Liturgie Comparee*, pp. 174ff.; Dom B. Botte, 'La Question Pascale' in *Maison-Dieu*, 41, 1955, pp. 88-95.

continuing Pentecost, the constant outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. There was apparently no need for them to separate the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ on the one hand or the descent of the Holy Spirit on the other into isolated— and special ‘feasts.’ The mystery of death and resurrection and the experience of the new life in the Holy Spirit are dominant themes in the whole life of the early Church. These feasts were neither special historical commemorations (since each Eucharist was a ‘recollection of His death and a confession of His resurrection’ and each Baptism was the actualization of Pentecost) nor were they a casting of the dogmatic significance of these events into special liturgical forms. If the Church preserved these two festivals of the old Israel, even when the idea of their consummation in Christ saturated the whole of her life, then this was because she preserved that theology of time of which they were the expression. Within this time or history the coming of the Messiah and His Passover, the descent of the Holy Spirit and in Him the manifestation of the ‘New Aeon’ in the world represent a decisive crisis, in the literal sense of this world. But time and the history of salvation continue. In the Messiah they acquire their whole meaning, and also a new goal: the ultimate cosmic victory of the Kingdom is already manifested in the Messiah. For this reason the Christian Passover is the same Passover of the chosen people of God, the Passover of the Exodus and of deliverance from bondage, the Passover of the desert, the Passover of the coming into a promised land. To this Passover as a series of events there was added yet one more meaning, the final one, including all the others: ‘Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.’ This final event established the Christian Passover as a sign of the new period

69

of the history of salvation, directed toward the consummation of the Passover in the ‘unending day of the Kingdom of God.’

No matter what the original liturgical expression of Pentecost may have been, its preservation in the Church as the fifty day period following Easter— points once again to the Christian ‘adoption’ of a definite understanding of the year, of time, of the natural cycles, as having a relation to the eschatological reality of the Kingdom. As an ancient agricultural feast, Pentecost was, in the words of Kohler, ‘transformed in rabbinical Judaism into a historical festival, a commemoration of the Decalogue given on Sinai.’⁵⁹ ‘If this transformation was completed in the period of the Gospels,’ notes McArthur, ‘it is remarkable that the Holy Spirit in His dynamic power was received by the disciples precisely on that day. just as the Old Covenant established in the Exodus and remembered at Passover was fulfilled on Sinai, so the New Covenant established in the events remembered by the Christian Passover was fulfilled on Pentecost. The Christian

⁵⁹ K. Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, New York, 1918, p. 463.

Pentecost became the birthday of the Church as the New Israel of God.⁶⁰ Once again there is the characteristic affirmation, on the one hand, that Christians live as it were in a continuing Pentecost (cf. Origen: 'he who can truly say that we are risen with Christ and that "God has glorified us and in Christ has set us at His right hand in heaven" lives always in the time of the Pentecost'⁶¹), and on the other hand the setting apart of Pentecost as a special festival celebrated at a special time of year. 'We celebrate also,' writes St. Athanasius, 'the holy days of Pentecost, looking to the age to come.' 'And so let us add the sever. holy weeks of Pentecost, rejoicing in and praising God for the fact that He has in these last days manifested to us the joy and eternal rest prepared in heaven for us and all those who truly believe in Christ Jesus our Lord...'⁶² Again eschatology, the experience of the Church as the New Aeon and an anticipation of the 'Kingdom of the age to come,' is related to the affirmation of time as a history within which this Kingdom must grow and 'be fulfilled' in the faith and practice of men.

If this were not so it would be impossible to understand and explain the whole subsequent development of the liturgical cycle of Easter and Pentecost.' Since even in its final Byzantine version it preserved a clear connection with the original biblical theology of time out of which it had grown, the connection of the redemptive Sacrifice of the Messiah with the Hebrew Passover, the connection of the descent of the Holy Spirit with Pentecost, the 'last and great day' of that Passover.

Although it is impossible to affirm the universal acceptance of a developed liturgy of time in the early pre-Constantine Church, it is both necessary and possible to trace its general principle and therefore

70

its historical beginning back to the original, apostolic, Judeo-Christian *lex orandi*. We are brought to this conclusion not only by an examination of the theology of time which existed in the early Church and which constituted the distinctive feature of her eschatology, but also by all that we know about the form, structures and content of her worship. The hypothesis concerning the late post-Constantine appearance of the idea of a liturgy of time, and thus also of a 'liturgical revolution' marking the end of the early Christian period of the history of worship, must be regarded as completely unfounded.

There is good reason to regard the principle of the Ordo, i.e. of that co-relation and conjunction of the Eucharist with the liturgy of time in which we recognize the

⁶⁰ McArthur *op. cit.*, p. 143.

⁶¹ *Contra Celsum*, 8, 22.

⁶² *Paschal Epis.*, 4:5 and 19:10.

fundamental structure of the Church's prayer, as having existed from the very beginning in her 'rule of prayer,' as the real principle of this rule.

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