

CHAPTER III

THE CLASSICAL SHAPE OF THE LITURGY: (I) THE SYNAXIS

SYNAXIS AND EUCHARIST

THE primitive core of the liturgy falls into two parts—the *Synaxis* (a Greek word which means properly simply a ‘meeting’) and the *Eucharist* proper (or ‘thanksgiving’). These were separate things, which had a different origin. The synaxis was in its Shape simply a continuation of the Jewish synagogue service of our Lord’s time, which was carried straight over into the Christian church by its Jewish nucleus in the decade after the passion. The eucharist on the contrary was of directly Christian development; though this, too, had a Jewish background in the Passover sacrifice-meal, in the *kiddush* or religious meal of the household with which the Sabbath and the great feasts began, and more particularly in the common meals with a devotional purpose held by Jewish religious brotherhoods (*chabûrôth*). But whatever its Jewish setting and pre-history may have been, the Christian eucharist as such derived from the Last Supper.

Originally synaxis and eucharist were separable, and either could be and frequently was held without the other. It happens that our earliest account of Christian worship in any detail, in S. Justin’s *Apology* (c. A.D. 155), describes the eucharist twice over. Once (67) it is preceded by the synaxis, and once (65) it is preceded only by the conferring of baptism. The next earliest witness, S. Hippolytus, in his *Apostolic Tradition* (c. A.D. 215) also describes the eucharist twice, once preceded by the consecration of a bishop (ii. and iii.) and once preceded by baptism and confirmation (xxi. and xxii.), but in neither case accompanied by the synaxis. In the fourth century they were still distinct and easily separable. In some churches down to the sixth century the typical eucharist of the year, that which commemorated the Last Supper, was still celebrated at dusk on Maundy Thursday without the synaxis (which had already been celebrated earlier in the day at noon followed by the eucharist) and began, as we should put it, with the offertory.¹ Even to this day the Roman missal affords on Good Friday an almost perfect specimen of the old Roman synaxis of the second century, followed on this occasion not by the eucharist but by the fourth century Syrian rite of the Veneration of the Cross and the second century service for communion from the reserved Sacrament.²

¹ Cf. p. 441.

² Cf. G. Dix, *The Mass of the Presanctified* (Church Literature Association, London).

However, despite their separate origin and different purpose, the synaxis normally preceded the eucharist in the regular Sunday worship of all churches in the second century. From the fourth century onwards the two were gradually fused, until they came everywhere to be considered inseparable parts of a single rite. We shall find that both their original distinction and their later fusion had at the time a true appropriateness to the contemporary situation and mission of the church in the world. Nevertheless, each part always retained the essentials of its own character, though less distinctly in the East than in the West. Thus it comes about that all over christendom the first part of the eucharistic action still revolves around the book of the scriptures¹ and not around the chalice and paten at all. Historically this still testifies to the purely jewish pre-christian origin of this part of the rite, though we shall find that there is a deeper reason than mere historical conservatism. Even so late a composition as the English Prayer Book of 1662 still never mentions holy communion at all until half the service which it calls 'The Administration of Holy Communion' is over, yet few communicants ask themselves why so strange a thing should be. But such is the force of unconscious liturgical tradition, even where it has suffered so considerable a disturbance as that involved in the recasting of our liturgy at the Reformation.

The Synaxis, or Liturgy of the Spirit

The jewish synagogue service, which was the root from which the apostolic synaxis sprang, consisted of public readings from the scripture, the singing of psalms, a sermon and a number of set prayers. Rabbinic scholars are in disagreement as to whether the prayers came first or last in the synagogue of the first century A.D., and there is no direct evidence from that period as to what prayers were in use, though some extant jewish forms probably go back to this date. In the third century the jews undoubtedly placed them in a group at the beginning, and this may have been the original practice of the synagogue. But in all christian churches from the earliest moment at which we have definite evidence² the prayers were universally placed last, after the sermon, and have remained there ever since. This was evidently a fixed christian tradition. Either the later jewish practice differed from that usual in the jewish circles from which the apostolic church emerged; or conceivably, the christians deliberately changed the position of the prayers from motives we shall understand in a moment. If so, the change must have been made early and probably by apostolic authority, for later christian tradition to be so universal and firm on the point.

¹ Now bound up for convenience with the eucharistic prayers in the form of a missal or altar-book in the West, but still separate in the East.

² S. Justin, c. A.D. 155, for Rome; the *Didascalia* and Origen in the first half of the third century, for Syria and Egypt.

The original unchanging outline of the christian synaxis everywhere was as follows:—

1. Opening greeting by the officiant and reply of the church.
2. Lesson.
3. Psalmody.
4. Lesson (or Lessons, separated by Psalmody).
5. Sermon.
6. Dismissal of those who did not belong to the church.
7. Prayers.
8. Dismissal of the church.

(9. On occasions a collection for the poor, the expenses of the church, etc., was made. But this was rather a separate duty of church life, which might for convenience be performed at the 'meeting', than a part of the synaxis itself.)

1. *Opening Greeting and Reply.* This was in a sense only a polite method of 'calling the meeting to order' and indicating that proceedings were about to begin. But the 'meeting' was after all one with a religious purpose, and the greeting took a religious form. It is found all over christendom in one of two forms: 'The Lord be with you', or 'Peace be unto you' (or 'to all'). Both are of jewish origin (*cf.* Ruth ii. 4, John xx. 19) and came into christian use from the beginning. The jewish Talmud remarks of the first that 'It was used of old time when a man would recall his companions to remembrance of the Law.'¹ As such it is probably an inheritance from the original jewish-christian worship of the first days of christianity, in which the immediately following first lesson would be taken from the Law of Moses. The other form, 'Peace be unto you', is the ordinary oriental greeting 'Salaam' (Heb. *Shalom*). It had a special and beautiful significance in christian worship as the first greeting of the Risen Lord to His own (John xx. 19). By a delicate distinction it later came to be reserved in the West to the bishop, as the direct personal representative of our Lord to his own church, while the presbyter was restricted to the less significant form referring only to the lessons about to be read. The reply of the church, 'And with thy spirit', suggests by its 'semitic parallelism' that it, too, came originally from jewish usage, of which there may be an echo in 2 Tim. iv. 22. But it was interpreted by christians as an acknowledgement of the special grace of the Holy Ghost received by the celebrant at his ordination for his ministry², which at the synaxis was to proclaim and interpret the Word of God set forth in the scriptures now about to be read.

¹ Tractate *Berakoth*, Tos. vii. 23.

² *Cf. e.g.*, Theodore of Mopsuestia (Asia Minor *c.* A. D. 400) *Catecheses* vi. ed. Mingana, p. 91. The use of 'The Lord be with you' is still officially restricted to those in holy orders. It may be suggested that it was the inappropriateness of *the reply*, interpreted in this sense, to those not ordained, which originally suggested the prohibition of their using the greeting.

2, 3 and 4. *The Lessons and Psalmody*. The Jewish practice was to read first from the Law of Moses as the most revered of their scriptures, and then, after psalmody, one or more lessons from the Prophets or other books. The Christians came to adopt an ascending instead of a descending order of importance in the reading of the lessons,¹ which was also roughly the chronological order of their original writing. The Christians read first one or more lessons from the Old Testament,² then from the apostolic writings, and finally from the gospel which records our Lord's own sayings and doings. The 'Word of the Lord' finds its completeness in the 'Word made Flesh.' In large gatherings at least, if not always, the lessons were chanted to a simple inflection rather than read. This was partly in order to secure that they should be heard distinctly, and partly to give them solemnity as the Word of God to the church, and through the church to the world. This custom also had been known in the Jewish synagogues, even if it was not necessarily always observed in small country places.

Between the lessons came the singing of psalms or other canticles from scripture (a chant known in later times as the 'gradual' from its being sung by the soloists from the 'steps' of the raised lectern), a custom which must have been familiar to our Lord and His apostles, since it was universal in the synagogues of their day. It served as a relief for the attention of the hearers. But it also offered the opportunity by intelligent selection for a devotional comment on the scripture just read which would bring home its point to the minds and hearts of the hearers. Such rare examples as we have of really early 'comment' in this way by the chant on the lesson show an apt and ingenious understanding of the devotional use of the scriptures.³ Dignity and attractiveness were given to this musical side of the service by entrusting much of it to special singers who sang elaborate solos. But the corporate nature of the rite was not lost sight of, and a part was usually reserved for the whole congregation to join as chorus in a simple refrain. Until the fourth century the psalmody appears always to have been in this form in the church, elaborate solo and simple chorus, and never, as it is usually with us, by two alternating choruses. The earlier Christian form was that which had been employed in the synagogue, where the signal for

¹ Justin, *Apol.*, i. 67 suggests that this had not yet been adopted when he wrote c. A. D. 155.

² Among the O.T. lessons the Law of Moses seems for a while to have retained something of its Jewish pre-eminence over the other O.T. scriptures in Christian eyes, and therefore was read after them in the new ascending order. Later the church adopted a purely chronological scheme in reading the O.T., placing the Law first and the Prophets, etc., after; thus returning to the Jewish order, though for a different reason. So on Good Friday, the Roman rite, which retains for this day a second century form of synaxis, reads Hosea before Exodus. But on Holy Saturday, the lessons of which were arranged in the fourth century, the Law is read before the Prophets. There are now many different strata in the liturgical cycle, the product of 2,000 years of history, and each of them has its own characteristics.

³ *E.g.* the use of Ps. xc. 1-12 as a comment on Hos. vi. at the paschal vigil, which was the Roman use in the third and probably in the second century.

the people's refrain was the cantor's cry 'Hallelujah', whence the 'Alleluias' still found in the gradual at the liturgy. The method of psalmody to which we are accustomed may have been used in the Jewish temple, but it did not come into Christian use apparently until A.D. 347-48, when it began to be employed by a confraternity of laymen at Antioch, and from there spread rapidly over Christendom.¹ The use of the psalter 'in course' (*i.e.* right through in regular order, and not as selected psalms to comment on other scriptures) in Christian services is one of the by-products of the monastic movement of the fourth century.

5. *The Sermon.* The delivery of the sermon was as much the bishop's 'special liturgy' and proper function at the synaxis as the offering of the eucharistic prayer was his 'special liturgy' at the eucharist. As we have seen, the bishop at his consecration received a special 'gift of grace' (*charisma*) for the office² not only of high-priest of the church's prayers and offerings, but also of quasi-inspired 'prophetic teacher'³ of the church's faith. He is the church's mouthpiece, as it were, towards man as well as towards God. Except in emergencies, therefore, he was irreplaceable as preacher at the synaxis, the solemn corporate 'church', even by the ablest of his presbyters. The great Origen himself gave great scandal in the third century by presuming to preach as a presbyter at the synaxis at Caesarea, though he did so at the invitation of the local bishop. And the feeling died hard. At the end of the fourth century the people of Hippo objected to their aged bishop's delegation of the sermon at the synaxis even to that prince of popular preachers, S. Augustine. It was the 'special liturgy' of the bishop's 'order', without which the action of the whole church in its synaxis was felt to be incomplete. The presbyters and other Christian teachers might expound their ideas at other gatherings to as many as would hear them, but the synaxis had a different character from even the largest private gathering of Christians. It was the solemn corporate witness of the whole church to the revelation of God recorded in the scriptures. At this the bishop, and the bishop only, must expound the corporate faith which his local church shared with the whole Catholic church and the whole Christian past, back to the apostles themselves. It was this, the unchanging 'saving' truth of the gospel, and not any personal opinion of his own, which he must proclaim in the liturgical sermon, because he alone was endowed by the power of the Spirit with the 'office' of speaking the authentic mind of his church.

There is a passage of S. Irenaeus which sheds so much light on the conception of the liturgical sermon in the second century that it is worth quoting here, despite its length:

'Having received this office of proclamation and this faith aforesaid, the

¹ Cf. p. 328.

² Rom. 12. 5.

³ So the Christians of Smyrna describe their late bishop Polycarp, the disciple of S. John, in A.D. 156 (*Mart. Pol.* 16).

church, though she be spread abroad over all the earth, diligently observes them as dwelling in a single household; and she unanimously believes these things, as having one soul and the same heart; and she concordantly proclaims and teaches and hands down these things, as having but one mouth. For, though the tongues of earthly speech differ, yet is the force of tradition ever one and the same. And the churches which have been planted in the Germanies have received no different faith and taught no otherwise, nor those in Spain, nor those among the Gauls, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those that are in the centre of the world (Italy). But as the sun, God's creature, is one and the same for all the world, so does the proclamation of the truth everywhere shine and enlighten all men who are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. And as among those who preside over the churches he who is very skilled in teaching says nothing else than this—for no man is above his own teacher—so he who is but a poor teacher yet does not omit the contents of the tradition. For since their faith is one and the same, neither does he who can say a great deal about it actually add to it, nor does he who can say but little diminish it.¹

It was this 'tradition' of faith, the unchanging revelation shared by all generations of christians alike, which the bishop proclaimed in his sermon, basing himself on the scriptures just read. He preaches therefore, in his official capacity, *sitting* upon the throne behind the altar which was his 'teacher's chair', as the representative of God revealing Himself to the world.

6, 7 and 8. *The Dismissals and Prayers*. Thus far the synaxis had been in fact what it was in name, a 'public meeting', open to all who wished to attend, jews, pagans, enquirers of all kinds, as well as to the catechumens preparing to be received into the church by baptism and confirmation. The church had a corporate duty to preach the gospel to the world and to witness to its truth. But prayer was another matter. Thus far there had been no prayer of any kind, but only instruction.

The church is the Body of Christ and prays 'in the name' of Jesus,² *i.e.* according to the semitic idiom which underlies the phrase, 'in His Person.' 'The Spirit of adoption whereby' the church cries to God in Christ's Name, 'Abba, Father'³ with the certainty of being heard, 'Himself makes intercession'⁴ with her in her prayers. The world had a right to hear the gospel; but those who have not yet 'put on Christ' by baptism⁵ and thus as 'sons' received His Spirit by confirmation⁶ cannot join in offering that prevailing prayer. All who had not entered the order of the laity were therefore without exception turned out of the assembly after the sermon.

¹ *Adv. Haer.* I. x. 2. S. Irenaeus, disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of S. John, was bishop of Lyons c. A.D. 180-200.

² John xiv. 13.

³ Rom. viii. 15.

⁴ Rom. viii. 26.

⁵ Gal. iii. 27.

⁶ Gal. iv. 6.

The catechumens who had accepted the faith, but had not yet been added to the church by the sacraments, first received a special blessing from the bishop. The following text of this, from Egypt in the fourth century, is the earliest we possess, and probably goes back considerably behind the date of S. Sarapion (c. A.D. 340) under whose name it has come down to us. The deacons first proclaimed loudly: 'Bow down your heads for a blessing, O ye catechumens', and then the bishop raising his hand in the sign of the cross blessed them: 'We raise our hand, O Lord, and pray that the divine and lifegiving Hand be raised for a blessing unto this people;¹ for unto Thee, eternal Father, have they bowed their heads through Thine only begotten Son. Bless this people unto the blessing of knowledge and piety, unto the blessing of Thy mysteries; through Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, by Whom glory and might be unto Thee in the Holy Ghost now and throughout all ages. Amen.'

The deacons now proclaimed: 'Let the catechumens depart. Let no catechumen remain. Let the catechumens go forth'; and when these had gone, cried again: 'The doors! The doors!' as a signal to those of their number, or their assistants, who guarded the doors, to close and lock them against all intrusion. Then the church corporately fell to prayer.

First a subject was announced, either by the officiant (in the West) or the chief deacon (in the East), and the congregation was bidden to pray. All prayed silently on their knees for a while; then, on the signal being given, they rose from their knees, and the officiant summed up the petitions of all in a brief collect. They knelt to pray as individuals, but the corporate prayer of the church is a priestly act, to be done in the priestly posture for prayer, standing. Therefore all, not the celebrant only, rose for the concluding collect.

The following is the scheme of the old Roman intercessions still in use on Good Friday.

Officiant: Let us pray, my dearly beloved, for the holy church of God, that our Lord and God would be pleased to keep her in peace, unity and safety throughout all the world, subjecting unto her principalities and powers,² and grant us to live out the days of a peaceful and quiet life in glorifying God the Father Almighty.

Deacon: Let us bow the knee. (*All kneel and pray in silence for a while.*)

Subdeacon: Arise.

Officiant: Almighty everlasting God, Who hast revealed Thy glory unto all nations in Christ, preserve the work of Thy mercy; that Thy church which is spread abroad throughout all the world may continue with a firm faith in the confession of Thy holy Name: through . . .'

There follow prayers for the bishop, the clergy, and 'all the holy people

¹ The bishop prays with uplifted hand as representing the Father here.

² *I.e.* the forces of Satan. Rom. viii. 38; Eph. vi. 12.

of God';¹ for the government and the state; for the catechumens; for the needs of the world and all in tribulation (a particularly fine collect, which has inspired one of the best of the official Anglican prayers for use in the present war); for heretics and schismatics; for the jews, and for the pagans. These prayers probably date from the fourth and fifth centuries in their present form, but may well be only revisions of earlier third century forms.

Or we may take an Eastern scheme from the Alexandrian liturgy, probably of much the same date as these Roman prayers.²

'*The deacon proclaims first:* Stand to pray. (All have been 'standing at ease' or sitting on the ground for the sermon.)

'*Then he begins:* Pray for the living; pray for the sick; pray for all away from home.

'Let us bow the knee. (*All pray in silence.*) Let us arise. Let us bow the knee. Let us arise again. Let us bow the knee.

'*The people:* Lord have mercy.'

(The officiant's prayers in their original form have been lost in this section of the intercessions;³ but the deacon's proclamations continue:)

'Pray for fair winds and the fruits of the earth; pray for the due rising of the waters of the river; pray for good showers and the harvest of the land.'⁴ Let us bow the knee, etc.

'Pray for the safety of men and beasts; pray for the safety of the world and of this city; pray for our most christian emperors. Let us bow, etc.

'Pray for all in captivity; pray for those that are fallen asleep; pray for them that offer this our sacrifice (*i.e.* for their intentions); pray for all that are in affliction; pray for the catechumens. Pray! Let us bow,' etc.

The text has also been preserved of what appears to be substantially an even older set of Alexandrian intercessions, now known as 'The three great prayers', which now follow this diaconal lity and are still used at several points in the Coptic rite. It runs as follows:

'*Deacon:* Pray for the peace of the one holy catholic and apostolic orthodox church of God. (*The people prostrate and say:* Lord have mercy.)

'*Officiant:* We pray and beseech Thy goodness, O Lover of mankind: remember, O Lord, the peace of Thy one holy catholic and apostolic church which is from one end of the world to the other: bless all the peoples and all the lands: the peace that is from heaven grant in all our hearts, but also graciously bestow upon us the peace of this life. The emperor, the armies, the magistrates, the councillors, the people, our

¹ This prayer is interesting as still recognising the laity as an 'order': 'Almighty everlasting God by whose Spirit the whole body of Thy Church is governed and sanctified; hear us as we pray for all its orders (*pro universis ordinibus*), that by the gift of Thy grace Thou mayest be faithfully served by all its ranks (*omnibus gradibus*).'

² Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, 1896, p. 158 sq.

³ A much expanded later version of them will be found L.E.W., p. 166.

⁴ These petitions reflect the local needs of Egypt, where winds from the desert may bring sandstorms fatal to the crops, and all life depends on the annual rising of the waters of the Nile.

neighbours, our comings in and our goings out, order them all in Thy peace. O King of peace, grant us peace, for Thou hast given us all things: possess us, O God, for beside Thee we know none other: we make mention of Thine holy Name. Let all our souls live through Thine Holy Spirit, and let not the death of sin have dominion over us nor all Thy people; through, etc.

'Deacon: Pray for our Patriarch, the Pope and Father N., Lord Archbishop of the great city of Alexandria. (The people prostrate and say: Lord have mercy.)

'Officiant: We pray and beseech Thy goodness, O Lover of mankind: remember, O Lord, our Patriarch, our honoured Father N. Preserve him to us in safety many years in peaceful times, fulfilling that holy pontificate which Thou hast Thyself committed unto him according to Thy holy and blessed will, rightly dividing the word of truth, feeding Thy people in holiness and righteousness; and with him all the orthodox bishops and presbyters and deacons, and all the fullness of Thy one only holy catholic and apostolic church. Bestow on him with us peace and safety from all quarters; and his prayers which he maketh on our behalf and on behalf of all Thy people (here he shall put on an handful of incense) and ours as well on his behalf, do Thou accept on Thy reasonable altar in heaven for a sweet-smelling savour. And all his enemies visible and invisible do Thou bruise and humble shortly under his feet, but himself do Thou keep in peace and righteousness in Thine holy church.

'Deacon: Pray for this holy assembly (ecclesia) and our meetings.¹ (The people prostrate and say: Lord have mercy.)

'Officiant: We pray and beseech Thy goodness, O Lover of mankind: remember, O Lord, our congregations. Grant that we may hold them without hindrance, that they may be held without impediment, according to Thy holy and blessed will, in houses of prayer, houses of purity, houses of blessing. Bestow them on us, O Lord, and on Thy servants who shall come after us for ever. Arise, O Lord God, and let all Thine enemies be scattered; let all them that hate Thine holy Name flee from before Thy face, but let Thy people be in blessings unto thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, doing Thy will by the grace of Thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord; through Whom . . .'

These Egyptian prayers are obviously similar in places to the old Roman prayers we have just glanced at, and the general scheme is the same. But this ancient universal scheme has already adapted itself to the particular genius of the different churches. The Roman prayers express exactly the old Roman temperament. They are terse, practical and vigorous, expressing pointedly and precisely what they wish to say without rhetoric or ornament of any kind beyond the polish and sonority of their Latin. The

¹ This is the ancient distinction between the solemn 'assembly' (*ecclesia*) and the private meetings (*synleuseis*).

Egyptian prayers are more 'flowery' in their devotion, though just as obviously sincere. They repeat themselves and cite scripture and poetise their requests; and one notes that tendency to elaboration for elaboration's sake (*e.g.* in the triple prostration) which has led to the complication of all Eastern liturgies. But all this is only to say that the East is not the West, and that in using the same ideas each will do so in its own way, which is in the long run the chief secret of that which differentiates the catholic church from the sects.

The important point to notice here is that in the early fourth century it is not only the position of the intercessions in the Shape of the Liturgy and the main points of their contents which are the same in East and West; that might have been expected. But all christendom was then still at one on the way in which the public intercession should be offered—by a corporate act involving the whole church, in which nevertheless each order—laity, deacon and officiant (bishop or presbyter)—must actively discharge its own separate and distinctive function within the fulfilment of the 'priestly' activity of the whole Body of Christ. It offers to God not only itself in its organic unity, but all the world with its sorrows and its busy God-given natural life and its needs. There is here a very revealing contrast with our own practice in this matter of liturgical intercession—the long monologue by the celebrant in the 'Prayer for the Church Militant' and the rapid fire of collects at the end of Morning and Evening Prayer. With us the deacon's part has completely disappeared, and the people's prayer—the *substance* of the old intercession, which the clergy's vocal prayers and biddings originally only led and directed—has been reduced to a single word, 'Amen.' If the truth be told, many of the more devout of our laity have come to suppose that intercession is a function of prayer better discharged in private than by liturgical prayer of any kind, so unsatisfying is the share which our practice allows them. The notion of the priestly prayer of the whole church, as the prayer of Christ the world's Mediator through His Body, being 'that which makes the world to stand', in the phrase of an early christian writer, has been banished from the understanding of our laity. Their stifled instinct that they, too, have a more effective part to play in intercession than listening to someone else praying, drives them to *substitute* private and solitary intercession for the prayer of the church as the really effective way of prayer, instead of regarding their private prayer as deriving its effectiveness from their membership of the church. So their hold on the corporate life is weakened and their own prayers are deprived of that inspiration and guidance which come from participating in really devout corporate prayer. The old method derives from the profoundly organic conception of the church which possessed the minds of the pre-Nicene christians. Our own is the product of that excessive clericalism of the later middle ages, whose conceptions of public worship were riveted upon the Anglican devotional tradition by the mistakes of the sixteenth century, and which we now take

for granted. Then and now its result upon the devout laity is to provoke an excessively individualistic conception of personal prayer.

By the middle of the fourth century the universal use of this pre-Nicene method of corporate intercession was beginning to disappear, a process in which the Antiochene invention of the 'Litany' form played an undesigned part (*cf. pp. 477 sqq.*). Another fourth century innovation, this time first attested in the church of Jerusalem, was the transference of the intercessions themselves from the old position after the sermon to a point within the eucharistic prayer, a change which other churches imitated in various different ways. The resulting duplication of the intercessions in some rites and their shifting in others is the first serious complication of the old clear universal Shape of the Liturgy.

But before these fourth century Syrian innovations the synaxis everywhere ended with the intercessions offered in the way we have described. If the eucharist were not to follow, the congregation dispersed, either with a dismissal by the deacon or, in some fourth century churches, with a blessing by the bishop.

When the eucharist did follow the synaxis, these intercessory 'prayers of the faithful', as they came to be called, though part of the synaxis, were attended exclusively by those who were about to be present at the eucharist. The catechumens and enquirers who had been present at the lections and sermon were dismissed before the prayers began. The intercessions thus came to be regarded rather as the opening devotion of the eucharist than as the conclusion of the synaxis. When the misleading names 'mass of the catechumens' for the synaxis, and 'mass of the faithful' for the eucharist, began to be attached to the two parts of what had now been fused into a single rite, the 'prayers of the faithful' were by a natural mistake included in the latter. But the earlier evidence is clear enough that they were originally the conclusion of the synaxis and not the beginning of the eucharist. Everywhere the synaxis celebrated apart from the eucharist ended with these prayers, as did the evening synaxis (corresponding to evening prayer or vespers) when this was first instituted as a public service, probably in the fourth century. The eucharist when celebrated alone normally began with the offertory.¹ It is as part of the synaxis and not as the beginning of the

¹ The exception in pre-Nicene times was the baptismal eucharist, at which both Justin (*Ap.*, i. 65) and Hippolytus (*Ap. Trad.*, xxii. 5) interpose these prayers between the initiation of the new christians by baptism and confirmation and the offertory of the eucharist at which they forthwith made their first communion. This was a special case of which the purpose seems to have been to allow the neophyte to discharge at once all the functions and enjoy all the privileges of the 'order of laity', into which he had just been admitted. The special restrictions on the catechumen took three forms: he might never receive the kiss of peace from the faithful; he might not pray with the faithful; he might not eat with the faithful. (They are derived, of course, from the jewish restrictions on *domestic* intercourse with non-Israelites, which were the same.) The catechumen receives the kiss of peace from the bishop immediately after receiving the chrism of confirmation, which conveyed the gift of the Spirit; he forthwith prays with the church in the intercessions, exer-

eucharist that the intercessory prayers must be taken when we come to consider the Shape of the Liturgy as a single whole.

cising his 'priestly' ministry as a christian; he then makes his communion after joining in the offering of the eucharist, his supreme function as a member of the 'priestly' body, which is also the highest form of 'table-fellowship' with the faithful. Hippolytus does not insert the prayers before the offertory on the other occasion at which he describes the eucharist without a preceding synaxis—at the consecration of a bishop (*Ap. Trad.*, ii and iii). In Justin *Ap.*, i. 67 the prayers come before the offertory as the conclusion of the preceding regular Sunday synaxis.