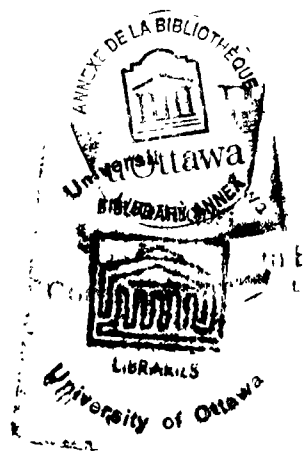


LAY PARTICIPATION IN THE EUCHARIST IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

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With true filial gratitude
I dedicate this
work for Christ
to my
Heavenly Mother, Mary
Earthly Mother and Father
Priestly Mother and Fathers
St. Paul's Seminary
and
The Oblates of Mary

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INTRODUCTION

At a time when the liturgy is undergoing vast changes and renovations, which seem to be a return to the past and to practices that have gradually fallen away from the present liturgical structure, it seems only fitting that the liturgical institutions of the Early Church be studied. The latest liturgical reforms stress the aspect of lay-participation in the liturgy, and it is precisely this aspect we wish to study in relation to the Primitive Church. What was the exact relationship existing between the layman and the liturgy in the first three centuries of the Church? What part did the layman play in the liturgical worship of this period, and more precisely, in the very center of all liturgical life of the Church, the Holy Sacrifice, or as it was then called, the Eucharistic Celebration?

It should be noted, that our concern is solely the external role of the layman in the liturgy, and not the doctrinal or spiritual aspect of the Eucharist, nor the time or place of its celebration. We wish to study that which would evidently strike the eye of an observer, were he to attend the Holy Mysteries at this time.

Our only sources in the reconstruction of this aspect of the early Eucharist, are the literary documents of the period, and mainly the well-known patristical sources whose

authority and authenticity are unquestionable. These documents, for the sake of brevity, are quoted only in their English versions. We have tried as much as possible, to adhere to the more recent approved translations, especially to the two collections: The Ancient Christian Writers, and The Fathers of the Church. We also have had to refer to the collection: The Ante-Nicene Fathers, which, although of a much earlier date, is a recognized and approved version. Information concerning the documents themselves has been taken almost exclusively from Quaston: "Patrology".

It should not be a cause of wonder, if throughout our study, reference is often made to documents which are seemingly unrelated to the Eucharist. One must bear in mind that until the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., there were few if any works dealing with the Eucharist as such. This fact may be explained by the contemporary circumstances which necessitated this unfortunate omission.

This was a period of nearly continual persecution of the Christian Church, and to be proven a Christian meant a death sentence. Certainly, in the face of such conditions, no treatise could or would appear, which by exposing the practices of Christians would expose them to the terrors of the persecution. This would be especially true of the Eucharistic celebration, which might give the persecutors a clue as to the manners and meeting places of the Christians. Furthermore, there

were many other treatises much more pressing for the Christian authors of the time. In the breathing spaces between persecutions, the Church had to write and struggle against errors in doctrinal matters. The Eucharist, on the other hand, was such an integral part of Christian life at the time, that any instruction in this field would only seem superfluous. In doctrinal matters it was quite another case, for all being converts, there was a serious danger that the faithful might be ensnared in the errors of false teachers, unless the true doctrines were exposed.

Perhaps the most important reason for this silence on the Eucharist, was what is known as the "discipline of the secret". The primitive Church regarded all Christian Worship, and especially the Eucharist, as a highly private activity, and rigidly excluded all strangers from attendance. Even those who were already convinced of the truth of the Gospel but had not as yet received the sacraments, were dismissed before the Eucharist was offered. Any written detailed description of the celebration would certainly not be in keeping with this spirit. That such a spirit of reverent secrecy and silence existed, is testified by St. Athanasius (348 A.D.),: "It is not permitted to describe the mysteries to those who are not initiated" ¹. Even at the time of St. Basil (375 A.D.),

¹ St. Athanasius: Apologia Contra Arianos, 11; MG. 25.

this¹⁹ secrecy recalled: "The Apostles and Fathers who from the beginning gave prescriptions concerning the Church, guarded the dignities of the mysteries in secrecy and in silence" ².

Due to this secrecy, allusions of any kind to the Eucharistic rite are, in the sermons and writings of the first ages, rare and guarded. We thus must use documents, which although not treating of the Eucharist as such, do however make allusions to it. This is also the reason why we have been forced to use documents which actually date later than the third century, but which we believe are merely witnesses of third century practices, a fact which we wish to explain.

The first such document is a series of lectures entitled: Catechism on the Mysteries, written by St. Cyril of Jerusalem in 348 A.D. There seems however to be no difficulty in admitting that its contents may be applied to the third century. Since this is a series of instructions given the Catechumens who were preparing for Baptism, it must necessarily contain traditional doctrines and practices as used and accepted in the Church. In fact, it is an opinion that this document is a witness of institutions introduced between 313 and 325 A.D., which was a period of organization after the "Great Persecution".

Another document, "The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles" was composed about 380 A.D., even though for some time it was attributed to the third century. There is nothing to

2 St. Basil: De Spiritu Sancto, 27; M.G. 32.

indicate that this source introduces anything new or original in its liturgical description, in fact the contrary is quite evident, and it would seem to be but a collection of liturgical practices long in use and which are found in a fragmentary way in many earlier documents. The main source of the first six books of the Constitutions, is the Syriac Didascalia, composed in the first decades of the third century.³ The Apostolic Traditions of Hippolytus, which next to the Didache is the most important of Ancient Church Orders, and which was written in 315 A.D., forms much of the eighth and last book of the Constitutions.⁴ We have thus made use of this document as a summary and collection of the liturgical institutions of the third century, despite its later date.

Two other works, the Liturgy of James and the Liturgy of Mark, would at first sight seem to be far from our period, for the actually known texts of these works are of a much later date than the third century. The first mention of the Liturgy of James is found in the Council of Trullo (692 A.D.), where it is cited as being an actual production of St. James.⁵ The known texts of the Liturgy of Mark date from the twelfth century onward. Its essential parts agree with the style and tenor of

3 Quaston: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 147.

4 Idem, Ibidem, p. 184.

5 Duchesne: Christian Worship, p. 67.

the best texts from other sources. It is no doubt of great antiquity, going back at the latest to the fifth century.⁶ The Churches, namely, Alexandria and Antioch, which gave birth to these liturgies are very old, and certainly must have had their own liturgies long before the fourth century. As stated when speaking of the Apostolic Constitutions of about the same period, the liturgy contained therein is of much earlier date, but had not been stabilized and codified until this period. By the very fact that these liturgies are attributed to two Apostles, although of course apocryphal, shows that they were very old, at least as to the practices and institutions contained in them, at the time they were written, otherwise they would not have been accepted as Apocryphal. It would seem quite safe to say that the liturgical institutions contained in these liturgies must date from about 200 A.D., which is the date attributed to them by the compilers of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. It was at this period that the Churches of Alexandria and Antioch acquired a certain importance. The very fact that large and beautiful Churches were built in the East about 200 A.D., would cause the emergence of a more splendid liturgy, as well as its stabilization.

Bearing these facts in mind, it does not seem out of place to use these documents extensively, in order to compliment

6 Duchesne: Christian Worship, p. 67.

the fragmentary notions given in earlier documents.

It may be useful to briefly explain the division of this work. The first two Chapters, although in many ways not directly concerned with the layman and the Eucharist, are nevertheless considered necessary for a comprehension of the later chapters. By discussing the layman and his habits of prayer, it becomes easier to discern his position in the Eucharist. The following chapters discuss the layman in relation to those parts of the Eucharistic celebration in which his participation is most evident. We cannot include in this paper all of the actions performed by the layman, but restrict ourselves to the more important and evident circumstances and indications of this participation, namely the Assembly, Kiss of Peace, Communion and prayer responses. Holy Communion is treated in three chapters, the person communicating, the manner of so doing, and finally the problem of one or two species in communion. In the problem of prayer responses, we deal first with responses which we term general, since they are found throughout the celebration, and secondly with special responses which occur at a definite time and but once in the celebration.

CHAPTER I

THE LAYMAN IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

To determine the active position of the layman in the primitive Church, it is necessary to understand the many different classes of laymen which may be distinguished in the church at the time, all classes being equal, but each separated from the others in the Christian assembly, the entire lay assembly being separated from the clergy and subjected to them.

The first indication of a clear distinction between men and women in the Christian community appears in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, written in 57 A.D., which states: "Let women keep silence in the Churches, for it is not permitted them to speak. It is unseemly for a woman to speak in Church" ¹. As we know from his other Epistles, Paul classifies all laymen as equal, regardless of sex, nationality, or position in life, nor does he in this passage contradict the principle of Christian equality. The word "speak" in this text is taken to mean "preaching" or "instructing", which are signs of a certain authority, and does not include prayer and inspired utterances at the services. Paul stresses here the fact that women are not to exercise any authority in the

1 I Cor., 14, 34-35.

church, which is in keeping with their position and dignity as women.²

In the Liturgy of James the Brother and Apostle of the Lord or as it is more commonly called The Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, for it was adapted throughout the East, we find the first mention of a class of laymen called Cathachumens. These were a group of unbaptized persons, who after expressing a belief in the Christian doctrines, and a desire to be numbered among the followers of Christ, were in a process of serving a three year probation period, before being allowed a formal reception into the Church. According to the above document, during the Eucharistic celebration and immediately preceding the offertory, the Deacon announces: "Let none remain of the Catachumens, none of the unbaptized, none of those who are unable to join us in prayer"³. We may question if in this text we find mention of three distinct groups of persons who were allowed to attend the instructive part of the Eucharistic celebration, that is until the offertory, or if these are only three different names given the one class of Catachumens. In the light of the following documents, it would seem perfectly correct to suppose that we have in this text, three distinct classes or

² A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture: page 1096, col. 880.

³ Liturgy of James, The Brother and Apostle of the Lord; 1, 16; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 540.

groups who attended the pre-offertory part of the Eucharist, namely the catechumens, friendly pagans, and sinners, or as they were called, penitents. We cannot consider these pagans, however, as members of the laity, for they had no connection whatsoever with the Church, but were probably those who were prospective catechumens.

A similar mention is made in the Liturgy of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark, the Disciple of Holy Peter, which is more commonly called the Alexandrian Liturgy, for it was supposed to have been used in Egypt and the neighboring countries, and is coeval with the Liturgy of James. After the Gospel the Deacon is instructed to say: "Take care that none of the catechumens remain" ⁴.

In the Apostolic Tradition attributed to Hippolytus and written about 215 A.D., which is a treatise on the norms to be followed in the Christian assembly, we find the following directions which mention both the catechumens and women as being classes separate from each other and from the other laity:

"Let the catechumens pray by themselves apart from the faithful; and let the women stand in the assembly by themselves apart from the faithful, both the baptized women and the women catechumens" ⁵.

⁴ The Divine Liturgy of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist, Mark, the Disciple of Holy Peter: 1, 9; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 554.

⁵ The Apostolic Traditions of Hippolytus, 18, 1-2; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 29; To be continued on page 4.

In the first decades of the Third century, we find and even more precise and thorough distinction existing among the laity in the Eucharistic Assembly, for we read in the Syriac Didascalia:

"But when ye are gathered together in the churches of God..... appointing the brethren their places with all care. And in the western part let the laity sit and behind them the women. In the church let the younger men sit apart... let those that are advanced in age sit in order... Let the younger women be apart" 6.

However, the most detailed account of the divisions of the laity in the Church is found in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles:

"Let the women sit by themselves, they also keeping silence...let the young persons sit by themselves if there be a place for them...let those that are already stricken in years sit in order. Let the younger women sit also by themselves...let the women which are married and have children be placed by themselves; but let the virgins, and the widows and the elder women stand or sit before all the rest... and after the catechumens and penitents are gone out..." 7.

In a later book of this same work, we have a very detailed account of the dismissal of four distinct classes of laymen,

5 ... This separation of women from men is found also in the "Heads of the Canons of Abulides or Hippolytus" written about the year 500 A.D., in Syria, and based on the Apostolic Tradition, for we read that: "The women ought to be separate from the men in prayer".

6 Syriac Didascalia Ch. 57; R.H. Cresswell: Liturgy of the English Book of the Apostolic Constitutions, p. 77.

7 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

the catechumens, energumens, those preparing for illumination (period of instruction immediately preceding baptism), and penitents.⁸

There can be no doubt, that in the first three centuries, there is to be found a clear distinction of classes among the laity. Men and women form two distinct and separate classes, each having its own place in the assembly, but not sharing the same authority. Whenever a special function was to be given to a layman in the Eucharistic celebration, it was always given to a man, for it was considered indecent for a woman to lead the community in prayers. However, we can be certain, that during the celebration, whatever prayers were proper to the laity as such, were said by the women as well as by the men.

Another important and basic distinction must be made between the baptized and the unbaptized. By unbaptized, we do not here consider the case of certain pagans and unbelievers who were allowed to attend the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration, for having no connection or liaison with the church as such, they do not fall into our category of laymen, but must rather be considered as those favorable to the faith. We here understand by the unbaptized laymen, those who were preparing for baptism and had accepted the faith, namely the catechumens. Among the catechumens there is also found a division. There were

⁸ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles; Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 6 & 9; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 483 & 485.

those who were still undergoing the two years of probation before the instruction in the faith actually began, and these are properly called catechumens. Those who having passed through the two year probation period, and were currently receiving instructions which would end with the baptism on the paschal vigil, were called "those preparing for illumination". Both of these classes of catechumens were allowed only at the instructions of the fore-Eucharist, which ended before the offertory, and were therefore dismissed immediately after the Gospel, nor would they be allowed to remain throughout the Eucharistic celebration properly speaking, until they had been washed in the waters of Baptism.

There is another class of people, the energumens, who also left after the Gospel. The strict sense of the word "energumen" is one possessed by a devil, a demoniac, however it would seem to be used here in a broader sense, meaning one, who though not a public sinner or penitent, still due to some sin or stain, was unable to partake of the Eucharist. As will be evident later, only those who could communicate could remain for the entire celebration of the Eucharist. Thus those who could not consummate the Eucharistic celebration by communion, because of some personal sin, were called energumens, distinct from the faithful who were doing public penance for their sins, and who were called penitents. These latter, due to their incapacity to receive communion until their time of imposed penance

had expired, were also dismissed after the Gospel.

Even among the faithful who were to remain for the celebration, there is a set distinction not only between men and women, but also between older and younger people, virgins, married women and widows. All women, as we mentioned before were subordinate to the men in authority, due to their state of womanhood, but even among themselves there seems to be a kind of hierarchy of precedence, for in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles we read: "But let the Virgins, and the widows and the elder women, stand and sit before all the rest" ⁹.

Before leaving this topic of the layman in general, it may be useful to consider briefly, in the documents of this period, the relationship which existed between the laymen and the clergy.

Clement of Rome, in his Letter to the Corinthians, written about the year 96 A.D., stresses the fact that each one has his own particular place and duty in the Church, and that the rules laid down for each class must be followed by the members of that class, if peace and harmony are to predominate.

"Special functions are assigned to the high-priest; a special office is imposed upon the priests; and

⁹ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

special ministrations fall to the Levites; the layman is bound by the rules laid down for the laity" 10.

"Each of us, brethren, must in his own place endeavor to please God with a good conscience, reverently taking care not to deviate from the established rule of service" 11.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his Epistles (107 A.D.), stresses the need for the layman to act in accord with the clergy, and warns that nothing should be done without the Bishop and/or the priests. He states:

"I will do so especially if the Lord should reveal to me that you -- the entire community of you -- are in the habit, through grace derived from the name of meeting in common, animated by one faith and in union with Jesus Christ...of meeting, I say, to show obedience with undivided mind to the bishop and presbytery, and to break the same bread" 12.

And in another place he writes:

"Just as the Lord, therefore, being one with the Father, did nothing, without Him, either by Himself or through the Apostles, so neither must you undertake anything without the Bishop and the presbyters" 13.

Also: "Let no one do anything touching the Church apart from the Bishop" 14.

10 Clement of Rome: Epistle to the Corinthians, 40, 5; Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 1, p. 34.

11 Id. Ibid., 41, 1; Idem, p. 34.

12 S. Ignatius Antioch: To the Ephesians 20; Fathers of the Church: "Apostolic Fathers", p. 67.

13 Idem, To the Magnesians 7; Idem, p. 71.

14 Idem, To the Smyrneans 8; Idem, p. 93.

Finally, in the "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles", we discover what seems to be an indication of the exact position of the laity in the Primitive Church:

"Neither do we permit the laity to perform any of the offices belonging to the priesthood, as, for instance, neither the sacrifice, nor baptism, nor the laying on of hands, nor the blessings, whether the smaller or the greater" 15.

The conclusion from these documents may be summarized in this, that the body of the laity, divided into distinct classes among themselves according to the set customs of the time, each class having its proper role in the life of the church, were perfectly united in Christian charity and subjected to the heads of the Church, the Bishops and the Priests, all forming a mystical union with Christ.

There is no room for lay and clerical as two separate spheres of influence; the community is one body which is a "royal priesthood", and it is significant that the clerical state seems to merge almost imperceptibly into the lay in the order of "Widows", who for some purposes are considered as of the clerical order, whose true vocation is intercessory prayer for the church, but for other purposes and most properly, the widows were considered as belonging to the laity.¹⁶

15 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 3, Sec. 1, 10; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 429.

16 Dom Denys Rutledge, A Third-Century Christian Community, in the Clergy Review, 41, (1956) 4-5.

CHAPTER II

THE LAYMAN AND PRAYER IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

Before we take up the problem of the layman's participation in the Eucharistic celebration as such, let us gather what we can from treatises on prayer in general in the Church. Here again we must stress the fact, that we are not concerned with the doctrinal aspect of prayer, but only with the accompanying external manifestations; not with the content or attitude of prayer, but rather with how these prayers were said by the layman in the first three centuries. We treat of this question, because the manner of prayer in general, will give an insight and a clue as to the manner in which the central prayer of the Church, the Eucharist, was carried on. What is to be particularly noticed therefore, is the position taken by the layman in prayer, which will in fact have a very strong influence on future Church Architecture, as well as the seating arrangement in the Church.

In considering first the externals of prayer in general, it will be useful to bear in mind, that the first Christians were Jews, and thus after their conversion, we may be sure that they did not change the externals of the prayer, but merely continued to do in the Christian assembly what they had been accustomed to do in the synagogue, and as they had seen Christ Himself pray.

One characteristic of prayer in the early Church, as also in the Synagogue, is that it was said standing, and usually, at least for the Christians, facing the east. That this was the usual custom in the Jewish Synagogue may be seen from St. Matthew's Gospel, where Our Lord in speaking of the prayer of Christians, instructs them:

"Again when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, who love to pray standing in the Synagogues and at the street corners in order that they may be seen by men" ¹.

Jesus is here taking a common event as was His custom, to point out a particular lesson. He does not condemn the practice of standing and praying in the public assemblies, nor does He condemn praying in the streets, but rather condemns the practice of deliberately striking a pious attitude for public notice.² This Jewish custom is also noted in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican who went to the Temple to pray: "The Pharisee stood and began to pray..... but the Publican standing afar off..." ³. There are many other texts from Sacred Scripture which demonstrate that the usual position for prayer was standing, however, one more will

1 Gospel of St. Matthew, 6, 5.

2 A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, page 863, Col. 686f.

3 Gospel of St. Luke, 18, 11.

suffice here: "And when you stand up to pray" ⁴.

We must not conclude from these instances, that standing was the sole position to be taken in prayer, for elsewhere we note that kneeling was also customary, although not the usual position. For example, when St. Paul was about to leave Miletus, He delivered a discourse to the brethren, then: "Having said this, he knelt down and prayed with them all" ⁵. Again, in his Epistle to the Philippians we read: "So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend" ⁶. This latter text is nothing but an indirect quotation from Isaias: "To me every knee shall bow" ⁷. However, the fact remains, that both in the Old and New Testaments, the position of prayer most often referred to is that of standing.

In the Epistles of St. Paul, there are indicated still other directions concerning the external position to be taken in prayer. For example, in his pastoral letter to Timothy, Paul writes: "I wish then, that the men pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands without wrath or contention" ⁸. As we shall see

⁴ Gospel of St. Mark, 11, 25.

⁵ Acts of the Apostles, 20, 36.

⁶ Phil. 2, 10.

⁷ Isaias 45, 23. (cf. Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, page 1129, Col. 1907d.)

⁸ I Tim., 2, 8.

later, the customary attitude of prayer was not only standing erect, but also with arms outstretched.⁹ In another Epistle, Paul becomes even more explicit, and states that women are not to be bare-headed at worship. This was an established custom of the period, that women should always have the head covered in the presence of men. Nor was this at all difficult, for the most common headgear of women was a portion of the outer garment, so made as to be able to be drawn up from behind, over the head, and this was easily and quickly done.¹⁰ "Every man praying with his head covered disgraces his head. But every woman praying with her head uncovered disgraces her head, for it is the same as if she were shaven" 11.

Tertulian, writing in the year 207 A.D., gives the rules to be observed in prayer. He says nothing explicitly of the standing position, but it is implied in his observation that the hands should be lifted, and no doubt since the custom of standing was so universal, he probably felt it unnecessary to mention it. "None I should think more shameless than him who stretches out his hands to his God, towards a heaven which is another's" 12. Also, in his Treatise on Prayer (198-200 A.D.),

⁹ Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, page 1146, col. 921f.

¹⁰ *Idem*, page 1093, col. 878 a-b.

¹¹ I Cor. 11, 4-5.

¹² Tertulian: Adversus Marcionem, L Ch. 23, 1; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 289.

he writes:

"But we more commend our prayers to God when we pray with modesty and humility, with not even our hands to lofty elevated, but elevated temperately and becomingly" 13.

He also mentions the Christian custom of facing the East when praying, which custom had given rise to false ideas among pagan circles, concerning the signification of such a gesture:

"Others, with greater regard to good manners, it must be confessed, suppose that the sun is the God of the Christians, because it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the East" 14.

Certainly, facing the East must have been a universal and well-known custom, if it could serve as an accusation by the pagans against the Christians. Tertulian's entire concept of prayer is expressed in another place where he writes:

"Looking up to Him, we Christians -- with hands extended, because they are harmless, with head bare because we are not ashamed" 15.

So also, Clement of Alexandria, (about 215 A.D.), when speaking of Christian prayer says: "So also we raise the head and lift the hands to heaven, and set the feet in motion at

13 Tertulian: De Orations, Ch. 17; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 686.

14 Idem, Ad Nationes, Ch. 13; Idem, p. 123.

15 Idem, Apology, Ch. 30, 4; Fathers of the Church, vol. 10, p. 86.

the closing utterance of the prayer" 16. There is some discussion as to the exact reference made, when he writes that they set their feet in motion, and there does not seem to be any certainty as to its signification. In the same work he states: "In correspondence with the manner of the sun's rising, prayers are made looking towards the sunrise in the East" 17.

Origen, writing in the year 233-254 A.D., gives us an even more complete picture of prayer, in his work of that name:

"While there are many ways of bodily deportment, there can be no doubt that the position of extending one's hands and elevating the eyes is to be preferred above all others...this we say should be, except under particular circumstances, the normal position taken" 18.

This leaves no doubt as to the Christian mentality concerning the external position to be taken in prayer, as we here have not only a recommendation, but a regulation or ruling as to what is the more correct position. He also states that:

"As for bending one's knees, this is required when a man is going to confess his sins before God and beseech Him for the healing of His forgiveness" 19.

16 Clement of Alexandria: Stromate, Bk. 7, Ch. 7; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 534.

17 Idem, Ibidem: p. 535.

18 Origen: On Prayer 31, 2; Ancient Christian Writers, No. 19, p. 131.

19 Idem, Ibidem: 31, 3; Idem, p. 131.

Thus, perhaps from this particular text we can deduce that in the prayer of supplication and adoration, the standing position was to be taken, however, in the prayer of petition for forgiveness and of reparation, one would kneel. He also indicates the direction to be faced when praying, and gives the reasons and explanations for this direction:

"And now we should add a few remarks on the direction in which we should face while praying... it should be immediately clear that the direction of the rising sun obviously indicates that we ought to pray inclining in that direction, an act which symbolizes the soul looking toward where the true light rises" 20.

From these texts, there is no possibility of reasonably doubting what the customs of prayer were in the time of Origen.

St. Cyprien (251-252 A.D.), also mentions the standing position in prayer, for he writes: "Moreover when we stand praying..." 21.

Now that we have glanced at the universal customs observed in prayer in general, let us examine whether or not we may apply these customs to prayer in the Eucharistic assembly. It must of course be quite evident, that the manner in which the Christians prayed at home, would be almost unconsciously carried over to prayer in the assembly.

20 Origen: On Prayer, 32, 1; *Ancient Christian Writers*, No. 19, p. 136.

21 Cyprian: On the Lord's Prayer, 31; *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, p. 455.

St. Justin Martyr, writing about 152 A.D., in his description of the Eucharistic celebration, affirms this fact when he says: "Then we all stand up together and offer up our prayers" ²². We may also call upon Tertulian (211 A.D.), as a witness, although his testimony is only indirectly applicable to prayer in the assembly, for in bewailing the fact that some Christians were engaged in making idols for pagans, he mentions that it is scandalous that these same hands which make idols, should be raised to God in the Church or in the assembly: "Bewailing that a Christian should come from idols into the Church...should raise to God the Father hands that are the mothers of idols" ²³. This same indirect method of speaking is found in his condemnation of Christians who frequent public shows (197 A.D.): "How monstrous it is to go from God's Church to the devil's...to raise your hands to God, and then to weary them in the applause of an actor" ²⁴.

In the early Eastern Liturgies, namely the Liturgy of Jerusalem and the Alexandrian Liturgy, or, the Liturgies of James and of Mark, as they were called, we find instances during the Holy Sacrifice, when the people were instructed to

²² St. Justin Martyr: Apology I, Ch. 67; Fathers of the Church, "St. Justin Martyr", p. 107.

²³ Tertulian: On Idolatry, Ch. 7; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 64.

²⁴ Idem, The Shows, ch. 25; Idem, p. 89.

stand for prayer. Since there are many such references we here include only one from each liturgy: "Let us stand reverently" 25. "The Deacon says 'stand and pray'" 26.

In the Apostolic Tradition (about 215 A.D.), we have another application of what we have said concerning the position of prayer in the Eucharistic Assembly: "The Deacon shall say: 'all ye stand, bow down your heads'" 27. This also holds true of the description of the Eucharistic celebration found in the Syriac Disdascalia. (First decades of third century), where we read: "When you stand to pray, let those who lead stand in front and behind them the laity...for you must pray towards the East" 28.

In the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, (380 A.D.), we can clearly see that the customs of private prayer were used in and transferred to the Eucharistic celebration, and this in such explicit terms that it cannot in any way be questioned:

"After this, let all rise up with one consent, and looking towards the East pray to God eastward who ascended up to the heaven of heavens to the East...
...Let the sacrifice follow, the people standing and praying silently...Let the women approach with heads

25 Liturgy of James; 2, 27; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol.7, p. 543.

26 Liturgy of Mark, 4; Idem, p. 552.

27 Hippolytus: Apostolic Tradition, 7; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 11.

28 Syriac Disdascalia: Ch. 57; Cresswell: Liturgy of the Eight Book of the Apostolic Constitutions, p. 78.

covered as is becoming the order of women" 29.

"All we of the faithful, let us bend our knee" 30.

In concluding this chapter on the layman and prayer, let us cite one more document concerning the language used by the faithful in their prayer. Origen in his Treatise Against Celsus (248 A.D.), writes:

"Let him (Celsus) then, state plainly whom we call upon for help by barbarous names. Anyone will be convinced that this is a false charge which Celsus brings against us, when he considers that Christians in prayer do not even use the precise names which Divine Scripture applies to God, but the Greeks use Greek names, the Romans Latin names, and everyone prays and sings praises to God as he best can in his mother tongue" 31.

This particular text concerns prayer in general, and is in no way connected directly with the Eucharistic sacrifice, but the author seems to speak so universally and without any qualifications whatsoever, that it would not seem to be too audacious to extend this observation even to the Holy Sacrifice, which would be said in the language of the Christians who attended. This matter of language will become more evident when, in a later chapter, we consider the responses made by the laymen at the Eucharistic Celebration.

29 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57; ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

30 Idem, Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 9; Idem, p. 485.

31 Origen: Contra Celsum, Bk. 8, 37; ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 653.

Thus we have quite a clear picture of the layman of the Primitive Church in prayer, and more especially, in the prayer par-excellence, the Holy Eucharist. As a general principle we may say, that as the layman and his fore-fathers had prayed in the synagogue or temple and in his home, so also, after his conversion, did he continue to pray in this same manner in the Christian assembly, during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

CHAPTER III

THE LAYMAN AND THE EUCHARISTIC ASSEMBLY

We now come to the very core of the relation of the layman to the Eucharistic celebration itself, in the first three centuries of the Christian Church. What part precisely did the ordinary Christian play in the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For a clearer understanding of the problem, let us concentrate on those particular parts of the Mass in which lay-participation is especially evident. After an analytic study of each of these parts in detail, we can then synthesize and place these parts in their relation to the whole service, and should thus obtain a fairly complete and accurate picture of the Eucharistic celebration, from the layman's viewpoint, during the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic periods of the Church.

Those parts of the Eucharist where lay participation is especially noticed may be reduced to four main actions, namely, the assembling and the assembly of Christians, The kiss of peace, holy communion, and finally the prayer responses in general, stressing more particularly those responses which occur most frequently, and which are found almost universally in all of the documents of this period. All of these, and especially the problem of the prayer responses, become more evident, when they are integrated into their proper setting, but for a real understanding of the many details which must

necessarily accompany these actions, we consider it most useful to study each of them individually.

Our first concern then is the Christian Assembly. It would seem, due to the fact that the first Christians were Jews, that they continued their Jewish custom of going to the Temple to pray, and in this they would be following the example of Christ Himself. However it would never occur to them, to celebrate the Eucharist in the Temple itself, for it was a mystery to be kept from all pagan eyes, nor would it have been allowed by the Temple authorities. Thus after their customary prayers in the Temple, the Christians would meet together in a home that had been agreed upon, in order to celebrate the Eucharist. It was not long however before the Christians were forbidden to enter the temple, and they therefore went directly to the meeting place, holding their prayer service before the Eucharistic celebration, in that same place. This prayer service became what is now known as the fore-mass, i.e. that part of the Mass which takes place before the offertory. Later, during times of relative peace between persecutions, this meeting place was their own Church. This development and gradual breaking away from the Jewish Temple service, becomes quite clear if one peruses the liturgical history of the period, and the preliminary and fundamental notions given above, are necessary to understand the words which we read in the Acts of the Apostles: "And continuing daily with one accord in the Temple,

and breaking bread in their houses" ¹. By this text, we know that parallel with the Temple liturgy was the Eucharist, celebrated in private homes, and this in the very first days of the Church. We have quoted this text, for the simple reason that it informs us that the assembly for the breaking of bread, as the Eucharist was often termed, occurred daily. However, we must also note that this is not necessarily the Eucharistic assembly, for it would seem from later documents, that in the beginning the Eucharist was held but once a week, and therefore some authors apply this text as a reference to the Agape or common meal held by the Christians. We are not here concerned with the Temple service as such, as held by the first Christians in common with the Jews, but it is most interesting to note the close relationship between this service, which consisted of hymns and Scripture reading and our fore-mass, as we know it today.

The Didache, probably written in the beginning of the second century, adds very little to our knowledge of the Christian assembly, but merely confirms what we have stated above, that it would seem that the first Eucharistic assemblies were held but once a week: "On the Lord's own day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks" ². Again, there is

1 Acts of the Apostles, 2, 46.

2 Didache: 14, 1; Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 6, p. 23.

some dispute as to whether this text refers to the Eucharist as such. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in the year 107 A.D., writing to the Ephesians, urges them to a more frequent assembly, and gives the purpose for so doing: "Be zealous therefore, to assemble more frequently to celebrate the Eucharist and praise God" ³. And later he says:

"Come together in common, one and all without exception in charity, in one faith and in one Jesus Christ, who is the race of David according to the flesh, the Son of man and the Son of God, so that with undivided mind you may obey the Bishop and the priests, and break one bread" ⁴.

He thus gives the spirit and attitude which the Christians should have in assembling for this Holy Mystery. Here we also obtain the first information that the assembly was not composed only of the laity for a common prayer and meal, which is often the signification of the term "the breaking of bread", but in this case due to the presence of the Bishop and priests, it would seem to have a Eucharistic character. Even at this early date we note the authority of the Bishop and priests over the Christian community. This latter point is also manifested in his Epistle to the Smyrneans, where he writes: "Wherever the Bishop appears let the people be" ⁵. Again, in writing to the

³ St. Ignatius Antioch: To the Ephesians, 13; Fathers of the Church: "Apostolic Fathers," p. 92.

⁴ Idem, Ibidem, 20; Idem, p. 95.

⁵ Idem, To the Smyrneans, 8; Idem, p. 121.

Magnesians, he urges them all to: "Hasten all together as to one Temple of God, as to one altar" ⁶.

The fact of the Christian Assembly was something well known by their pagan contemporaries, at least that such gatherings were held, for Pliny the Younger, a Pagan governor, mentions the Christian assembly in a letter to Trajan his superior in 112 A.D., reporting:

"But they (Christians) declared that the sum of their guilt or their error only amounted to this, that on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ....." ⁷.

St. Justin the Martyr, (152 A.D.), the first extant source giving a rather complete account of the Eucharistic celebration, gives us a little more information on the Eucharistic assembly and its makeup in general:

"After this, baptizing the one who has believed and given his assent, we escort him to the place where are assembled those whom we call brethren" ⁸.
"On the day which is called Sunday we have a common assembly of all who live in the cities or in the outlying districts" ⁹.

In the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which were actually written in the second century, we have explicit mention

⁶ St. Ignatius Antioch: To the Magnesians, 7; Fathers of the Church: "Apostolic Fathers", p. 98.

⁷ Pliny, Ad Trajanum, 7; Kidd: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church, Vol. 1, p. 39.

⁸ St. Justin Martyr: I Apology, 65; Fathers of the Church: "St. Justin Martyr", p. 104.

⁹ Idem, Ibidem, 67; Idem, p. 106.

that not only were the Christians assembled, but also that they stood around a table on which the Eucharist was offered: "Peter stood by the sacrifice and the others around the table ...His (Christ) body was on the table about which they were assembled" 10.

Clement of Alexandria, writing in 215 A.D., although not adding very much to the knowledge we already have of the assembly, shows us however that this was not considered as a mere common assembly, but one which should be attended with great reverence:

"Women and men are to go to Church decently attired, with a natural step, embracing silence, possessing unfeigned love, pure in body, pure in heart, fit to pray to God" 11.

The Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), gives us the first indication of a definite orderly arrangement of the faithful in the Christian assembly, at least as regards Catechumens and women, who were assigned definite places in relation to the other laymen:

"Let the Catechumens pray by themselves apart from the faithful, and let the women stand in the

10 Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew Apostle; Montague Rhodes James: Apocryphal New Testament, p. 185.

11 Clement of Alexandria: The Instructor, Bk. 3, 11; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 290.

assembly by themselves, both the baptized women and the women Catachumens" 12.

Here is also mentioned what we stated in the first chapter, concerning women coming to the assembly with heads covered, for we read: "Moreover let all women have their heads veiled with a scarf but not with a veil of linen only, for that is not a sufficient covering" 13.

It is not until the year 250 A.D., or thereabouts, in the Syriac Didascalia, that we find complete and detailed directions concerning the exact positions to be assigned to each class of laymen in the Christian Eucharistic assembly:

"But when ye are gathered together in Churches of God, make your assemblies in a comely manner, appointing the brethren their places with all care, and let a place be becomingly set apart for the Presbyters in the eastern part of the building... and in the western part let the laity sit, and behind them the women. When ye stand to pray, let those who lead stand in front and behind them the laity and then the women...If anyone be found sitting out of his place, let him be rebuked by the deacon who is present, and be led to the place which belongs to him. For the Church is like a flock. For as the shepherds place each of the animals, I mean the goats and sheep, according to their kind and age, and everyone of them runs to join its like; so also in the Church let the younger men sit apart, if there be room, and if

12 Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 18, 1-2; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 29.

13 Idem, 17, 5; Idem, Ibidem, p. 29; In the Heads of the Canons of Abulides or Hippolytus (who is supposed to be the author of the Apostolic Tradition) written about the year 235 .D., we find canon 34 entitled: "The sober behavior of the layman in the Church".

there be not room, let them stand upright. And let those that are advanced in age sit in order. But let their fathers and mothers take charge of the little children who stand. Again let the younger women be apart, if there be room, but if not, let them stand behind the women. And let those who are already married and have children be placed apart" 14.

We have quoted this document at length, for it shows the meticulous care taken to preserve all semblances of order in the Church. At the very beginning, the author has made it clear why he has deemed it necessary to give such detailed directions, for he writes: "make your assemblies in a comely manner". A deeper analysis of these instructions makes it clear that this is actually a very practical system of placement, and would avoid any and all unnecessary moving about during the ceremonies. We may even go so far as to conclude that it was this very practical purpose along with the basic rules of Christian courtesy, that served as norms for such a concise system. Let us pause here for a few moments, and reconstruct conjecturally the set-up of the assembly as seen in this description. The Catachumens are not mentioned in this particular text, but no doubt they would have been placed nearest the exit, that is, in back of all the other faithful members, whether men or women, so that when the time came for them to leave after the Gospel, they could do so quietly and

14 Syriac Didascalia, Ch. 57; Cresswell: Liturgy of the Eighth Book of the Apostolic Constitutions, p. 77.

without disturbing the whole assembly. Men and women were separated from each other, for as we shall note later, the kiss of peace was given by the men to men, and by the women to women, and it was strictly forbidden to give it to a member of the opposite sex. Thus if both sexes were mixed indiscriminately in the assembly, a rather uncomely confusion would result at this time. The aged of course were given the seats, in the case that there were not enough for all, in which circumstance, the younger people would stand in back of the older. Those who had children with them, would stay with and care for them. The general principle of these separations is well expressed in the allegory of the shepherd and his flock, each being placed according to age and kind, and "all running to join their like". This order in the assembly was insisted upon, as we can see by the direction given the deacon to "severely rebuke anyone who might be sitting out of place", and to lead the culprit to his proper position.

Perhaps however, our most complete description of the assembly as a whole, comes from the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, written at the end of the fourth century. It is here that we find that one of the main duties of a deacon in the Primitive Church, was to watch over the laity. The following words are addressed to the Bishop of a community: "When thou callest an assembly of the Church as one that is a commander

of a great ship' 15. Here we have explicit mention that the assembly was called by the Bishop, as the authority in the Christian community. We then find explicit directions as to the church building itself, and the position to be taken by different groups within the building:

"And first let the building be long, with its head to the east...in the middle let the Bishop's throne be placed, and on each side of him let the Presbytery sit down...let the laity sit on the other side, with all quietness and good order. And let the women sit by themselves, they also keeping silence. Let the young persons sit by themselves, if there be a place for them; if not let them stand upright. But let those that are already stricken in years sit in order. Let the younger women also sit by themselves, if there be place for them, but if there be not, let them stand behind the women. Let those women which are married and have children, be placed by themselves; but let the virgins and the widows and the elder women stand or sit before all the rest" 16.

Here we find the same specifications as found in the Didascalia, the arrangement of the laity being made for practical purposes, and approximately the same specifications being given here as before.

It is interesting to note what would seem to be an indication in this text, of the pre-eminence of Virgins, Widows, and elderly women. We mentioned before, that widows were in some respects considered as ranking in the clergy. In this text it

15 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

16 Loc. cit.

strikes us that the class of Virgins is named before that of Widows. May we deduce from this, that despite the quasi-clerical status of Widows, that even at this period, Virgins were considered an even more elevated and honorable class than the Widows? It would hardly seem coincidental or oversight, that the order of mention here should place the Virgins before the Widows, especially if we bear in mind the great dignity of the order of Widows, unless they were actually second to Virgins.

The text continues:

"Let the deacon oversee the people, that nobody may whisper, nor slumber, nor laugh, nor nod; for all ought in the Church to stand wisely, and soberly, and attentively, having their attention fixed upon the word of the Lord" ¹⁷.

Once again we have the stress on the reverence with which the faithful ought to attend the Eucharistic celebration, and it is the duty of the deacon to see that this spirit of reverence predominates the assembly. This latter duty is mentioned again later in the chapter when it is said: "Let others of them (deacons) keep watch over the multitude, and keep them silent" ¹⁸.

In concluding we can say, that the Christian assembly of the Primitive Church resembles to a certain degree, that of

17 Loc. cit.

18 Loc. cit.

our present day. The laity would sit so that they would be facing the altar and the east. They probably formed a kind of semi-circle around the altar and the Bishop's throne. This semi-circle would be split in half the entire length of the Church, by an aisle separating the men from the women. The elder men sat in front next to the altar. The younger men would either sit, if there were enough seats, or otherwise stand behind the older men. On the women's side, the Virgins, Widows and elderly women sat in front, across the aisle from the older men. The younger women either sat or stood behind them. All of these aforementioned would be communicants and would thus remain for the entire Eucharistic celebration. In back of the communicants would come the non-communicants, namely the energumens (those who could not communicate because of some private sin), penitents (who must wait until the prescribed time of penance had expired before communicating), those who were preparing for illumination (not baptized but receiving instructions in the faith), and the Catachumens (who were undergoing a two year probation period before illumination), and finally pagans (who were probably prospective Catachumens and who were allowed to attend); and placed in that order, men and women on their respective sides of the semi-circle. We place them in this order, because in the dismissal ceremonies of all non-communicants, we find that pagans, catachumens, those preparing for illumination, penitents, and energumens, were

dismissed in that order, thus those leaving first would be placed closest to the exit. In such a system, when all the non-communicants had left, there would be no empty places among the communicants, and these later would be nearest the altar.

Thus, we can see from these texts, that the Christian assembly was one worthy of the Eucharistic celebration, and to be sure that the proper reverence and order was maintained, each Christian was assigned a special place in the Church, the deacons overseeing the laity to be certain that this placement and becoming attitude was not violated.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAYMAN AND THE KISS OF PEACE

The next action of the Mass which we must consider, because of the evident participation of the laymen, is the kiss of peace. This sign was a common salutation among friends in Ancient times, and we read of its use many times, both in the Old and in the New Testaments. It was only fitting, that in the Eucharistic celebration where all the Christians were united in one mind and in one spirit, this union of all should be made manifest by the use of the kiss of peace. This sign of mutual Christian Charity, became known as the kiss of peace, and still exists today in our Solemn High Masses, but it is only given among the clergy, and the laity no longer actively participate in this very beautiful symbol.

In several of the Epistles of Peter and Paul, we find many instances where these Holy Apostles command the Christians to: "Greet one another with a holy kiss" ¹. At first sight we may question the connection of this command as given in the Epistles, to the Kiss of Peace found in the Eucharistic liturgy.

Most likely the original intent of the inspired authors was not the Kiss of Peace as such, but if we recall the fact that these

¹ Epistles of St. Paul: Rom. 16, 16; I Cor. 16, 20; I Thess. 5, 26; I Peter, 5, 14.

Epistles, even at this early date, were read in the assembly at the fore-mass as Divinely inspired writings, then perhaps it is not going too far to say, that the liturgical kiss of peace may have resulted from the application of this command. However, as we shall see, the kiss was delayed until a short time later in the ceremony. It is a common opinion that these texts, at least in a remote and indirect fashion, refer to the solemn kiss given at Mass, of which our "pax" is a relic.² This conclusion is brought to light and finds backing, in the succeeding documents, where the kiss is explicitly placed as a part of the Eucharistic liturgy, and with the same signification and symbolism attached to it, as was intended by the inspired writers.

St. Justin Martyr (152 A.D.), gives a series of preliminary prayers before the bread and chalice are brought out, after which he writes: "At the conclusion of these prayers we greet one another with a kiss"³. Its first position, in regard to the whole, would thus have been immediately after the dismissal of all non-communicants, and yet before the offertory as such.

² Catholic Commentary of Sacred Scripture, page 1098, col. 8821.

³ St. Justin Martyr: I Apology, 65; Fathers of the Church: "St. Justin Martyr", p. 105.

The Liturgy of Jerusalem, or of St. James the Apostle, places it in approximately the same position, for the "pax" is mentioned as occurring after the dismissal of non-communicants, and as the holy gifts are brought in: "The Deacon shall say: 'Let us salute one another with an Holy Kiss" ⁴. We have here a tendency which will become a set rule by the end of the third century, of giving the kiss after the offertory. In this particular text however, we may also interpret it as being given during the offertory.

In the Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), more precise and definite directions are given concerning the kiss:

"The Catachumens shall not give the kiss of peace, for their kiss is not yet pure. But the baptized shall embrace one another, men with men, and women with women. But let not men embrace women" ⁵.

The kiss then was given only to one of the same sex, a strict rule, the practicality of which is strikingly evident, nor was it at all inconvenient, since as we have seen, both the men and women were separated in the assembly. It is rather surprising to find mention that the Catachumens could not take part in this ceremony. The reason given is easily comprehensible, but according to all predominant tradition, and especially by this time, this particular direction would seem quite unne-

⁴ Liturgy of James, 2, 20; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol.7, p. 541.

⁵ Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus 17, 3-4; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, 6, 29.

cessary, for their dismissal should have occurred before this moment of the celebration. This fact might have been mentioned to put in relief the holiness and purity with which this ceremony ought to be carried out.

Origen, most probably before 244 A.D., commenting on the text of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans "Salute one another with a holy kiss", writes: "From these words and many others similar to them, the Church teaches us that after our prayers we ought to receive each others as brothers with a kiss" ⁶.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), in his Catechism on the Mysteries of the Faith, a series of instructions directed to the Catechumens who were about ready to be baptized, explaining to them the Eucharistic celebration which they will soon be allowed to witness, says that: "The Deacon cries aloud: 'Receive ye one another; and let us kiss one another'" ⁷.

It is once again in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles that we find a synthetic summary of all that we have seen concerning the kiss of peace. In this document, the kiss is placed immediately after the dismissal of all non-communicants and after the offertory prayer has been said, at which moment we

⁶ Origen: Comm. In Epistola Ad Romanos, Liber 10, 33 (P.G. Vol. 14, Col. 1282).

⁷ St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechism on the Mysteries of the Faith, Lecture 23, 3; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 273.

read: "Then let the men give the men, and the women give the women, the Lord's Kiss" ⁸. Again, later in the document, we find that after those unable to communicate have left, the following ceremony takes place: "

"Let the Deacon say: 'let us attend', and let the Bishop salute the Church and say: 'the peace of God be with you all'; and let the people answer: 'and with thy spirit', and let the Deacon say to all: 'Salute ye one another with a holy kiss'. Let the men of the laity salute the men, the women the women" ⁹.

From these texts it is quite evident that the Kiss of Peace was a universally established ceremony at all the Eucharistic assemblies. Although its position in the liturgical ceremonies varies according to local custom, it seems to have retained a place occurring between the dismissal of all non-communicants and the end of the offertory prayer. Since only the communicants gave the kiss of peace to each other, it was a true symbol of peace among the brethren who were soon to be united by the bonds of the Body and Blood of Christ. It was an external manifestation that all those present were already in communion of mind and spirit, and thus worthy of remaining for the Holy Mysteries. Perhaps the presence of the kiss of peace in the celebration of the Eucharist, and its position

⁸ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

⁹ Idea: Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 11; Idem, p. 486.

before or after the offertory, but definitely before the actual celebration itself began, might have been inspired by the words of Our Lord:

"Therefore if thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there remembreth that thy brother has anything against thee, leave thy gift before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother (by the holy kiss?) and then come and offer thy gift" ¹⁰.

The symbolism of reconciliation with fellow-Christians was most evident when the kiss occurred at this time in the ceremony, and perhaps its present position towards the end of the Sacrifice has made it lose much of its former significance.

¹⁰ Matthew 5, 23-24.

CHAPTER V

THE LAYMAN AND HOLY COMMUNION

We now come to the very central portion of the entire Eucharistic celebration which is the communion of the faithful. We must note that in the Primitive Church, one finds many practices concerning Holy Communion, which are no longer in use today, and which to our manner of thinking may seem quite strange. We must bear in mind that we are speaking of the Church in the embryonic stage of her development, and what was prevalent, practical and even necessary at that time due to the conditions in which it developed, was changed in later years when these conditions were no longer present, and these peculiar customs neither practical nor convenient. There are many different aspects to be considered in the primitive customs concerning Holy Communion, and thus it will be well to consider each of these customs separately in the light of the available documents.

Let us begin our considerations with a rule which the Primitive Church had in common with the Church of our day, namely, that only baptized persons may receive the Sacred species, and only those who, being baptized, live according to the laws of God and of the Church, being free from all stain of sin. This was the universal custom from the beginning of the Church, for only they could receive Holy Communion who were

already in communion with the Mystical Body of Christ, who had become members of the Church by the cleansing waters of Baptism.

Our first indication of such a practice is found as early as the beginning of the second century, in the Didache or as it is commonly known The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles: "But let no one eat or drink of the Eucharist with you, except those baptized in the name of the Lord" ¹. Certainly we could not expect a clearer or more explicit exposé than this. St. Justin Martyr, in his Apology (152 A.D.), after a general description of the Eucharistic celebration, goes on to explain the dispositions needed for a worthy reception of the Eucharist:

"We call this food the Eucharist, of which only he can partake who has acknowledged the truth of our teachings, who has been cleansed by baptism for the remission of his sins and for his regeneration, and who regulates his life upon the principles laid down by Christ" ².

Explicit mention is made of the need for Baptism, and perhaps the latter part of this text may be taken as an implicit indication of the most evident doctrine that sinners were not allowed to receive the Eucharist, for in sinning they have wandered from the principles laid down by Christ.

¹ Didache 9, 5, Fathers of the Church: Apostolic Fathers, p. 179.

² St. Justin Martyr: I Apology 66; Fathers of the Church: St. Justin Martyr, p. 105.

In the Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), we find the direction that: "A Catechumen shall not sit at table at the Lord's Supper" ³. Although in its context this statement does not explicitly refer to the Eucharist as such, but rather concerns the "Agape", a love-feast or common supper taken by all the Christians together after this supper had been separated from the Eucharistic celebration, still it is important for it discloses the mentality of the time. It can easily be deduced that if the Catechumens were not allowed to partake of this ordinary food with the Christians, how much more would they be excluded from the banquet of the very Body and Blood of Christ. Certainly this is not being too audacious in our deductions, for a little later in this same document, we find explicit mention of the exclusion of Catechumens from the Eucharistic Communion: "And let all take care that no unbaptized person taste of the Eucharist" ⁴.

We also find this insistence on the reception of the Eucharist only by those who are baptized in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, where we read: "Let no one eat of these things that is not initiated; but those only who have been

³ Apostolic Traditions 26, 5; Dix: Apostolic Traditions, p. 46.

⁴ Apostolic Tradition 32, 2; Dix: Apostolic Traditions, p. 59.

baptized into the death of the Lord" 5.

This suffices for all practical purposes, to show that only baptized persons could receive the Eucharistic bread, and we may go a step further, for although it cannot be immediately deduced perhaps from the above documents, certainly there can be no doubt of the fact that besides the Catechumens, public penitents and all other sinners were excluded from this holy participation. This becomes quite evident if we consider the fact stated earlier, that the Catechumens, penitents and energumens, were dismissed publicly before the offertory, and only those who could receive the Eucharist were allowed to remain for the entire celebration. Thus it follows that all who remained communicated, as can be seen from what we read in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles:

"The Deacon shall immediately say: 'Let none of the Catechumens, let none of the hearers, let none of the unbelievers, let none of the heterodox stay here'" 6,

which direction occurs immediately before the Offertory. We have noted earlier the detailed account given in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles concerning the dismissal of the Catechumens, energumens, those preparing for illumination, and penitents, leaving only the communicants present.

5 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 7, Sec. 2, 25; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 470.

6 Idem, Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 5; Idem, p. 483.

To show what care and reverence was shown towards the reception of the Eucharist, we need only mention the letter of Dionysius of Alexandria (265 A.D.), addressed to Bishop Basilidus, speaking of women with issue, and directing that these women out of reverence certainly should not approach the Holy Table:

"I do not think that, if they are believing and pious women, they will themselves be rash enough in such a condition, either to approach the Holy Table or to touch the Body and Blood of the Lord" 7.

Thus only the most pure of body, and "a fortiori" of soul were allowed to receive Holy Communion. Since only those who could communicate were allowed to assist at the Eucharist celebration in its entirety, this text can be an indication that these women were dismissed with the Catachumens, for they are of the non-communicant group. Perhaps also in this latter case, we can find a definite trace of Judaistic influence on the Primitive Church, for according to the Judaic Law and mentality, all women at such a time were considered unclean.

While considering the problem of who could receive the Eucharist, we must mention the Communion of infants. It is now well established that in the early days of Christianity it was not at all uncommon for infants to receive communion immediately

7 Dionysius of Alexandria: Epistle to Bishop Basilidus, Canon 2, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6, p. 96.

after their baptism.⁸ There is only one text of this period however, which explicitly mentions the communion of infants, but the manner in which it was written seems to indicate, that this was something very common, and the only reason why it seems to be mentioned at all, was due to the peculiar circumstances surrounding this particular communion. St. Cyprian (251 A.D.), writes that a child due to the fact that it had been too young to eat the flesh sacrificed to idols, had nevertheless, been forced to drink before an idol. Later, when it was brought by its mother to the Eucharistic celebration, the following incident occurred:

"When, however, after the solemnities were complete, the Deacon began to offer the cup to those who were there, and in the course of their receiving, its (child) turn came, the little child turned its face away, under the instinct of God's majesty, and refused the cup. The Deacon however persevered and forced upon her of the sacrament of the cup"⁹.

⁸ Catholic Encyclopedia: "Communion of Children".

⁹ St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, 25; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, p. 444.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAYMAN AND HIS MANNER OF COMMUNICATING

Our next problem in our discussion on Holy Communion, now that we have seen who were permitted to communicate, is the manner of receiving the Holy Eucharist. The first question which quite naturally arises, is the necessary dispositions required for the reception of the Eucharist, namely, the Eucharistic fast.

We do not here intend to go into the problem of the "Agape" or love-feast in its relation to the Eucharist, for many volumes have been written on this most complex problem, and there still remains a great deal of uncertainty and obscurity. However, a few of the basic notions of this relationship are necessary in order to determine the problem of the Eucharistic fast, its beginnings and evolution. We know that at the Last Supper, the first Eucharistic celebration, The Eucharist was received during the Paschal meal. St. Matthew relates, that while they were at supper,

"Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke and giving it to His disciples He said: 'Take and eat; this is My Body'. And taking a cup He gave thanks and gave it to them, saying: 'All of you drink of this; for this is My Blood'" ¹.

¹ Gospel of St. Matthew, 26, 26-27.

St. Mark likewise places the Eucharistic reception during the meal: "And while they were eating" ². After Pentecost, when the Apostles began to celebrate the Holy Mass, according to the command delivered to them by the Lord: "Do this in commemoration of Me", they kept it in its original setting of a meal, and thus the Sacred Body and Blood were received during the meal itself. Later, as the Eucharist gained prominence, it was celebrated before the meal or "Agapé", and thus the sacred species were received while fasting. Finally, it became customary to come together for the Agapé in the evening, the Eucharist being celebrated the following day, and communion being received while fasting. This entire evolution took place before the end of the first century, at least in most Christian communities, and was most definitely universal by the middle of the second century.

Our first witness to the custom of fasting is St. Polycarp, who in about 120 A.D. wrote: "Let us be temperate and ready for prayers, persevering in fasting" ³. Although this cannot be said to be strictly applicable to the Eucharist, still from its context there can be no objection to applying it in this manner.

² Gospel of St. Mark, 14, 22.

³ St. Polycarp: Epistle to the Philipppians, 7, 2; Ancient Christian Writers, No. 6, p. 79.

Tertulian, writing in 200-206 A.D., explicitly states that the Eucharist was received fasting. However, here again we must note, that in this particular case, he is speaking of the Sacred Species which had been taken home to be received during the week: "Will not your husband know what it is you take in secret before eating any other food? If he recognizes it as bread..."⁴. He is here posing the problem which must confront a Christian women with a Pagan husband, who receives the Eucharist before she eats anything else, that is, while fasting.

The Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), leaves no doubt that fasting at this time was obligatory for the reception of the Eucharist:

"And let everyone of the faithful be careful to partake of the Eucharist before he eats anything else. For if he partakes with faith, even though some deadly thing were given him, after this it cannot hurt him"⁵.

Thus, although the custom and regulation of the Eucharistic fast cannot be proven in the Apostolic Age, or first century, and in fact, from some of the above documents the

⁴ Tertulian: To His Wife, Bk. 2, ch. 5; Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 13, p. 30.

⁵ Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 32, 1; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 58; The Canons of Hippolytus, written supposedly by the same author and based upon the Apostolic Tradition command and direct: "That the faithful ought to eat nothing before the Holy Communion"; Heads of the Canons of Abulides or Hippolytus, Canon 28; Ante-Nicene Father, Vol. 5, p. 256.

custom would seem to have been just the contrary, however by the middle or at least by the end of the second century, it is safe to say that the Eucharistic fast was a requisite for the worthy reception of the Body and Blood of Christ.

We now come to the problem of the actual reception of the Eucharist itself, and more particularly, the position taken by the communicant at the moment of the reception of the Eucharist. It is accepted that the Christians of the early Church universally stood for the reception of communion, the laymen proceeding to the Holy Table in order, according to their different classes, receiving the Eucharist in their hands.

Once again we must cast a glance back to the upper room where the Eucharist was instituted, and note that at the last supper, the Sacred Species were received while reclining at the table. It was considered a part of the meal, in a certain sense, and thus was received in the customary position taken for the rest of the meal. As long as the Eucharistic celebration was joined to a meal, and had the form of a real meal, the actual communion was accomplished by the passing of the consecrated elements from hand to hand, while reclining at the table. Later, as we have already noted, when the Eucharist became a formal act apart from the meal, and all the tables had disappeared except the one on which the Eucharist was celebrated, the faithful approached the altar and received the

elements in their hands.

Tertulian, writing in 211 .D., against certain Christians who were employed in making Pagan idols, alludes to this custom in the Primitive Church of receiving the Eucharist in the hands:

"Bewailing that a Christian should come from idols into the Church...should raise to God the Father hands which are the mothers of idols... should apply to the Lord's body those hands which confer bodies on demons" 6.

In the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostle Paul (about 200 A.D.), we have what may be considered as an indirect reference to the reception of the Sacred Species in the hands: "And everyone took the bread" 7. Also in the Apocryphal Acts of Thomas, written at this same time, there is a direct and more explicit reference to such a custom:

"Now there was a certain youth who had wrought an abominable deed, and he came near and received of the Eucharist, but his two hands withered up, so that he could no more put them into his own mouth" 8.

The Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), resolves the doubt beyond any objection, for we read: "Let the Deacons give the bread to the people in their hands" 9.

6 Tertulian On Idolatry 7; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 64.

7 Apocryphal Acts of Paul, 9; Montague Rhodes James: Apocryphal New Testament, p. 293.

8 Apocryphal Acts of Thomas, 5, 51; Idem, Ibidem, p. 388.

9 Apostolic Tradition, 24, 1; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 43.

St. Cyprian (253 A.D.), in encouraging the faithful in the face of persecution, also mentions the reception of the Eucharist in the hands:

"Let us arm the right hand with the sword of the spirit, that we may boldly reject the deadly sacrifices, and mindful of the Eucharist, the hand which has received the Lord's Body, may embrace the Lord Himself" 10.

We here have the added information that the right hand was used to receive the Eucharist. St. Cyprian (251 A.D.), also refers to this custom, when writing of different cases where the Eucharist had been refused to, or received unworthily by those who had weakened in the faith and worshipped the pagan idols:

"The fallen and wounded raises threats against the upright and sound, and is impiously wrathful against the priests, because he is not permitted at once, to take the Lord's Body in his defiled hands" 11.

"Another person also, who adventured secretly, after having defiled himself, when the sacrifice was celebrated by the priest, to accept his portion with the rest, was disabled from eating or handling the Holy Thing of the Lord; on opening his hands he found that they contained a cinder" 12.

10 St. Cyprian, Epistle, 58, 10; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 17, p. 149.

11 Idem, The Lapsed, 22; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, p. 443.

12 Idem, Ibidem, 25; Idem, p. 445.

Dionysius of Alexandria (265 A.D.), also indirectly refers to this tradition, when, in warning women with issue, he says that they ought not: "either approach the Holy Table or touch the Body or Blood of the Lord" 13. In another Epistle, concerning a man who had long been considered as one of the faithful, but who had discovered later that he had never been baptized, and had thus asked for this sacrament, Dionysius writes, that he had refused to baptize him for:

"I should not dare to renew afresh, after all, one who had heard the giving of thanks, and who had stood at the Holy Table and stretched forth his hands to receive the blessed food, and had received it" 14.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), in his instructions to the Catechumens, explaining the Eucharistic celebration, directs them thus:

"After this ye hear the chantor, with a sacred melody inviting you to the communion of the Holy Mysteries. ... Approaching therefore, come not with thy wrists extended, or thy fingers open, but make thy left hand as if a throne for thy right, which is on the eve of receiving the King. And having hallowed thy palm, receive the Body of Christ. Then after thou hast hallowed with carefulness thine eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake thereof, giving heed lest you lose any of it. Then after having partaken of the Body of Christ, approach also to the cup of His blood, not

13 Dionysius of Alexandria: Epistle to Bishop Basilides, Can. 2; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6, p. 96.

14 Idem, Epistle to Sixtus, 20-22; Idem, Vol. 6, p. 103.

stretching forth thine hands, but bending.... be thou hallowed by partaking also of the Blood of the Christ, and while the moisture is still upon thy lips, touching it with thine hands, hallow both thine eyes and brow and the other senses" 15.

This text is certainly most revealing, and even startling to we who are accustomed to consider the Holy Eucharist as something to be handled only by consecrated hands. Not only are the faithful instructed to receive it in their hands, but also to touch the eyes with the Sacred Body, the eyes and other senses with the Sacred Blood.

The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, usually most revealing in the matter of the liturgical celebrations, due to its later date (380 A.D.), has little however to say concerning the actual reception of the Sacred Species. It does however direct the manner in which the laymen should approach the Holy Table:

"When the oblation has been made, let every rank by itself partake of the Lord's Body and precious Blood in order and approach with reverence and Holy fear, as to the Body of their King. Let the women approach with the heads covered, as is becoming the order of women" 16.

It is only to be expected, that this particular document which in the beginning gave such explicit directions about

15 St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechism on the Holy Mysteries, 20- 22; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 278-279.

16 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

the distinctions to be made among the laity, should also carry through with these class distinctions, even to the very reception of the Eucharist. Later, in the same document, we have a repetition and a stress on the order to be observed in the reception of the Eucharist: "Then all the people in order and with reverence and Godly fear, without tumult, approach the Holy table" 17.

There can thus be no possible doubt, that the Eucharist was received by the faithful while standing, in their hands, and each of the diverse classes among the laity approached the table in an established order.

17 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 13; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 490.

CHAPTER VII

LAY-COMMUNION AND THE TWO SPECIES

Our next problem concerning the Eucharist, now that we have established the way it was received, is the matter of what was received, namely the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ. In the many texts already quoted, this custom of receiving both species has been frequently referred to, and now the time has come to show that it was the common usage in the Primitive Church, to receive Communion under both species, but in particular cases, one species, whether the Sacred Body alone or the Sacred Blood alone, was administered, and considered sufficient. In the following documents we will stress those passages which show that the Sacred Blood was given to the faithful, for it is taken for granted that the Sacred Body was received then as it is now.

Let us return once more to that first Holy Thursday, and the institution of this most Blessed Sacrament. At the Last Supper, we find that the Apostles received both the Body and Blood of Christ. Our Lord said: "All of you drink of this; for this is My Blood" ... Take and eat for this is My Body" ¹.
Again in the Gospel of St. Mark we read: "Take, this is My

¹ Gospel of St. Matthew, 26, 26-27.

Body. And taking the cup and giving thanks He gave it to them and they all drank of it" ².

Our first testimony of the reception of the two species, outside of the Sacred Scriptures, is the Didache, written about the year 90-110 A.D., which, in directing that only baptized persons should communicate, states: "But let no one eat or drink of the Eucharist with you except those baptized in the name of the Lord" ³. Here, unlike the Scriptural passages quoted above, there is no question of the communion under both species in reference to the clergy alone, for at the Last Supper we might argue that the Apostles were priests, and as such, were allowed to receive both the Sacred Body and Blood, as do all priests today during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. However, in the Didache, by the very mention of Baptism as a requisite for Holy Communion, it evidently concerns the ordinary layman.

St. Ignatius of Antioch (107 A.D.), in one of his Epistles, mentions this fact: "The flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ is one, and His Blood is one, which was poured out for us; one bread is broken for all, and one chalice is distributed for all" ⁴. Notice the last phrase, stating that one

² Gospel of St. Mark, 14, 22-23.

³ Didache, 9, 5; Fathers of the Church, "Apostolic Fathers", p. 179.

⁴ St. Ignatius of Antioch: Epistle to Philadelphians, 4; Ancient Christian Writers, No. 1, p. 86.

chalice containing the Sacred Blood was given to all, to each communicant.

St. Justin Martyr (152 A.D.), in his description of the Eucharistic celebration writes:

"And when he who presides has celebrated the Eucharist, they whom we call Deacons permit each one present to partake of the Eucharist, bread and wine and water" ⁵.

Justin first mentions the reception of the Eucharist, and then explicitly states that by the Eucharist he means the bread, wine and water, that is both species, which was received by all.

St. Cyprian (257 A.D.), often mentions the reception of the two species. In his Exhortation to the Martyrs, he writes:

"A more severe and fiercer struggle now hangs over us, to which the soldiers of Christ must prepare themselves by faith untainted, and by sturdy courage, considering that they therefore daily drink of the cup of the Blood of Christ, that they too may be able to shed their blood for Christ" ⁶.

Thus the layman daily drank the Sacred Blood. In his treatise on The Lapsed, he writes: that such a person who had fallen away under the threat of persecution:

"is impiously wrathful against the priests, because he is not permitted at once to take the

⁵ St. Justin Martyr: I Apology, 65; Fathers of the Church: St. Justin Martyr, p. 105.

⁶ St. Cyprian: Epistle 58, 1; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 17, p. 142.

Lord's body in his defiled hands, and drink the Lord's Blood with his polluted mouth" ⁷.

In his Synodical Epistle addressed to Pope Cornelius after the Second Council of Carthage, (252A.D.), Cyprian writes:

"How do we teach or encourage men to shed their Blood....if we do not first admit them with the right of communicants to drink the cup of the Lord in the Church" ⁸.

Notice again that the partaking of the chalice of the Sacred Blood was considered as the "right of communicants". Thus from the texts of St. Cyprian there can be no doubt concerning this custom, and the very fact that it is referred to so often in an indirect manner, proves that it was a usage requiring no explanation and was well known by all.

Origen (251 A.D.), also indirectly refers to the two species in his commentary on St. John. His primary topic here is the subject of prayer, but he takes the example of something common and prevalent in his day to prove his point. He says:

"And thus, not only does he eat of this bread and of this chalice...Just as it is not fitting that all should abstain from this bread and not drink of this chalice, neither is it fitting that all should not elevate their eyes" ⁹.

⁷ St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, 22; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, p. 443.

⁸ Idem, Epistle 54; Idem, Ibidem, p. 346.

⁹ Origen: Commentary in John: Bk. 28; P.G. 14, Col. 686, 4D; My translation.

To receive both the Body and Blood was as commonplace as to elevate the eyes in prayer.

In the text quoted once before, written by Dionysius of Alexandria (265 A.D.), we find that in his directions to the women with issue, they are told not to approach the holy table to receive the Body and Blood. Thus at any other time these women were allowed to receive both species, and certainly, if the women could do so, then the remainder of the laity could also receive both. "I do not think that they will be rash enough in such a condition to approach the holy table or to touch the Body and Blood of the Lord" ¹⁰.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), in his instructions to the Catechumens, writes: "Therefore with fullest assurance let us partake of the Body and Blood of Christ" ¹¹. Again, when instructing them on the manner of receiving the Eucharist, he says: "When we taste we are bidden to taste not bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Christ" ¹². Later he tells them:

"Approaching therefore...receive the Body of Christ, saying after it 'Amen'. Then after having partaken of the Body of Christ, approach also to the cup of His Blood...be thou hallowed by parta-

¹⁰ Dionysius of Alexandria: Epistle to Bishop Basilides: Can. 2; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6, p. 96.

¹¹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechism on the Mysteries; Lecture 22, 3; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 271.

¹² Idem, Ibidem: Lecture 23, 20; Idem, p. 278.

king also of the Blood of Christ" 13.

There can be no doubt here, for these words were addressed to Catechumens who were not even as yet considered worthy of assisting at the celebration, concerning their actions as active laymen of the future. They are told to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and when drinking from the chalice of wine, they should taste not wine but the blood of Christ.

The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles adds little to our present knowledge for it states only briefly: "When the oblation has been made, let every rank by itself partake of the Lord's Body and precious Blood" 14. Later, it instructs the Bishop:

"And let the Bishop give the oblation saying: 'the Body of Christ'; and let him that receiveth say: 'Amen'. And let the Deacon take the cup and when he gives it say: 'the Blood of Christ, the cup of life', and let him that drinketh it say: 'amen'" 15.

There can be therefore no doubt that in the Primitive Church, it was the universal custom to receive both species, the Sacred Body and Blood. However we must also note, that this type of reception was not considered indispensable for a valid reception of the Eucharist, for there are cases when only

13 Idem, Ibidem; Lecture 23, 21-22; Idem, p. 279.

14 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 2, Sec. 7, 57, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 421.

15 Idem, Ibidem: Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 13; Idem, p. 490.

one species was given, namely, in private domestic communion where a portion of the Sacred Body was alone received, in the communion of the sick where the bread alone was given, and in the communion of children where the Sacred Blood alone was given, even at the Eucharistic celebration.¹⁶

The communion under bread alone will be evident from the following considerations concerning the reservation of the Eucharist, and its administration to the sick and absentees, as it is most evident in these two cases and only in these two cases, for in the assembly, both species were received by all, except for the infants who could not eat the bread and were therefore given only the Sacred Blood.

St. Justin (152 A.D.), after describing the Eucharistic celebration, says: "They whom we call Deacons permit each one present to partake of the Eucharistic bread, wine and water; and then carry it to the absentees"¹⁷. From this account, it might seem that both species were carried to the absent, but in the light of later documents, and due to the impracticality of such a thing, it is safe to say that most probably Justin here refers only to the Sacred Body when speaking of the communion of absentees. To carry both species would have meant that the Deacons would have to have had

16 Catholic Encyclopedia "Communion under both kinds".

17 St. Justin Martyr: I Apology Ch. 65; Fathers of the Church "Justin Martyr", p. 105.

two separate containers, one for the Body and the other for the Blood, which during this time of persecution would have been a sure betrayal. Since it was not considered absolutely necessary to receive both species, it would have been foolish to have made this duty of the Deacons any more dangerous than it actually was. Again, a few chapters later we read: "The Sacred elements are distributed and consumed by those present, and to those absent they are sent through the Deacons" ¹⁸. The same observation holds true here as above.

We read in Tertulian (198-200 A.D.), that it was a common practice to take the Blessed Eucharist home, and in the particular instance described here, it was also encouraged:

"Similarly too, touching the days of stations, most think that they must not be present at the Sacrificial prayers, on the ground that the station must be dissolved by the reception of the Lord's Body...When the Lord's Body has been received and reserved, each part is secured, both the participation of the sacrifice, and the discharge of duty" ¹⁹.

The word station is here used in the sense of a "fast". It seems that many who were fasting, believed that they could not attend the Eucharistic celebration, for they would then need receive the Eucharist, and thus break their fast. However they are told to attend the celebration,

¹⁸ St. Justin Martyr: I Apology Ch. 67; Fathers of the Church "Justin Martyr", p. 107.

¹⁹ Tertulian: On Prayer Ch. 19; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 687.

receive the Body of Christ, but not to eat of it immediately, rather to reserve it and take it home with them, so that they might partake thereof when the established time of fasting had been accomplished. Also in Tertulian we find the following text concerning a Christian woman with a pagan husband:

"Will not your husband know what it is you take in secret before eating any other food? If he recognizes it as bread will he not believe it to be what it is rumored to be..."²⁰.

Some of the Sacred Bread was taken home from the Eucharistic celebration, and received secretly each morning. There is no mention of the Sacred Blood, and thus due to the inconvenience which would be caused by the reservation of the Sacred Blood, only the one species, the Sacred Body was taken home.

In the Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), we find the direction:

"And let all take care that no unbaptized person taste of the Eucharist nor a mouse or other animal, and that none of it at all fall and be lost"²¹.

Certainly this cannot refer to the reception of the Eucharist at the assembly, for there would be little danger of an unbaptized person partaking of these Holy Things, and even less of an animal, but this warning is clearly understood if we refer

²⁰ Tertulian: To His Wife, Bk. 2, ch. 5; Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 13, p. 30.

²¹ Apostolic Tradition, 32, 2; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 59.

it to the storage or reservation of the Holy Eucharist in the home, for then these dangers could be possible.

St. Cyprian (251 A.D.), speaking of a woman who had sacrificed to the idols, says:

"And another woman when she tried with unworthy hands to open her box, in which was the Holy Body of the Lord, was deterred, by fire rising from it from daring to touch it" ²².

This does not concern the reception of the Eucharist in the assembly, for there the Sacred Species were given directly in the hands of the communicant, but this text explicitly notes that this incident occurred when she opened her "ark". The "Ark" was a small box, about the size of a snuff box, in which the communicant at the assembly, after receiving the Eucharist and eating a part of it, placed the remainder, to be taken home and received during the week. This again is an example of communion under one species.

As we mentioned earlier, The Eucharist was taken to the absentees by the Deacons, and according to Dionysius of Alexandria (265 A.D.), it was also taken to the sick, but in the particular case narrated by Dionysius, not by a Deacon, but rather by a young boy. A certain man was ill and sent a boy for the priest that he might receive the Eucharist before he died, but the priest being himself ill: "gave the boy a

²² St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, 26; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, p. 444.

small portion of the Eucharist telling him to steep it in water and drop it into the old man's mouth" 23.

Thus, to resume this section on the reception of the Holy Eucharist, we may conclude, that in the Primitive Church only baptized persons could communicate, the Catechumens, penitents, and the like, being dismissed beforehand. Even infants who had been baptized were given the Sacred Blood to drink. Although in the beginning, there was no such a thing as the Eucharistic fast, by the middle of the second century this had become the prevailing custom, and even a regulation. It would seem that the Eucharist was received while standing, each person proceeding to the Holy Table according to the lay-class to which he belonged, taking the Sacred Bread in his own hands, blessing his eyes with it, and partaking of a portion of it, placing the remainder in a small container, or "ark", as it was called, to be taken home and received during the week. He then proceeded to receive the Sacred Blood of Christ. Both species were ordinarily received, although by exception, due to necessity and practicality, as in the case of the communion of the children and the sick, and domestic communion in the home, one species alone sufficed.

23 Dionysius of Alexandria: Epistle to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6, p. 101.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAYMAN AND GENERAL PRAYER RESPONSES

We now proceed to our final consideration of those parts of the Mass in which lay-participation was most evident, namely, the prayer-responses made by the layman during the Eucharistic celebration. It is not our intention to give here all the prayer responses made by the faithful during the Eucharistic sacrifice, which developed throughout the period of the Primitive Church, but we wish to signal out certain particular responses which seem to have been common over the greater part of this period. The complete account of these responses could be given only if we were to reconstruct the entire Eucharistic celebration proper to each period.

First, however, it will be useful to note the great importance these responses had in shaping the liturgy of the Eucharist. We know that the celebration was not something decisive in the first centuries, but varied to a certain extent according to custom. The only thing that was definitely fixed and invariable, was the general outline of the ceremonies and the words of institution. All else was more or less pliable and variable, for there was no missal which was used, and in which these prayers were written down. Of course there seemed to be a definite set pattern for the general content of these prayers, but each celebrant improvised his own method

of expressing this content. This is where the lay-responses derived their great importance on the determination of the future rite. The Eucharistic prayer was the main thing in the rite which was pliable, because it was the celebrant's own liturgy, which he recited alone. It was thus easy for one man to add new phrases to a traditional framework. But the Deacons and people did their parts by custom and by rote, and to change these, which were as much their special liturgy as the celebrant's was his, was a much more difficult matter. Thus there is a constant tendency for the people's responses, the Deacon's productions, etc., which form the framework in which the celebrant's prayer is set, to remain more archaic than the prayers themselves. It was the fact that the Eucharist as a whole was the corporate act of the entire church, which everywhere maintained the rigid fixity of the outline of the liturgy, through the conservation of the laity. The responses of the laity had been handed down by custom and tradition from one generation to another, and once they were learned, it was almost impossible to change them because of the great number of the responses used. Thus the celebrant had to arrange his prayer so that the laity might know when and what to answer. This restriction on the celebrant was a great factor in limiting an almost infinite possible diversity in the Eucharistic celebration.

We have many written accounts of the Eucharistic celebration, as well as of the Eucharistic prayers which were recommended to the celebrant, but the priest was not forced to use these prayers, not in fact was he expected to do so, for they were considered only as models to inspire those who could improvise their own prayers, or for the less original celebrants, these prayers could be memorized. We may however consider the responses found in these models as the actual standard and fixed responses universally in use at the time by the laymen, and thus invariable as such.

Let us look at some of the more common of these responses which appear in a majority of the Eucharistic accounts throughout this period of the Church. There is some variety concerning the exact place in the early liturgies where these responses originally occurred, so we will present them for consideration according to the order in which they occur at present in our own Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Let us cast a quick glance at the problem of the language in which these responses were given. There are very few indications in the documents of the time, but we can ascertain that the Eucharist was celebrated in the language of the locality, and thus the responses would be made in that same language. Let it suffice to quote here the text of Origen (246 A.D.), which, although not explicitly concerning the Mass, still can be easily applied to it:

"I challenge anyone to show what being we name in a barbarian tongue in order to call him to our aid... Christians do not even use in their prayers the names applied to God which are found in the Divine Scriptures. But the Greeks speak in Greek, the Romans in Latin; and so each one according to his language prays to God and sings His praises as he is able" ¹.

As a matter of fact, at least until the time of Origen, the universal language of the peoples all over civilized Europe and Africa was the Greek, and thus the Mass must have been celebrated in Greek. The first recorded use of the Latin in the Eucharistic celebration is by St. Victor, a Pope who was a native of Africa. It was only in the second half of the third century that Latin became the almost universal language of the liturgy.

There are eight predominant responses which occur repeatedly and universally in all of the extant liturgical accounts of the Eucharistic celebration during the period. Let us briefly consider each of these responses individually.

The first response which meets the eye, are the words "and with thy spirit". It occurs many times during the Holy Sacrifice, then, as it does today. It was the first response given by the faithful in answer to the celebrant's: "Peace be to all", which was the signal that the Sacrifice was about to begin. In the Liturgy of James, we readily see this res-

¹ Origen: Contra Celsum, Bk. 8, 37; Translated by Henry Chadwick, p. 479.

ponse used as a call to order of the assembly: "After the approach to the altar, the priest says: 'Peace be to all', and the people answer: 'And to thy spirit'" ². The same response in this particular account occurs seven different times. Just as the first time it was used it was to draw the attention of the assembly to the opening of the Holy Mysteries, it seems that each subsequent time it was used to draw the assembly's attention to a new phase or action of the Sacrifice. It may become clearer if we note this fact with concrete examples, all taken from the aforementioned document. The first time, as we stated above, it was used to signal the opening of the celebration. It is used again immediately preceding a litany led by the Deacon and answered by the people, also just before a prayer for the Catechumens which ended in their dismissal. Once more, immediately after the offertory to announce the time for the kiss of peace. Again to introduce the preface, then the "Our Father", and finally to signal the time for Holy Communion.³

In the Liturgy of Mark, it occurs even more frequently, in fact nine different times.⁴ Here also we remark that its

² Liturgy of St. James: 1, 8; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 538.

³ Idem: 1, 8, 11, 15; 2, 20; 3, 28, 37, 39; Idem, Ibidem, p. 538sq.

⁴ Liturgy of Mark: 1, 1-8; 3 Idem, Ibidem, p. 551sq.

use introduces each time a new action in the celebration, and would seem to be a means of drawing the attention of the faithful to each new phase.

The Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), gives this response immediately before the dialogue preceding the preface, and in fact, seems to include this response as a part of the dialogue itself.⁵ This is the first time it appears in this document, and it occurs here only three times during the entire celebration, but this cannot be taken as a certain indication that in fact it did not actually occur more often, for the entire context is more of a synthesis of the Holy Sacrifice, than a precise and complete liturgical account of it.

In the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, we do not find this response until after the Gospel:

"And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, and our own Epistles and Acts, and the Gospels, let him (Bishop) salute the Church saying: 'The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all'; and let them all answer: 'And with thy spirit'"⁶.

In previous documents, the response was usually made to the salutation "Peace be to you all", but here we have a

⁵ Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus 4, 3; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 7.

⁶ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 5; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 483.

much more elaborate greeting. It is also mentioned with the shorter form of greeting, before the kiss of peace, preface, and "Our Father".⁷

This response was therefore most common to all the faithful of the early Church, and is seen from its repeated occurrence in nearly all the liturgies of the period. Besides being a prayer, it also served its own proper purpose of announcing to the faithful and drawing their attention to a new thought or theme in the Holy Sacrifice, which explains its position in the liturgy.

Our next consideration must be the "Kyrie Eleison", "Lord have mercy". This response is noticeable especially in the Eastern Liturgies, perhaps because it is a Greek response. However it did exist and in fact still does, in the original Greek, in the Latin or Roman Liturgy.

In the Liturgy of James, the "Kyrie" first occurs in the Mass of the Catechumens, that is, in that part of the Eucharistic celebration (up to the offertory) in which the Catechumens were allowed to take part, in fact, it occurs almost immediately before the dismissal of the Catechumens. After a litany by the Deacon: "The people say three times

⁷ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles; Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 11-12; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 486.

'O Lord have mercy upon us'" 8. Again after the kiss of peace:

"The Deacon says: 'In peace let us pray to the Lord' and the people answer: 'O Lord have mercy'. The Deacon prays the Litany answered by 'O Lord have mercy' by the people" 9.

We also find a slight variation of this response during the canon of the Eucharistic celebration, for shortly after the words of consecration:

"Priest says three times 'For Thy people and Thy Church supplicate Thee', and the people answer 'Have mercy on us O Lord our God, Father Almighty" 10.

The most noticeable instance however of this supplication of mercy, occurs immediately before communion, where the Deacon is instructed to pray for the remission of sins: "And the people shall say 'Lord have mercy', twelve times" 11.

In the Liturgy of Mark, the Kyrie, as was the case with the response "and with thy spirit", is much more frequent. It is preceded each time by an admonition from the Deacon to the people, to pray, and the response seems to be their prayer.

8 Liturgy of St. James, 1, 12; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 539.

9 Idem, 2, 22; Idem, Ibidem, p. 541.

10 Idem, 3, 31; Idem, Ibidem, p. 545.

11 Idem, 3, 41; Idem, Ibidem, p. 548.

"Deacon: 'Pray', the people: 'Lord have mercy' (three times)". "Deacon: 'Pray for the Emperor', people 'Lord have mercy' (three times). "Deacon: 'Pray for the Papas (Patriarch of Alexandria), and the Bishop', people 'Lord have mercy' (three times)". "Deacon: 'Stand and pray', people 'Lord have mercy' (three times)". "Deacon: 'Let us pray', people 'Lord have mercy' (three times)" 12.

Again just before the communion: "The people say 'Lord have mercy' three times" 13.

In the Constitution of the Holy Apostles, which is mainly of Roman origin, there is a less frequent use of the "Kyrie", however it is present. When the Catachumens were to be dismissed, the faithful were asked to pray for them:

"and let the faithful pray for them saying: 'Lord have mercy upon them'. But at the naming of each one by the Deacon, as we said before, let the people say: 'Lord have mercy upon him'" 14.

Thus the "Kyrie" was also a standard response, varying as to frequency of its use on the customs of the place. Since it is more fitting to the Eastern mentality, we find it most frequently in the Eastern Liturgies. The nine "Kyrie" in our present Mass is an heritage left us by the Primitive Church.

12 Liturgy of Mark: 1, 1-5; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 551sq.

13 Idem: 3, 20; Idem, Ibidem, p. 559.

14 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: BK. 8, Sec. 2, 6; Idem, Ibidem, p. 483.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAYMAN AND PARTICULAR PRAYER RESPONSES

The next response to be considered, is in fact a series of responses which occur as an introductory dialogue to the preface, between the priest and the people. We might entitle this series the "Sursum Corda" or "Lift up your hearts", for the entire dialogue seems to center around this invitation by the priest. We have many witnesses of this response in the Primitive Church.

In the Liturgy of St. James, after several prayers over the oblation, we find the following: "The priest says: 'Let us lift up our minds and hearts' and the people answer: 'It is becoming and right'" ¹. This invitation and response is followed by a long preface, ending in the "Sanctus".

In the Liturgy of Mark, however, we find this dialogue immediately after the offertory, and in almost the identical form in which it remains in our liturgy today.

"The priest makes a sign of the cross upon the people and says aloud: 'The Lord be with you all' and the people answer 'and with thy spirit'; the priest: 'Let us lift up our hearts', the people 'We lift them up to the Lord'; the priest:

¹ Liturgy of St. James: 3, 28; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 543.

'Let us give thanks to the Lord', the people 'It is meet and right'" 2,

then follows a long preface.

The Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), directs that the following be said after the kiss of peace and the offertory:

"The Lord be with you', and the people shall say 'And with thy spirit'. And the Bishop shall say 'Lift up your hearts', and the people shall say 'We have them with the Lord', and the Bishop shall say 'Let us give thanks unto the Lord', and the people shall say 'It is meet and right'" 3,

and the Bishop then continues with the preface.

St. Cyprian (251 A.D.), explains the signification of this dialogue:

"For this reason also the priest, by way of a preface before his prayer, prepares the mind of the brethren by saying 'Lift up your hearts' that so upon the people's response 'We lift them up unto the Lord', he may be reminded that he himself ought to think of nothing but the Lord" 4.

2 Liturgy of Mark, 3, 13; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 555.

3 Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 4, 3; Dix: Apostolic Traditions, p. 7; The canons of Hippolytus have nearly a verbatim direction: "Let the Bishop say 'The Lord be with you all' and let the people reply 'And with thy spirit'. Let him say 'Lift up your hearts', and let the people reply 'we lift them up unto the Lord'. The Bishop 'Let us give thanks unto the Lord'. Let the people reply 'It is meet and right to do so'". Canons of Hippolytus or Abulides: Canon 3; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5,

4 St. Cyprian: On the Lord's Prayer, 31; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, p. 455.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), in his instructions to the Catechumens on the Eucharistic celebration, says that after the kiss of peace:

"The priest cries aloud 'Lift up your hearts' then ye answer 'We lift them up unto the Lord'. Then the priest says 'Let us give thanks unto the Lord', then ye say 'It is meet and right'" 5.

So also in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles:

"The high priest says 'Lift up your minds'. All the people 'we lift it up unto the Lord'. The high priest 'Let us give thanks unto the Lord'. All the people 'It is meet and right to do so'" 6.

This is followed by a very long preface.

There is therefore no doubt as to the antiquity of this dialogue and its universal use in the Ancient Church. We may marvel at the fact that it has been handed down to us in almost its original form.

Let us briefly consider the ending of this dialogue and preface, which is what we know as the "Sanctus" repeated three times. The Liturgy of James instructs the people after the preface to respond:

"Holy, Holy, Holy, O Lord of Sabaoth, the heaven and the earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the Highest; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest" 7.

5 St. Cyril of Jerusalem Catechism on the Mysteries, Lecture 23, 4-5; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 274.

6 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 12; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 486.

7 Liturgy of James: 3, 28; Idem, Ibidem, p. 544.

This is the exact form which is still used in our masses of today. The Liturgy of Mark, has a shorter version of this response, for after the preface it directs the people to say: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord" ⁸. The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, has still another version for we read: "Let all the people say 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of hosts, heaven and earth are full of His glory, be thou blessed forever. Amen" ⁹.

There are almost an infinite number of "Amen's" said by the faithful during the Eucharistic celebration. The people made this response after nearly every prayer said by the celebrant, Deacon, or themselves. In the accounts of the Eucharistic celebration, the frequent occurrence of the "Amen" is easily seen, and no doubt there were many other instances of it which were not recorded. It would be impossible and useless for us to consider every occurrence of the "Amen", however, there are two occurrences of it which are quite significant, and which stand out from all the rest, namely, the so called "Great Amen" ending the Eucharistic prayer of the celebrant, and the "Amen" said when receiving the Sacred Species in Holy Communion.

⁸ Liturgy of Mark: 3, 13; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 557.

⁹ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 12; Idem, Ibidem, p. 480.

Let us first consider the "Great Amen", which still exists today, but which has unfortunately lost much of its primitive signification, for it is no longer said, at least in most cases, by the people. The "Amen" is a sign of the approbation of the people to the prayer recited by the celebrant. In the Primitive Church, the Eucharistic prayer was said aloud, and at the end the people could intelligently approve of what had been said. Today, the Eucharistic prayer is recited silently by the celebrant, and thus the "Amen" is but a formality, for it is but a blind affirmation of a prayer not heard. In the Primitive Church the case was quite different, and a Christian's attendance at the celebration was often characterized by and referred to as his utterance of the "Amen". This will become clear in the following documents.

St. Justin Martyr (152 A.D.), records this response and gives its significance, for he says that after the consecration and prayers of thanksgiving:

"At the end of these prayers and thanksgiving, all present express their approval by saying 'Amen'. This Hebrew word 'Amen' means 'So be it'" 10.

Later, he again refers to the "Amen", saying: "He who presides likewise offers up prayers and thanksgiving to the best

10 St. Justin Martyr: I Apology, Ch. 65; Fathers of the Church: "St. Justin Martyr", p. 105.

of his ability, and the people express their approval by saying 'Amen'" 11.

The Liturgy of James, also instructs the people to say "Amen" after the prayers of consecration and thanksgiving.¹² Dionysius of Alexandria (265 A.D.), indirectly refers to this response, when writing of an unbaptized person who had been present at the celebration: "One who had heard the giving of thanks, and who had answered with the others 'Amen'" 13. From this document the prominence of the "amen" becomes quite evident. Likewise, the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, after giving the prayers of consecration and a long prayer of thanksgiving, says: "And let all the people say 'Amen'" 14.

It was also the custom for the communicant to say "Amen" when receiving the Sacred Species. This is no longer the case in our present liturgy, nor in fact is it any longer practical, for unlike the Primitive Church, the Blessed Eucharist is placed directly on the communicant's tongue, thus making it impossible for him to speak. The case was quite

11 St. Justin Martyr: I Apology, Ch. 65; Fathers of the Church: "St. Justin Martyr", p. 107.

12 Liturgy of James: 3, 36; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 546.

13 Dionysius of Alexandria: Epistle to Sixtus II; Idem, Vol. 6, p. 103.

14 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 12; Idem, Vol. 7, p. 490.

different when the Eucharist was received in the hand.

Tertulian (197 A.D.), records this "Amen", when condemning public shows he says:

"For how monstrous it is to go from God's Church to the devil's...out of the mouth, from which you uttered 'Amen' over the Holy Thing, to give witness to a gladiator's favor" 15.

This may be taken to refer either to the utterance of the "Amen" over the Blessed Eucharist held in the communicant's hand, or the "Great Amen".

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), instructs the Catechumens as future partakers of the Eucharist:

"Approaching therefore... receive the Body of Christ, saying after it 'Amen'... approach also to the cup of His Blood... bending and saying in the way of worship and reverence, 'Amen'" 16.

The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles has the same occurrence:

"Let the Bishop give the oblation saying 'The Body of Christ'; and let him that receiveth say 'Amen'. And let the Deacon take the cup, and when he gives it say 'The Blood of Christ, the cup of life', and let him that drinketh it say 'Amen'" 17.

From the last two documents, written in the fourth century, there is no doubt that this was the custom at least

15 Tertulian: The Shows, Ch. 25; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 90.

16 St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechism on the Mysteries, Lecture 33, 21-22; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 278.

17 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 13; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 490.

at that time. The great silence concerning this "Amen" before this time may be an indication that this "Amen" was not a universal custom until the second half of the third century. Tertulian is our only previous witness to it, and even his account may be interpreted as referring to the "Great Amen".

We now come to the "Our Father", the prayer given to us by Jesus Christ Himself, and thus it is only to be expected that such a prayer of Divine origin should be found in the Eucharistic celebration from the very beginning.

In the Liturgy of James, we find it immediately after the consecration and thanksgiving prayers, the same position in which it occurs in our present liturgy, for we read: "The people shall say 'Our Father which art in heaven, etc., on to the doxology'" ¹⁸. We find nearly the same position given it in the Liturgy of Mark, only here, since there is no recorded thanksgiving prayer as such, the people are instructed to pray the "Our Father" after the prayers of institution, which no doubt were followed by thanksgiving prayers although they are not recorded, and thus the "Our Father" would be found in the same location as in the Liturgy of James.¹⁹

¹⁸ Liturgy of James: 3, 38; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 547.

¹⁹ Liturgy of Mark: 3, 18; Idem, Ibidem, p. 558.

In the Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), we find that the "Pater" was said immediately before communion, for we read a prayer which is expressly stated to be a preparation for Holy Communion, which is followed by: "The Deacon shall say 'Pray ye'. Here should follow the Lord's Prayer" ²⁰.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), in his Instructions to the Catechumens on the Eucharistic celebration, places the "Pater" shortly after the preface, and definitely after the consecration prayers, which no doubt also included the thanksgiving prayers, and thus, here also the "Pater" would be in the position illustrated in the earlier accounts:

"Then after these things, we say that prayer which the Saviour delivered to His own disciples, with a pure conscience styling God our Father and saying 'Our Father which art in heaven'" ²¹.

As to the existence of this prayer in the Eucharistic celebration, even if there were no positive testimony, there could be no doubt, due to the very nature of the prayer itself, and especially its Divine source. However, we need not merely surmise its presence, for the above texts show that the prayer was universally used, and it should be noted that with very slight variations, its position in the liturgy then, is nearly

²⁰ Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 7; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 11.

²¹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechism on the Mysteries, Lecture 23, 11; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 276.

the same as it is today; immediately after the "Great Amen" and before the communion.

We now come to a response which is entirely peculiar to the Primitive Church, and which is not found, at least in the Roman Liturgy, today. We must however qualify this statement by stating that although this prayer is not found in its primitive form as such, still it does have a parallel in the present liturgy. The celebrant today turns towards the people with the Sacred Species and prays: "Behold the Lamb of God, Behold He who takest away the sins of the world". This prayer was not known in the Primitive Church, but in its place was said "Holy Things for holy persons...". We mention this fact, for the formula is commonly found among the liturgical accounts of the Eucharistic celebration in the Primitive Church.

In the Liturgy of James, we read that after the "Our Father", the priest says several prayers in secret, comparable perhaps to our present day three communion prayers, after which:

"He takes up the gifts and saith aloud 'The Holy Things unto the Holy'. The people say 'One only is Holy, one Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, to whom be glory for all eternity'" 22.

22 Liturgy of James: 3, 40; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 547.

In the Liturgy of Mark, we find a slight variation of the same prayer, for after the "Pater", the priest says several prayers, followed by the people's response:

"'Lord have mercy', then the priest says 'Holy Things for the holy', the people answer 'One Father Holy, One Son Holy, One Spirit Holy, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen'" 23.

The Apostolic Tradition (215 A.D.), also informs us that after the "Pater" and a prayer by the Bishop: "The Bishop should say 'Holiness to holy ones', and the people should say 'One Holy Father, One Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit'" 24.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (348 A.D.), in his Instructions to the Catechumens, says:

"Then after completing the prayer ("Pater") thou sayest 'Amen'. After this the priest says 'Holy Things to holy men'. Then ye say 'One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ'" 25.

The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles likewise states:

"After all have said 'Amen', let the Deacon say 'Let us attend', and let the Bishop speak thus to the people 'Holy Things for holy persons'. And let the people answer 'There is One that is

23 Liturgy of Mark: 3, 20; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 559.

24 Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 7; Dix: Apostolic Tradition, p. 12.

25 St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechism on the Mysteries; Lecture 23, 18-19; Library of the Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 278.

Holy, there is One Lord, one Jesus Christ, blessed forever, to the glory of God the Father, Amen!" 26.

It should be noted that in the Liturgy of James, we have express mention that the priest took the Sacred Species in his hands while uttering these words, just as the priest does in our present day liturgy when reciting the "Behold the Lamb of God". However, this is the only document which expressly mentions this practice in the Primitive Church.

We have dealt at some length on the prayer responses of the laity in the Early Church, both because they show very well the active part which the layman played in the liturgy, and because the great number of these responses, only a few of which are actually given here, would show us how these prayers, once learned by the laity, who for the most part were illiterate, would be a factor in stabilizing the liturgy. Once these prayers were learned, they could not be easily changed, thus forcing the celebrant who enjoyed almost unlimited freedom in his own prayers, to conform himself to these responses. As we stated above, we include here only those responses which appear most frequently in all the accounts, but there are a great number which are peculiar to each period and section of the Primitive Church.

26 Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: Bk. 8, Sec. 2, 13; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 490.

That these prayers were in fact memorized by the laity, seems to be evidenced in a work by Origen (251 A.D.), where he directs the faithful to memorize, if not all, at least those prayers which are taught in the Church and which are recited there, among which prayers, certainly those used during the Eucharistic celebration would stand out. This would also be an indication of the unchanging nature of these prayers, for it would be very difficult for the masses of the faithful to commend so many prayers to memory, and this would not be asked of them unless these prayers would remain stable and invariable. "Certainly, if not all the prayers, at least those which are now taught in the Church, or which are recited, we ought to memorize" ²⁷.

²⁷ Origen: Homily V in Leviticum; P.G. 12; My translation.

CONCLUSION

Of necessity we have had to omit many liturgical practices which involve the laity in the Eucharistic celebration, but we have tried to show the integral part the layman played in the Eucharist. Lay-participation in the liturgy varies a great deal in the Primitive Church, for each locality had its own customs. We must also expect variations in relation to the different periods of the Church. In the first century the celebration remains rather primitive and adheres more or less to the rite used by Christ when He instituted this sacrifice. Gradually the liturgy emerges in its full splendour, with an elaboration of the ceremonies centered about the words of institution and the communion. To give a complete synthesis of lay-participation in the Eucharist for this period, is almost impossible, for we would need to reconstruct the celebration and its evolution from century to century, as well as the local characteristics which were integrated into it.

It has therefore, in the face of this difficulty, been our aim to give the general trends of this aspect of the Eucharist which were more or less common to all periods and localities during the third century. It must be left to the reader to make the synthesis for himself.

However, from what has been said, it is easily seen that the layman played an important part in the Eucharist, from its

very beginnings. It is to be regretted that the laity of today no longer has this life and spirit which must have saturated the first Christians whose entire life centered on the Eucharist, and who were made to realize this fact, from the intimate part they had in its celebration. Perhaps, as time goes on, and greater studies are made in the field of lay-participation in the liturgy, the values of the system in the Early Church will be recognized and restored. We do not in anyway advocate a reproduction of the early liturgical institutions, for as they stand they are not in keeping with the time in which we live. As His Holiness Pius XII states in the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, a thing is not good merely from the fact of its antiquity. However, when we look at the faith and Christian spirit which prevailed in the Early Church, we may seek to trace its course to the fount of spirituality, the Eucharistic celebration, and the active part played by the laity in this center of Christian life. The recent liturgical renovations seem to be an indication that the Church realizes the need for lay-participation in her liturgical worship if she wishes to keep the layman interested in her most precious of gifts, the Eucharist. We certainly may hope, that before too great a time has elapsed, more and more of the beauties of the early liturgy will be restored, with proper adoptions, to this our twentieth century.

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