



FIG 9 *St. Columba-by-the-Castle, Edinburgh*

THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

FACING THE PEOPLE

BASIL MINCHIN



FIG 10 *Queen's College, Birmingham (From the film strip "Towards a Patristic Ceremonial.")*



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The Celebration of the Eucharist Facing the People was first published by the author, in 1954. This edition, with revisions and alterations to both text and illustrations, was first published in 1961.

Readers who would like a fuller discussion of the revivals and experiments in liturgy and ceremonial which have come out of the Liturgical Movement, are recommended to consult the other works by the same author published under the general title *Worship in the Body of Christ*.

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FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

Some months ago a digest of some articles that had appeared during the last few years in *La Maison-Dieu* appeared in the periodical *Parish and People* over my name and with the title "THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST FACING THE PEOPLE." That people were greatly interested in this subject was amply demonstrated, and I had many enquiries asking, in one form or another, "How does one do this?" Most of these enquiries were from priests from the Catholic side of our tradition, men who learnt to "say Mass" according to the ritual books of the last century. It is to help them to adapt their ways to celebration over the altar that in the last chapter the principles stated elsewhere in this book are brought down almost to rule of thumb instructions, and that in this section far more attention is paid to "Catholic" ways than to Evangelical.

A busy parish priest is very conscious of the deficiencies of his scholarship, and has no time or opportunity to read half the books he would like. The historical material in Chapter 1 is largely derived from two articles in *La Maison-Dieu* which were summarised in the March, 1953 number of *Parish and People*, and which were themselves summaries of the position reached by recent research. The last chapter is the fruit of twenty years of reading and thought about the central act of my professional and personal life, and is almost entirely undocumented, very largely because I feel almost more indebted to the friends, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Free Church, as well as Anglican, with whom I have discussed these matters, than to the books I have read. The most controversial position I have taken is to reject the assumption, which seems to me to be an obsession amongst Roman Catholics, that an elevation is always a showing of the Sacrament to the people in order to stimulate their devotions. I am convinced, largely from its position in the Eastern Rites, and the words that accompany it, that the "Great Elevation" is one of offering to God, which in the Roman Mass has been displaced from its proper position.

It is with the conviction that these matters must be discussed

rather than in any absolute conviction of the finality of my conclusions, that this booklet is put forward, though naturally I have tried to arrive at the truth, with the materials at my disposal, as honestly as I can. It is in the same spirit that the Central Council of Parish and People have encouraged the writing and publishing of this book in association with its name. It would be quite contrary to the policy of that movement to promote celebration over the altar, or any other way of celebrating, as an official policy, as some new orthodoxy; but it does feel that thought should be given to this way of celebrating, and experiments made, when authority permits it, to see whether the ideals of the movement are better expressed by celebration over the altar than by any other way of celebrating. For this reason it has used this way of celebrating as one of the normal expressions of the liturgical life at its recent conferences, both in "Catholic" and "Evangelical" forms.

August, 1954

FOREWORD

This book has already been through two editions, one duplicated and one printed, published by the author. It has sold in a great many parts of the world and the privately printed edition is now exhausted. It is still the only book on the subject published in English in Europe of which I know, yet in the last six years the practice of celebrating in this way has been spreading slowly but surely. The demand for the book, so far from drying up, is increasing and it has now been taken over by professional publishers. Because it is a relatively short, simple, and cheap book I feel that it still fills a need, despite the fact that the three volumes of the work produced under the heading *Worship in the Body of Christ* which have already appeared have dealt with some of the questions I raise in much greater detail, at much greater length, and, one hopes, more adequately. The opportunity of a new edition has been taken to revise the text. Not a great deal had to be altered because I have changed my mind in the intervening years, but a few details have been revised, new illustrations have been used in some cases and others added. Perhaps the greatest change that has come into being since the original writing of this book is that there are now, even in England, some churches that have been specifically built for this way of celebrating.

London
November, 1960

BASIL MINCHIN

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL

For many hundreds of years celebration over the altar was the normal way of doing the Eucharist in the main centres of Christendom. It would be convenient to be able to say that up to a certain date the celebrant always faced the people over the table, but history is seldom as neat as that. The exceptions to this generalisation are of two kinds. Firstly the isolated exceptions must be taken into account, but leave one with the conclusion that, though the early Church was far from uniform, the main consideration was that what the priest did and said must be seen and heard as fully as local conditions allowed. Secondly there are the district traditions which seem to enshrine a different form of piety, a different spirit, without which it would not be possible to explain how it came about that celebration with the back to the people almost displaced the earlier custom for such a long time.

We are familiar with pictures of the Last Supper in which, in an attempt to record the scene with historical accuracy, our Lord and the Apostles are shown reclining round the table. This would be so for the meal proper, but for the Prayer of Thanksgiving said over the cup, which, whether it was a Passover meal or not, was the origin of the Eucharistic Prayer, they would have been standing. Our Lord as the president of the feast, playing the part that in a family would be done by the father, would have stood at the centre of the table, and the Apostles at their places would have been, some at his side, and others looking across the table.

The early Church was very practical, and a sentimental attempt to reproduce the exact conditions of the Last Supper was very far from its spirit. Of course, whilst the Eucharist remained a Christian version of the Jewish meal-service, the familiar way of doing this would naturally be retained, but when the Christian elements were isolated from the meal proper, and the blessing of the bread and wine combined, and when the Church spread outside Judaism, the Christians seem simply to have used whatever was most convenient and to hand in the way of meeting place and table. In the house-church the dining-room was generally the most convenient place for the Assembly to meet, and the table already *in situ*, whether made of wood or stone, was used for the Eucharist. We can thus see, in the *sigma*-shaped altar, common in Syria, a tradition going back to a local style of dining table. Another theory is that in the Roman type house the *atrium*, with its square roof-opening and central tank for water (which is supposed to have

become the font) was the place where the Christians met for worship, and the Christian altar replaced the old pagan one in the *tablinium*, or family shrine, at one end of it. Perhaps this was so, at least when large congregations had to be accommodated, but the *triclinium*, the dining-room, would have been more convenient. The fashion of having the font in the same hall as the Eucharistic altar did not come in for many centuries. The Roman *triclinium* often had an apse, but this was a common feature to give focus to any large room or hall, as we shall see when we are thinking of the basilica, and the natural place for the celebrant, as for the one who presided at an ordinary meal, would have been in front of the apse, facing into the room.

Long before the peace of the Church the Christians began to build places of worship, often most imposing buildings like the one that caused the Emperor's jealousy at Nicomedia, and of course outside the Roman Empire there would have been no restrictions. For any hall designed to accommodate a large number of people there was a common form of building already to hand in the basilica, and the arrangement of the Christian basilica for worship would be sufficiently near to that of the house-church for St. John's liturgical vision of heaven in Revelation Ch. 4 to have been derived from either.

THE CATACOMBS

Before we go on to consider the basilica it is worth saying a word about the catacombs, as they have influenced Christian imagination out of all proportion to their formative influence upon Christian architecture or liturgical habits. The catacombs were only used for Eucharistic worship at the height of the persecutions, and such persecutions only filled a very small proportion of the first three centuries, and were, for the most part, very limited geographically. Persecutions in Russia today do not affect our liturgical habits in England directly, and, again in Russia, it is the great ambition of those who have undergone the persecution to restore worship to the scale and richness that they remember in peaceful days. The catacombs must have been very inconvenient. The largest cave, at the time of the persecutions, could only have held about fifty people standing, nor, at this time, was there any direct stimulus to worship in the closeness of the bodies of the departed. Though the Church was always conscious that in prayer and Eucharist it was in union with the saints and departed (between whom it would not make a distinction as sharp as was to become common later), the cultus of the martyrs and of the departed did not become united with the Eucharistic worship until the fifth century. At this period the rites in memory of the departed would normally have been held, not at the grave in the catacomb, but in

a small memorial court with a miniature apse like a small basilica, but often without a roof, built in the cemetery above the place of burial. In the catacombs there are slabs of hard stone, fitted into grooves in the soft tufa stone out of which both caves and graves are excavated, which can be pulled out to make a shelf before the graves, and there are also table-tombs. It is now doubted whether either of these were used for altars at the time they were built, or when the Eucharist had to be celebrated in the catacombs. If they were so used the celebrant would, of course, have had to have his back to the people. It is now thought that movable tables were brought in for the Eucharist, like the three-legged ones shown in the contemporary, though symbolic, eucharistic paintings in the catacomb of Callistus. This would allow the normal practice of celebrating over the altar to be continued here.

THE BASILICA

Just as a Cotswold church and a Cotswold barn were, in the middle ages, built with a similar technique, so the basilica was a technique of building that was found useful for a great diversity of purposes, when a building to hold a large assembly of people

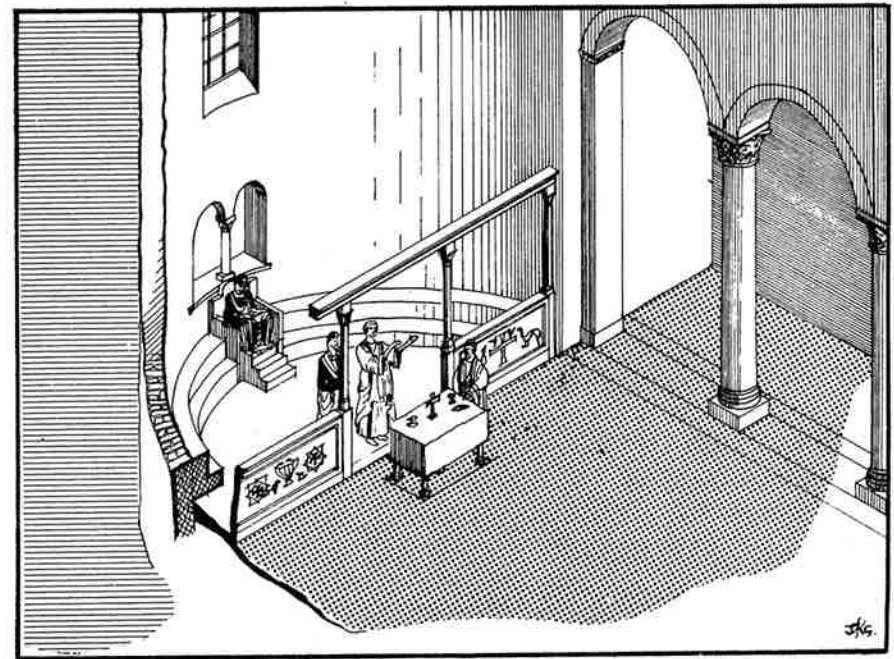


FIG 1 The basilica of Santa Maria della Grazie at Grado, about A.D. 450. The benches, throne, pavement, and the base of the altar remain behind and below the present altar. The altar Table stood outside the apse and the celebrant at the time of the Eucharist must have stood framed by the door of the screen that enclosed the apse.

was needed. Basically it was a long oblong building with a tiled roof carried on wooden beams. In order to increase the capacity of the building the long walls had been replaced by a range of pillars or arches, above which were clerestory windows for lighting, and lean-to aisles were built outside them. Sometimes there were two or even three aisles on each side of the central nave. One of the shorter ends was generally built as an apse which formed the frame for the centre of interest of the internal arrangements, and the other end could either be a balancing apse, in which case the main entrance had to be at the side, or the main doors were placed opposite the apse with an elaborate porch outside. In the basilicas that were used for law courts among other purposes, the seat for the chief magistrate was at the back of the apse, and his assessors sat round the walls of the apse on either side of him. In front of the apse a platform several steps high was built out into the nave. On the top of the steps there was generally a low balustrade, of a type called *cancellus* that were later used in Christian churches to divide one section of the congregation from another, or the area of liturgical action from the main congregation, and which gave us the name "chancel" for the space limited by these screens. At the sides this screen was generally curved to form the *ambos* from which advocates pleaded. Behind the chancel screen stood an altar to Minerva. When the pagan altar had been replaced by the Eucharistic table of wood or stone, this became the common pattern for the Christian church. The bishop sat in his "cathedra" at the back of the apse, with the presbyters beside him round the walls of the apse. The first part of the service was conducted from his throne, and he preached, seated, from there. When the time came for the Eucharist proper he stepped forward to the table, perhaps a third of the way down the nave, and with his presbyters surrounding him, he faced the people across the table. A local variant of this basilica arrangement at Rome was that the platform before the apse was extended to the full width of the church, and the roof also extended at full height for the complete width of the aisles. Thus transepts were formed that were very useful for accommodating the lesser clergy. Between this transept and the nave was the triumphal arch, often richly decorated with mosaics, and below this the holy table was later to stand, at the people's edge of the platform. Earlier, and it remains in North Africa later than elsewhere, the table might be almost in the middle of the church. In North Africa too, the bishop's chair was sometimes raised on a number of steps, so that he could be more easily seen when presiding at the prayers and readings, and when he preached. After the fourth century, in order to give greater dignity to the Eucharistic table, it was often covered by a canopy. The four posts supporting this generally rested on the corners of the table itself, or might be on the floor beside it. Lamps were also hung from

the canopy not only to draw the congregation's attention, but for the practical purpose that the shade cast by the canopy should not make it impossible for the people to see what was done there.

The basilica was the basis of Christian architecture for many centuries in both east and west, with local variations according to the local style of building, or to adapt it to a particular site. At Rome they were at first indifferent to the direction in which the basilica faced, and orientated prayer, when it did reach Rome from the east via the countries north of the Alps, was opposed by Pope Leo as a dangerous pagan custom. Where the custom did prevail, however, it was the priest who faced east to pray, towards the early morning sun streaming through the great porch opposite him, whilst the people faced him looking west. One of the influences making for the priest celebrating with his back to the people was that they demanded that they also should face Paradise as they prayed.

THE SYRIAN TRADITION

The exception to this almost universal custom was a local tradition that kept a firm hold in Syria. Syrian church architecture, and probably ceremonial, was very much more influenced by the synagogue than other parts of the Church. In the early Syrian synagogues that have been excavated the building was always orientated towards Jerusalem, but, as with this conception coming into the Christian Church, it did not at first appear clear who was to face in the desired direction, the congregation or the leader of the worship. At Capernaum and Chorasim the doors faced Jerusalem, and the Torah shrine was against the wall opposite, so that whilst the people faced away from Jerusalem, the leaders and those in the chief seats faced the desired direction: on the other hand, at Beth Alpa and Na'Aran and farther east at Dura Europos the Torah shrine was on the wall facing Jerusalem, so that the congregation faced both the shrine and Jerusalem at the same time. This arrangement seems to have prevailed and later one finds that most Syrian synagogues are built so that the people face a Torah shrine let into the thickness of the wall or forming an apse, so that they are facing both it and Jerusalem at the same time.

There was a great deal of Christian building in north Syria between the fourth and seventh centuries, before the district was to a large extent abandoned as a result of Persian and Mohammedan conquests. As a result the numerous ruined stone churches have not been altered to suit later fashions. The commonest form is that illustrated by the plan Fig. 2. There was no west door, but two entrances, the main one for men on the east side of the south wall, and a lesser one for the women to the west of it in the same wall. At the east of the nave were three chambers as in the Greek basilica. The middle one was the sanctuary, which was almost always an inscribed apse, that is to say it appeared as an apse from inside

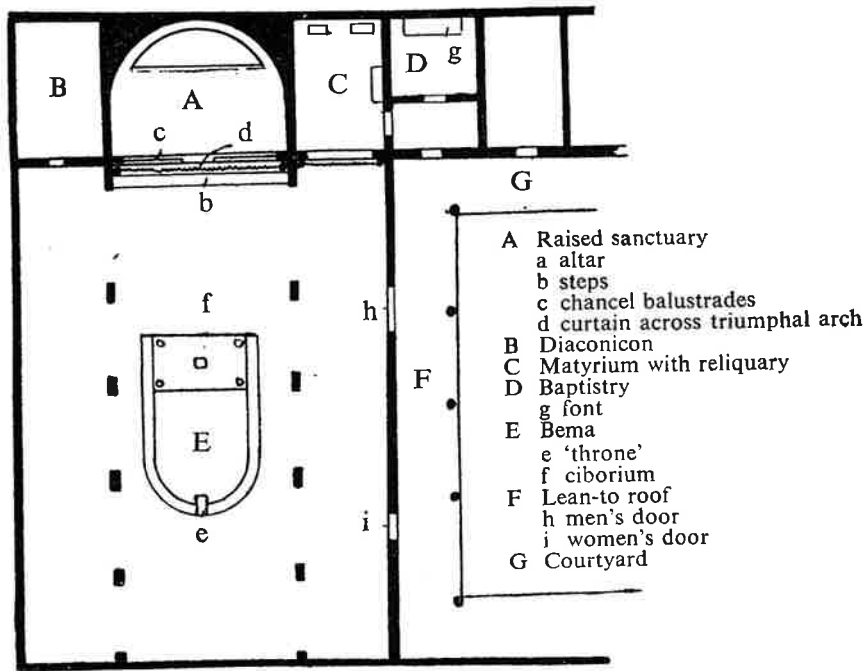


FIG 2 North Syrian Church (after J. Lassus)

the church, but it was built so that the outside wall was straight, during the earlier part of this period. Late examples, though, tended to have square ended sanctuaries. The sanctuary was raised, with several steps leading up to it, and the platform might be extended into the nave beyond the triumphal arch. There was a chancel balustrade at the top of the steps and curtains were hung from a beam resting on the capitals of pillars at either side of the triumphal arch. There was no throne at the back of the apse and the altar stood either very close to the east wall, or was a shelf actually fixed to this. Certainly no one could stand behind it, and the celebrant must have stood with his back to the people, whilst eastern ideas of reverence dictated that the curtains should be drawn at the most solemn parts of the Eucharist so that he would not be seen by them. As in the Greek basilica the chamber to the north of the sanctuary was the *diakonikon*, where the elements were prepared, which had a narrow entrance; and on the south was the *martyrium* with chests containing the relics. To this the people wanted to have access and so the door was wide. In the centre of the nave was a platform or *bema*. This was oblong, except that the western side was curved to balance the apse of the sanctuary, and round the sides, except at the east, ran benches for the clergy. Opposite the altar, at the back of the curved side, was the "throne" whilst at the eastern edge of the platform was a canopy, the posts

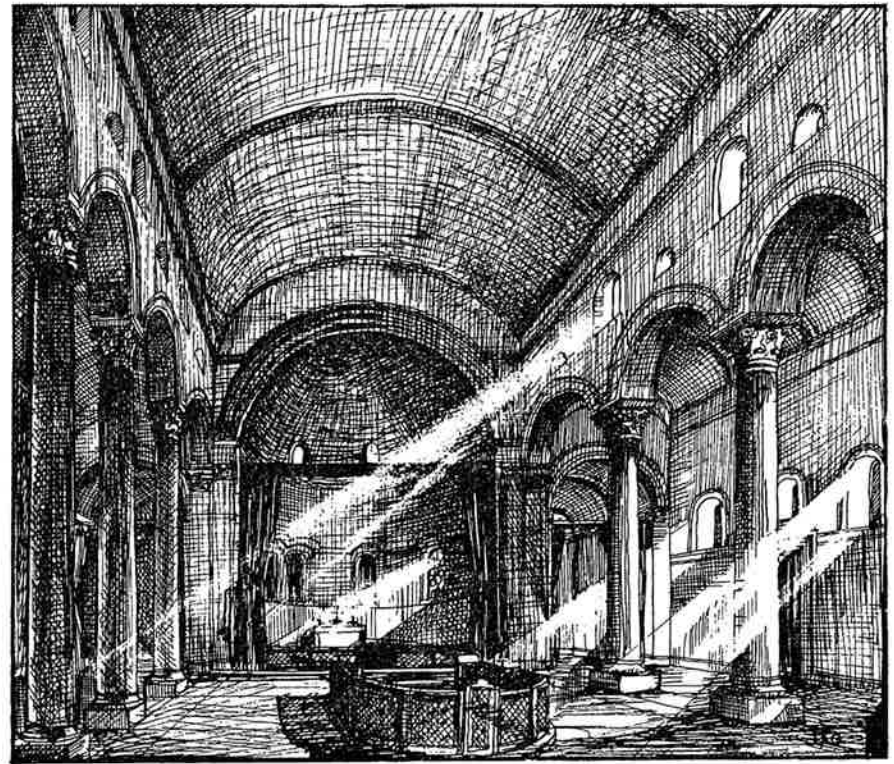


FIG 3 The elaborate bema which stood in the middle of the floor of some Syrian churches in the fifth century. From this the clergy conducted the Ministry of the Word. The altar Table was against the wall of the apse and it was raised on a platform often higher than that shown in this reconstruction. The curtains mounted on the beam across the sanctuary veiled it at the most holy moments. Similar arrangements can still be seen in an Armenian church.

of which often touched the seats at the side or rested upon them. The interpretation of the remains proved difficult as the "throne" in earlier examples was obviously too narrow for anyone to use it as a seat. Jean Lassus* now suggests that to begin with this "throne" was a place of honour in which to keep the Gospel and other books, but later was used as an actual throne for the bishop. This seems probable, especially when it is remembered that the normal place for the aumbry for the Scriptures was above the episcopal throne. Probably the bishop used a movable *cathedra* in front of this "throne" at the beginning of our period, but later it was adapted to become his throne. The canopy, likewise, seems to have started as a sort of sounding board above the place

* For this section I have relied heavily on the work of Jean Lassus, whose latest conclusions are conveniently summarised in *Spätantike und Byzanz* (Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, Baden-Baden 1952).

where the Gospel was read and sermons preached. The Gospel would also have been venerated here, and so the canopy came to have something of the nature of a Gospel shrine. The liturgical use in these churches has been preserved in Nestorian documents of the tenth and eleventh centuries, on which much work remains to be done, but Fr. Connolly and others† have already a great deal of information. The first part of the Eucharist was conducted from the *bema* at the end of which the celebrant went up to the apse to celebrate with his back to the people. Whereas in the western basilica the division between the sexes was between the two sides, in Syria the men stood in the front of the church, between the *bema* and the apse, and the women behind the *bema*.

A comparison of the plans of the synagogue at Dura and the typical Syrian church (Figs. 2 and 4) show that the two doors on the south side might well have come from the synagogue, and on this the disposition of the sexes within the church depends. The *bema*, too, seems to be a development of the synagogue pulpit. The arrangement of the apse may have come from the apse-like Torah shrine, so that the altar derives from the shelf on which stood the

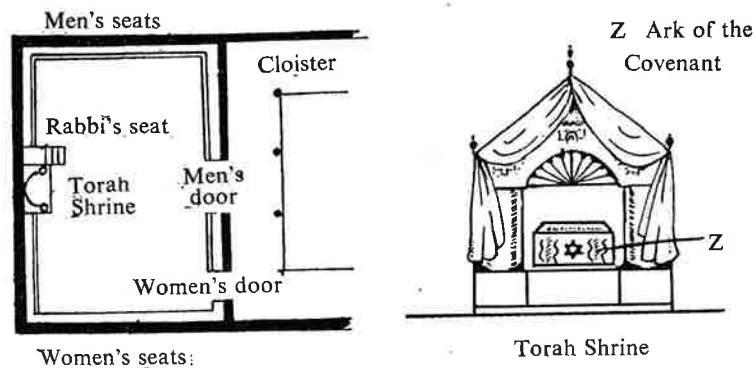


FIG 4 The painted Synagogue of Dura Europos

Ark of the Covenant. If the town of Dura was typical, apsidal niches were thought a suitable way of displaying holy objects amongst all religions, but they are generally much smaller than the apse of a church and stand in square-ended buildings. The form of the Christian font, the Jewish Torah shrine, the cult shrine in the temple of Bel, and so on, which have so much in common, are a local form of baldachin. The apse may have been thought of as an enlarged shrine for the Christian altar. Of the buildings at Dura the Mithraeum, with its raised sanctuary at the end of a basilica, its

† Fr. R. H. Connolly, O.S.B., has translated the *Exposito Officiorum Ecclesiae*, ascribed to George Arbeles, in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptorum Syri*, Second Series, Tom 91, Paris 1911. This document enshrines the tradition of the Nestorian Patriarch Isôyabh III who died in A.D. 657-8.

arches and curtains, seems the building most nearly resembling these Syrian churches. The form of the apse was probably due to a common idea of what was suitable, rather than to direct influence, though even the possibility of the latter being true should not shock or surprise us when we remember that Christian iconography undoubtedly stems from a style of painting which was developed in the pagan temples of Dura, but which was not used in the Christian church in that place. This influence of the culture of Dura and the surrounding districts upon that of Byzantium is not based only on the use of a painting style. The Empress Theodora, for instance, is shown in the Ravenna mosaics wearing a Palmyran "hair-do." This culture is likely to have influenced the nearer Syria more directly.

THE CONFESSION

In Rome the reign of Pope Damasus (366-84) saw the bringing together of the cultus of the Martyrs and the Eucharist. Pope Damasus in Rome started the practice of siting the Eucharist altar as close as possible to the tomb of a martyr, probably adopting what was already a fashion in North Africa. Many churches were rebuilt or altered to make this possible, and churches like S. Peter's at the Vatican, which had been built for the martyr cultus, were

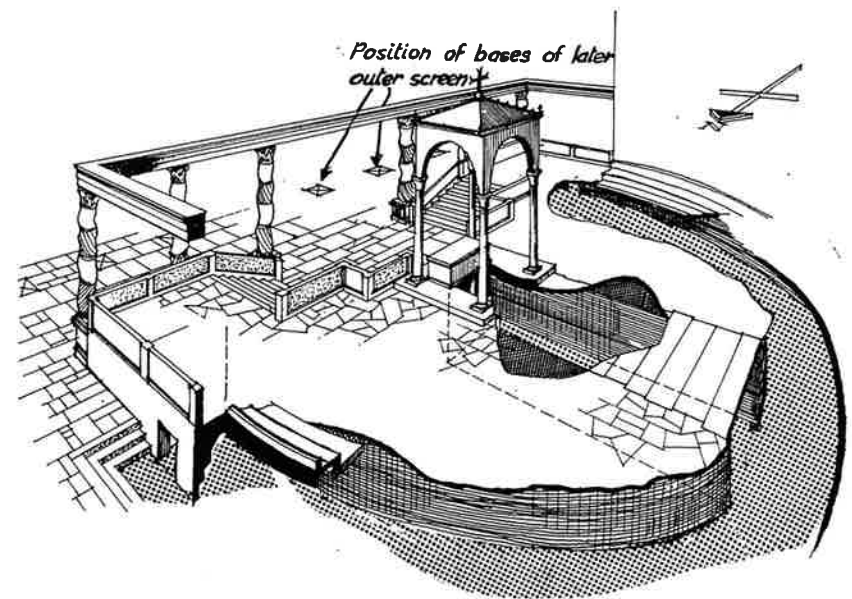


FIG 5 The new arrangement at St. Peter's, Rome, put in by St. Gregory the Great about A.D. 630. The pavement is omitted to show the passages round the apse, and the one leading to the back of the memorial. The Eucharistic altar was now an enlargement of the top of the memorial, there was a grille between the two flights of steps, and the original six pillars were arranged in front of the altar.

now used for the Eucharist as well. This was often effected, probably with Revelations 6: 9 in mind, by building a platform above the ancient tomb, so that the altar could stand upon it immediately above the tomb. The altar was usually at the people's edge of the platform, immediately above an arch through which a flight of steps led down into the crypt or "Confession" in which the tomb lay. Flights of steps upward on either side gave access to the platform on which the liturgical action took place. Because the altar was at the edge, it was impossible for the bishop or priest to stand at the people's side of the altar, and we shall see that this was an arrangement which hindered the celebration with the back to the people when this became fashionable. Even if there were not steps down to the confession immediately on the people's side of the altar, there would be a grille below the altar, or even in the structure of the stone table itself, to which the people would want to have access so that they and objects they brought to be blessed might be sanctified by contact with the holy place. In the sixth and seventh centuries confessions were often built in churches where no martyr or famous saint was buried, and, as by this time the eastern habit of dividing the bones of a saint had come to the west, these "artificial" confessions were furnished with relics of saints collected from other places. But a later fashion, developing in the eighth century, called for the people to see the reliquaries in which the relics collected from afar were displayed, and they were no longer relegated to a crypt, but, housed in beautiful reliquaries, were placed upon the altar, or on beams above the altar. Unless the tomb of a major martyr was in the confession it now fulfilled no purpose, and the steps leading down to an "artificial" confession could now be closed when the sanctuary was next redesigned, leaving only a very much raised platform for the altar. Canterbury Cathedral is an excellent example of these changes. Unless there was a major martyr's tomb over which the altar must stand, it could now be moved back to provide a space where the clergy could stand with their backs to the people. It was the presence of the tombs of great martyrs, and the siting of the altars immediately above them, that caused celebration across the altar never to be given up entirely at Rome.

EASTERN INFLUENCE

It has been explained how celebration with the back to the people could be possible, but it has not been explained why people wanted it. After the huge expansion of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries many practices that were slack and careless, as well as superstitious, crept into the life of the Church. It was probably in reaction to these that a very interesting movement arose, which combined a self-conscious effort at Judaizing, under the influence of the Old Testament, with unbalanced, exaggerated

reverence. The Western Church tended to look to the east, and especially to the Church in Syria, which seemed to them, at a time of barbarian invasion and political unrest, to have a purer tradition because of its Jewish elements. We find eastern and easternising Popes importing eastern devotions like the Agnus Dei, the Trisagion and the Alleluia into Rome itself. Other customs first established themselves outside Rome. The Irish, for instance, were very active about the fifth and sixth centuries in travelling to the eastern end of the Mediterranean and Egypt, and bringing back new liturgical and other ideas. From Columbanus' mission in A.D. 590 up to the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, Irish missions and monasticism had a profound influence upon the Church in central and northern Europe. These "non-Roman-Western" customs had more difficulty in being accepted at the Patriarchal See, as we have already noticed in the case of orientated prayer. There was tension, and sometimes the reaction was strong enough for an oriental custom to be rejected.

We know that something like a Syrian *bema* was installed half-way down the nave of S. Mary Major at Rome, because Pope Pascal (817-24) objected to the women chattering just behind his throne during service time. This means that the women must have been at the back of the church, and not on the left-hand side as was usual in a basilica, as well as that the Pope was sitting in the nave and not at the back of the apse. He had the *bema* moved up to the triumphal arch and the *bema* in this position was to develop into the chancel, a place for the clergy and choir separated from the people by low screens. Pope Pascal, no doubt, imagined that he was returning to primitive ways, and put his throne back at the depth of the apse and once more celebrated over the altar. This arrangement is still to be seen at S. Clement's at Rome, and used to be thought the most primitive arrangement of the Christian sanctuary. But in fact the altar was often a good deal farther from the people than it had been in the old days, and the chancel was something quite new.

Pillars were often used in the early days of the Church for displaying the altar, or any important object, that is to say they stood in a row behind the altar acting as a sort of reredos. This can be seen in the "Communion of the Apostles" Icon, of which the sixth century Riha paten in the Bliss collection is a good example. The painting of the Mass of S. Clement, dating from the ninth century, below the present San Clemente in Rome shows a similar arrangement. Again, the "Thrones and Altars" sequence in the dome of the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna, done in A.D. 458 would be a better illustration of this if the artist had had a better idea of the laws of perspective. To the old basilica of S. Peter's, Rome, Constantine gave six twisted marble pillars which were said to have come from the Temple at Jerusalem. These were first used

- A Altar (and Canopy)
- C Chancel balustrades
- G Gospel ambo
- E Epistle ambo
- CG Confession grille
- B Bishop's cathedra
- P Priest's bench
- S Steps

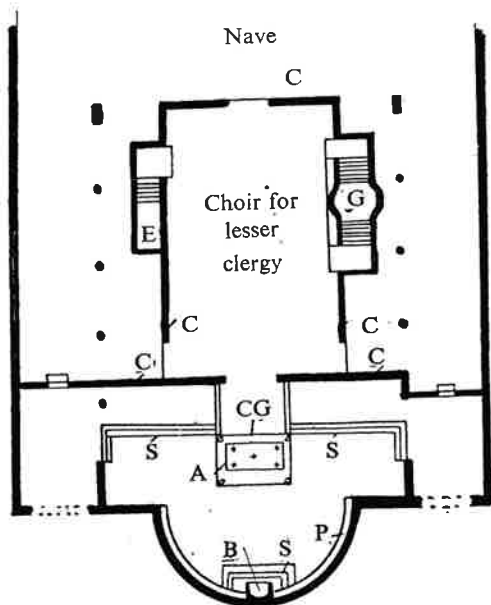
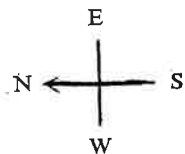


FIG 6 *St. Clement's, Rome (1084-1108)*
Rebuilding of fourth-century Church

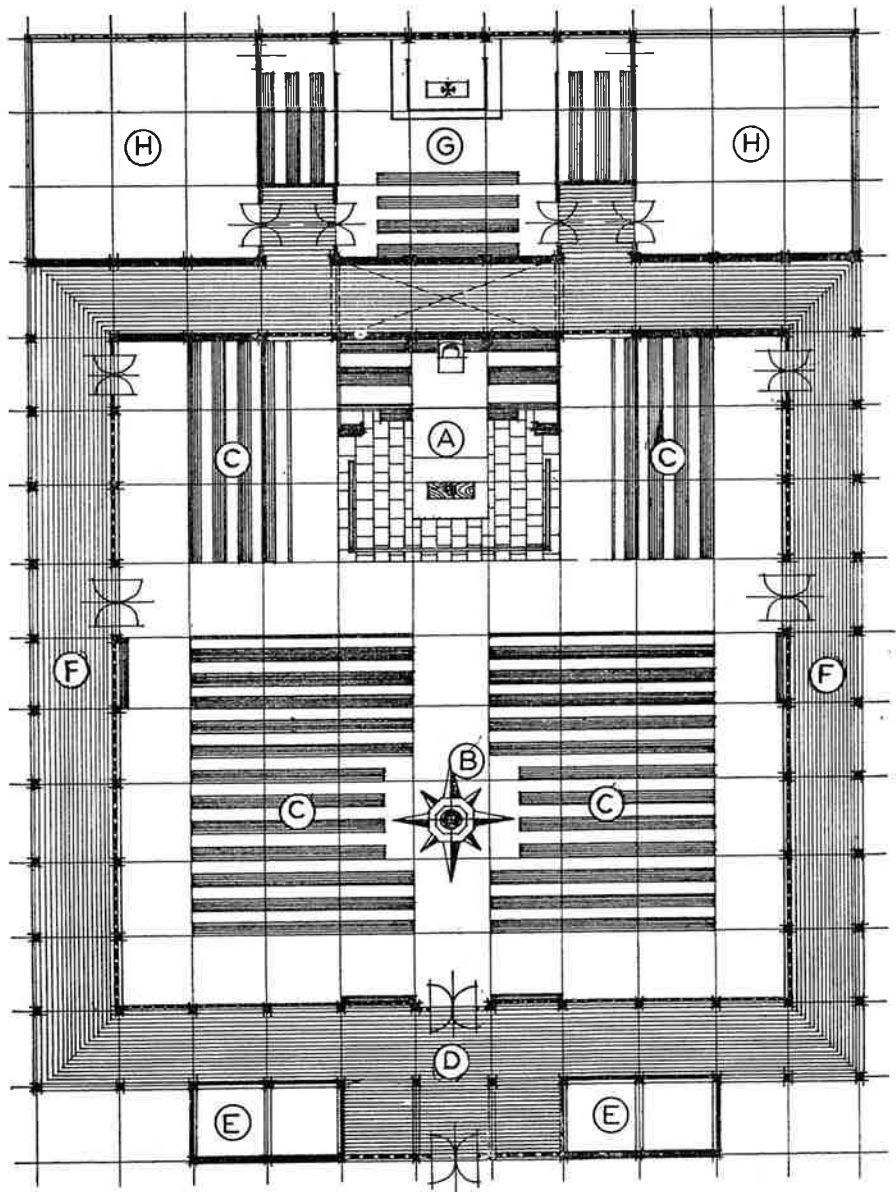
in the manner described above; they stood behind or round the memorial to display it. When the basilica was later used for the Eucharist a portable table was brought in and placed in front of the tomb, with nothing between it and the people. Pope Gregory the Great redesigned the apse and sanctuary, making a confession crypt for the tomb, and raising the top of the old memorial so that it formed the new altar on the pavement above the confession. The altar was now much farther back in the apse, and furthermore, the six pillars, with another six copies, were now used as a screen between the people and the altar (see Fig. 5). This arrangement at S. Peter's is very important because it had a great influence on buildings in many countries, and was slavishly copied in a number of places.

A COMPARISON

Had a fourth-century Christian come back four centuries later he would have found one of the greatest changes in that whereas he

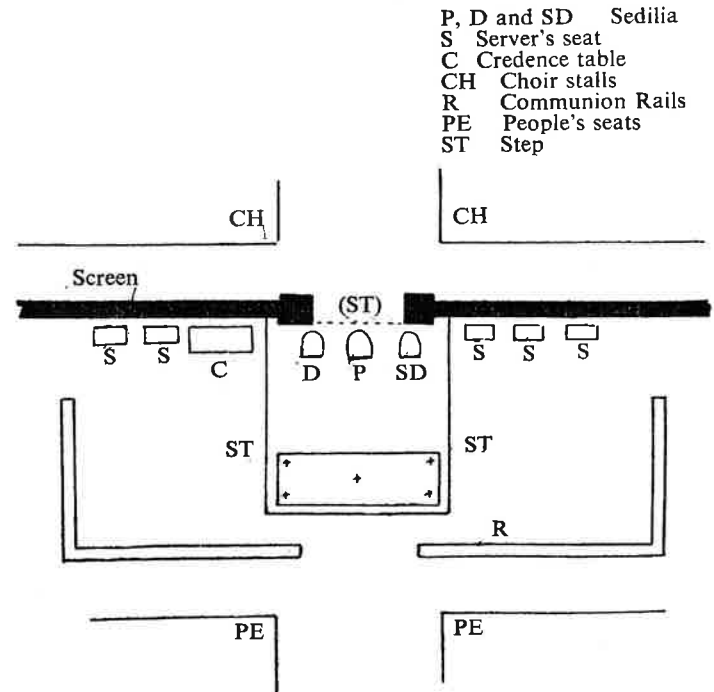
used to have nothing between him and the holy table, and if he wished he could stand for the service almost touching it, or at least at the bottom of the steps upon which it stood, now there was the enclosure for the clergy, and possibly pillars and curtains, separating him from what happened there. Perhaps he would not be the best person to notice the spirit of all the other changes, for much that was familiar to him as everyday and commonplace in the fourth century, had been retained by the Church after it had become archaic and exotic. The Latin used in the services, for instance, had been the everyday language of the people throughout the Roman empire in his day, into which the original Greek had been translated not long before his time. Now it was rapidly becoming, at least north of the Alps, a "dead" and incomprehensible language except to the learned clergy. As the people didn't understand it anyway, it was no longer thought important to sing the words aloud for all to hear. The service was becoming a private affair for those surrounding the altar, something done for the ordinary people by experts, rather than something in which they played an essential as well as an active and intelligent part. The chasubles too, which in his day were the normal wear of the quiet and respectable, had been retained by the clergy and those in the sanctuary as a special dress to mark them off from the rest of the laity, though as yet the different Orders were not stressing their difference from each other by individual dress for each Order. All wore chasubles, clergy and servers alike. But what would have probably shocked him to the core, would be to find that they were giving to the bishop not just the proper respect due to a brother raised to so high a responsibility, but the exaggerated reverence that the pagans used to reserve for the Emperor or his representative, carrying lights and incense before him.

Celebration with the back to the people was part of this movement. It was just one element in a change of mentality that some would not hesitate to call the expression of a spiritual disease. Because the ordinary laity were already passive and separated from the altar it did not seem important that the priest was now to put himself between them and what he did there, nor was it important that he was not speaking in their direction, for he was by now mumbling in a language they did not understand. But it came from Syria, and so was thought to be ancient and Jewish when it was first introduced. Later it would be justified as "more reverent" in the days when to be awestruck before the "mysterious" was thought to be more pleasing to God than to worship with the intelligence as well as with the emotions. After the celebration of many private masses became general, with the need for many altars, it was more convenient to place them against a wall than to have them standing free, and this helped to popularise celebration with the back to the people. There were revolts against it, of which



- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| A-Liturgical Bema | E-Toilets & Cloaks |
| B-Font | F-Ambulatory |
| C-Seating Blocks | G-Chapel |
| D-Porch | H-Clergy & Choir Vestry |

FIG 7 Project for a modern church built to a centralised plan with the altar arranged off the centre for the celebrant to face the people.



- P, D and SD Sedilia
 S Server's seat
 C Credence table
 CH Choir stalls
 R Communion Rails
 PE People's seats
 ST Step

FIG 8 An arrangement of a Gothic Church, the altar at the crossings in front of a screen.

Pope Pascal's is an example, and much conservative resistance, so that at Rome the old ways were never given up entirely, but over the Alps the new ways and the new spirit triumphed for over five hundred years. Later, at the Reformation among Protestants, and now four hundred years later still, in our own time, amongst both the Roman Catholics and ourselves, the original way of celebrating is being revived for theological, rather than archeological reasons.

CHAPTER TWO

CANONICAL

THE BISHOP

The liturgically minded priest is likely to be more interested in the spiritual significance of the bishop in the diocese, the place episcopacy has in the promulgation of the Gospel, than in arguing the exact legal responsibility of the bishop to control his behaviour in church. In England, again, to which this chapter must mainly refer, the effective control of the bishops over things liturgical has become so small that, in our present chaos, probably the best service that the movement can do is to build up from the origins the proper place of the bishop, and the loyalty due to him as a representative of the Universal Church in his diocese.

In the early Church each local Christian Church was an independent unit, controlling its own life and electing its own bishop. If the man selected was approved for consecration by his brother bishops he then became the link between the local Church and the Universal Church, consulting with the other bishops in local and Universal councils, the decisions of which were framed into canons to guide him and his successors in the ruling of the local Church. His responsibility towards the life of the local Church was to keep it within the stream of the Universal Church. He was guardian of its charity, both internal and with other local Churches and the world; of the purity of its faith, morals, and also of its liturgical traditions. That is to say he had to see that the perhaps exuberant life of the local community, as well as its sins, did not cause them to stray from the revelation entrusted to God's Church, or from the interpretation of this which had been accepted by the Church in prayerful Council.

At first the bishop was the centre around which the entire liturgical life of the local Church revolved. He was not only responsible for ordinations, and, with his brothers, for consecrations, but he was the celebrant at the annual Easter initiation service (including Baptism and Confirmation) and the normal celebrant of every Eucharist, though, of course, in every liturgical act he would be supported by the different Orders of the clergy and laity. If he was absent for any reason one of the presbyters would be deputed to take his place and preside at the Eucharist. When "parishes," what we now call dioceses, became larger, and the Church pushed out into the villages surrounding the see town, or when all the Christians could not congregate in one church,

presbyters were sent to celebrate at the churches at which the bishop would not be present on that occasion. They went as his deputy and, of course, were entirely under his control. Soon the presbyters began to claim the right to celebrate the Eucharist as part of the natural functions of their Order, and to concelebrate with the bishop even when he was present. But the original relationship is still preserved to this day in the fact that no priest can celebrate the Eucharist in a parish church unless he holds the bishop's licence or other permission. Our larger dioceses of today, with the consequent loss of much of the direct contact with the bishop, throw a greater autonomy and a much bigger responsibility upon the parish priest. This is heightened by the limitations of the bishop's power in the Parson's Freehold. In spite of this, every priest is still merely the bishop's deputy, and he is responsible to the bishop for the liturgical life of any parish with which he has been entrusted.

In France the argument that the bishop is the "primary celebrant" at every altar in his diocese was used a few years ago (by Chanoine M. Michaud in *La Maison-Dieu* for July, 1945) both to justify the keeping of the old eastward-facing high altar, until such time as the bishop is prepared to get behind his cathedral altar, and to use this way of celebrating everywhere in his diocese, and also to suggest a practical way round the Roman Catholic regulations, so that a temporary altar could be used for celebrations facing the people. This could be a simple table, without relics, placed where it was most convenient. Thanks to our rubrics, as we shall see, we do not need any such justification for having a simple table "in the body of the church, or in the chancel," but that the bishop is the "primary celebrant" at every altar in his diocese does make it clear that he has a perfect right to control what the priest does there as his deputy. We can see how, within his diocese, the bishop is the centre of liturgical unity. Because he is the link with the Universal Church he would not only have the right, but the duty, to stop a parish from adopting a liturgical custom that would cut it off from the tradition of the Universal Church, or, on a smaller horizon, that would separate it from the other dioceses of the Anglican Communion. In this he must be guided by local canons, which on this matter are represented by the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer. The unity of the diocese, and also that of the parish in question, together with its pastoral care is also ultimately his responsibility, though much has been deputed to the parish priest when he was inducted. Incumbents must concede to the bishop, then, the right to advise, for the well-being of the diocese as a whole, that the introduction of this reversion to older ways should be deferred until greater preparation for it has been effected, or that he should demand, perhaps by a resolution of the Parochial Church Council, some proof that the unity of the parish will not be destroyed by hasty or irresponsible

alterations of the ways to which the people have become accustomed. He would be untrue to his function as a bishop in the Catholic Church, however, if he attempted absolutely to forbid the practice on any lesser grounds than that it was contrary to the traditions of the Universal Church, or to local canons within that tradition. In the first chapter we attempted to show that this way is within the traditions of the Church, and in the next that it is theologically sound, and for the rest of this chapter it will be discussed in the light of the rubrics, the local liturgical canons.

THE RUBRICS

The rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer are our directives for the celebration of the Eucharist according to our local rite. Since the English Prayer Book was first introduced the arrangements of our chancels have passed through a series of developments, and some of the rubrics have remained in the Book after the conditions for which they were written have ceased to exist. If the rubrics do not actually contradict themselves, at least it requires very great ingenuity to obey them all, and in fact at present every celebrant ignores some of them. One aspect of our liturgical chaos is this element of choice as to which of the conflicting rubrics is to be obeyed. In such a situation the spirit of the rubric is obviously of more importance than meticulous obedience to one or other alternative.

Starting from the least important of the rubrics, the priest is ordered to turn to the people to say the Ten Commandments, and then to "*stand as before*" for the collect. No indication is given of the direction in which the lessons are to be read. The priest is further directed to say the "Ye that do truly" "*to them that come to receive Communion*" and to "*face the people*" for the absolution. After the Sursum Corda he is to "*turn to the Lord's Table*" for the Preface onwards. The only indication of where the people are, and so of where the priest is to face, is that before the Long Exhortation there is a rubric "*the Communicants being conveniently placed for the receiving of the holy Sacrament.*" This is very much more vague than the 1549 direction that after giving their money offering into the poor man's box those who are not communicating are to go out, but those who are to receive Communion are to remain "*still in the quire, or in some convenient place nigh the quire, the men on one syde, and the women on the other syde.*" These directions can apply to almost any of the known ways of celebrating, for although the priest is told to turn back to the table, the direction that this involves is not mentioned, and that he should be conveniently placed for performing the manual acts seems to be the main consideration. But the intention of the rubrics is clearly the positive one of ensuring that the priest does face the people at certain parts of the service, rather than that

he should turn his back on them when he "turns to the Lord's table." If he is celebrating across the altar he is facing them without the fuss of turning. Although the letter of one sentence in these rubrics, when the priest is told to turn back to the altar, is no longer relevant for he has never moved, the spirit is entirely satisfied if he throughout faces the people over the altar.

Before the Consecration there is a rubric; "*When the Priest, standing before the Holy Table, hath so ordered the bread and wine that he may with the more readiness and decency break the bread before the people, and take the cup into his hands, he shall say the Prayer of Consecration as followeth . . .*" This 1662 rubric is ambiguous, but, despite the Lincoln Judgement which pronounced "Eastward Position" legal, the intention seems quite plainly to have been to ensure that the manual acts should be done "before the people," as a public act in which they can share, and not a private act of the priest hidden from the people; and further that this should be done in the most decent and reverent way possible. "North End," of which more must be said below, fulfils the intention that the people see what is done, but this is also true of "Across the Altar," and for convenience the latter wins triumphantly. "*Standing before the table,*" too, implies standing at the long side, for it is clearer in the Scottish version of 1637 "*at such part of the Holy Table where he may with the more ease and decency use both hands,*" which was understood to imply "Eastward position" in the accusations against Laud, but would apply equally well to "*Across the Altar.*" Recent liturgical fashion in England has been to take the "Eastward Position," and generally to ignore the direction to let the people see the actions. "North End" lets the people see the actions, but is less "convenient." The compromise of taking the "Eastward Position" and of turning away from the altar to face the people whilst the Words of Institution are said, breaking the bread upon the paten held before the people, is an attempt to solve the clash of interests, but is probably the least decent and convenient way of all. "Across the Altar" is the only way that fully satisfies both the principles at stake.

Lastly there is the rubric that, in the past, has caused most controversy. "*The Table at Communion-time . . . shall stand in the body of the Church, or the chancel . . . and the Priest, standing at the north side of the Table shall say . . .*" Ignoring for the moment the question of whether one can exactly carry out this rubric in chancels arranged as at present, no one would contest that this 1552 rubric expresses the reformers' ideal that the holy table should be in the midst of the chancel, so that the people could entirely surround it (as can be seen from the furnishings at Deerhurst in Gloucestershire and other places), or that it should be brought right down into the nave if that were more convenient. Because the mediaeval churches were long and narrow, the most convenient

way of putting the table was lengthways, the way of the long axis of the church. In this position it was logical and convenient that the priest should stand at the north side (or the south for that matter, but one had to be chosen for uniformity, and with human inconsistency the north side was probably chosen so that, from the west, the book would not hide the actions) but not at the end of the table, for that would be inconveniently narrow. Also, if the priest was facing in the direction to which they had previously been accustomed, the people would almost inevitably cling to their old habit and get behind him, instead of surrounding the table. It was only after Laud had enforced his "interpretation," which was in fact a reversal of the new arrangement back to the mediaeval tradition, that it became difficult to interpret the rubric. One was forced to choose between saying that the north end was almost the same as the north side, as they did in the seventeenth century up to the Oxford Movement, or to say that the altar has been moved round through 90 degrees to put it against the east wall, so that the old north side has now become the west side, and so "Eastward Position" is as legitimate an interpretation as the others, seeing that anyway it is impossible to obey the letter of the rubric. Of course, if the altar is thought of as being turned through the right angle in the other direction, it is behind the altar that the priest comes, and the same arguments can be used for this. It is only the futility of this kind of casuistry that impresses.

But this rubric does give quite specific permission to abolish the great distance that came into being in mediaeval times between the altar and the people, and the rubric has been retained in the 1552 form, and even in the 1928 Book. The rubric encourages us to put the altar where it, and what happens upon it, can best be seen of the people. It does not say that it must be put lengthways down the chancel, though there is certainly nothing to stop this if it is the most convenient place for it in a particular church. It is permissible to use the steps at the chancel arch, or to bring the altar outside the screen, or anywhere that it is convenient, so long as it is not separated from the people. It even permits the use of a temporary table, which could be brought in at "Communion-time" if the local Christian community was not yet prepared for a drastic replanning of its church.

To sum up: Celebration over the altar fulfils the letter of the rubrics at least as fully as any other way of celebrating, with the possible exception of "North End." It translates the spirit of them into the needs of our age triumphantly.

NORTH END

It is a natural reaction to say that as "North End" fulfils the letter of so many of the rubrics, and is already an accepted Use of the Church of England, why bother to introduce still another way

of celebrating into our liturgical chaos? But North End is just such a peculiar aberration as we were thinking of at the beginning of this chapter, and which we were suggesting that it was the bishop's function to condemn, because it cuts our Church off, stresses the difference between it and every other part of the Universal Church of Christ. That the Church is now rent into separation, but is feeling towards reunion, strengthens the argument. North End gives no point of contact between our Church and any other tradition, Protestant or Catholic.

Secondly, the priest, standing half-ways to the people, is not at all naturally placed to preside at the Eucharistic Feast. This has been used as an argument in its favour, claiming that it reduced sacerdotalism to a minimum, showing that there is no president but the Lord. If this is true it seems strange that Continental Protestantism and English non-conformity did not adopt such an admirable expression of their beliefs. But an argument along such lines falls to the ground when we consider that our Lord presided at the Last Supper, the Apostles presided at the Breaking of Bread, the bishop presided at the basilican Eucharist, and, although he had his back to them, the priest quite definitely presided at the mediaeval Mass, and again after the Reformation the minister presided across the table. That there should be no president at the Eucharist may fit some Protestant theory, or more likely some reaction to a distortion of mediaeval symbolism, but it is not scriptural, apostolic, patristic or according to any later tradition in the Church. It is a way of celebrating that has no connections in space or time, a compromise born of literal interpretation of rubrics that no longer refer to things as they are, and it would tend to isolate the Anglican from his fellow Christians of any tradition.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL

At the end of Chapter One it was stated that celebration over the altar, the original way of doing the Eucharist, is being revived for theological, rather than archaeological, reasons. Just as the fashion of turning the back to the congregation was not an isolated thing, but came in as just one manifestation of a complex movement, so facing the people cannot be isolated, whenever it has been revived, from a whole climate of thought. In the sixteenth century, as in our own time, the key to this climate of thought is the corporate nature of the Church, and lay responsibility.

One aspect of the Reformation was that it was a revolt against excessive clericalism, in which the ideal function of the laity seemed to be passive obedience. Against this Protestantism raised the doctrine of the Priesthood of the Laity, which found expression not only in lay activity in worship, but was enshrined in Church Order as they conceived it. No doubt this truth was sometimes taught in isolation from balancing doctrines, and was associated with other errors or denials of the truth, but in our time the Roman Catholics are themselves teaching a version of the doctrine. They are anxious to point out that a doctrine of a Priesthood of the Church, and so of the Laity, does not mean that there is no difference between the priest, in the narrow sense, and the laity, but that all Priesthood in the Church is an extension of Christ's, and in that we all share. Despite the mediaeval background, despite the decree of 1870, this century has seen a tremendous upsurge of lay initiative and true people's movements in the Roman Catholic Church—and with it has come a demand for the use of the vulgar tongue, and the revival of celebration over the Altar.

Though there was an element of expediency and compromise in our English Reformation of which we are not particularly proud, yet we can give thanks that we were given a liturgy in the common tongue, which people could make their own. It has fundamentally affected the basic culture of our country, yet despite it the dissenting bodies came into being, and the Church has lost touch with the main part of the people of this land. Perhaps the failure of the attempt to establish celebration over the altar in the sixteenth century, as well as frequent general Communion, is an indication that the Reformation was not a real people's movement, but it was rather a new set imposing its will, and the people in so far as they did not oppose it were merely passive. Anyway, the sort of Church order that did evolve in England was a kind of lopped-

off mediaevalism. The attempt by the Crown to substitute itself for the Pope was fairly effectively diverted, but the whole idea of episcopacy was still perverted by the remains of mediaeval prelacy. After the suppression of Convocation this was obviously dictatorship by bishops, respecting and controlled by Parliament, but very much separated from the people. Later, in the nineteenth century fight against this unsatisfactory Erastian situation, it was sometimes the priest who made himself the dictator, and who, sniping from behind his Parson's Freehold, defied the bishop and imposed his own ideas of the Faith and Life of the Church upon his long-suffering congregation. The Oxford Movement was successful in so far as it was possible to carry the laity with it; it was unsuccessful in so far as the lay response was small. It developed too fast to carry the people with it, even those inside the Church, and alienated the majority outside. We have all inherited much good from the Oxford Movement, but, alas, with it a greater gulf between the Church and the world than ever before. This gap will only be closed by a keen and responsible lay apostolate, each member of the Church carrying the redemptive Gospel of Christ to those around him, each one supported by his or her fellow Churchmen in the fellowship of the Church.

In our time, as part of the nexus of ideas we know as the Liturgical Movement, there has been a vital rethinking of the nature of the Church as an essential part of the Gospel of Christ. In the new Biblical Theology the Old Testament conception of Israel as the People of God is seen to be taken and transformed by Christ when He founded His Church to carry on the work of redemption. We now see ourselves, who are incorporated into Christ and His Body the Church, as having been made responsible, as a Body, for bringing the redemptive Power of Christ to bear upon the world in which we live. We are not just a number of pious individuals bolstering up our assurance in our own salvation, but a Body that is committed to the great task that was begun by God the Son when He was on earth. We know that we cannot even begin to tackle this task except in the Power of Christ, who is our Head, nor can we do it except in the unity of Charity which is of the essence of Christ's Mystical Body. And this unity is not confined just to those who meet together as a congregation. As a local Church we are not isolated either in time or space. We must work in a specific place and in the here and now, but we belong to a world-wide Church, we inherit the wisdom of past ages and know the support of those who have gone before but are still alive in Christ. The Church is One, and even in our separations we are discovering a Unity of Prayer and Charity that transcends the very real disunity that the sin of man has brought into the outward organisation of Christianity. It is this discovery which we hope will lead to corporate reunion.

In this mental climate the Church demands a form of worship that enshrines its continuity from past ages and that is not divorced from the very varied traditions in which individually we have been brought up, supporting and deepening the Unity of our own Communion, and that of the local congregation (especially where it is made up of people trained according to very varied traditions). It must not wander off into individual eccentricities, but demonstrate its true unity with parts of the Church from which we are at present separated. It must be a worship in which each worshipper can take an intelligent and active part, expressing his personal dedication within the Church, and the evangelistic and redemptive vocation of the Church to those outside. It is the contention of the writer, that celebration facing the people does express many of these things better than any other way of worship.

Many of the demands listed above are met by Eucharistic worship however it is presented. There is the offering of the natural gifts of God, and the work and skill of mankind, with which every worshipper must couple his own offering of self and work, in the bread and wine. That the bread and wine are the gifts of all is expressed by forms of the Offertory Procession that have been revived by many parishes which still keep the eastward position. That the bread and wine are taken by God and used by Him as the Sacramental Body and Blood of Christ has many implications bearing upon the redemptive mission of the Church. But the special contribution of celebration over the altar is that what happens there is done openly so that all may share in it with full responsibility. It stresses the corporateness, the togetherness, of the whole congregation as they take part in this act, with a sense of unity with other branches of the Church, and, it was attempted to show in the first chapter of this booklet that this way of celebrating has its roots in the Bible and history more surely than our present practice.

The opportunity of seeing what is happening at the altar is a most vivid experience for the laity, particularly for those who have never served or officiated in the sanctuary. It comes as a revelation to them that they are able to enter so intimately into the action. For the priest the result of facing across the altar is that soon this seems a most natural way of doing the Eucharist. When we read to someone, or to a group of people, and we are reading in a language that they understand, the natural thing is to face them. It is facing away from the people to read the Epistle, facing the altar, that needs justification, not the reverse. It is possible to justify such unnatural behaviour, chiefly on the grounds that it is a very interesting archaeological relic of the days when the laity couldn't understand Latin, and the bishop was seated behind the altar. But for most of us such reasons have little force against the obvious evangelistic advantage of reading the Epistle so that the people

can best hear it. In a similar way, it is only because we are not used to it that facing across the altar seems strange. We have to overcome the idea that God is somewhere out beyond the east window (an idea that is dealt with in objection 4 below), and we should then find it a much more natural way of celebrating than our usual one. We should also appreciate the evangelistic force of reading not only the Scriptures, but also prayers in the direction which makes it most easy for the people to hear.

The mediaeval Low Mass was something that the priest did for the people. As soon as the Eucharistic Prayer is said in a language that the people understand they are able to join with him, and it becomes something that the priest and people do together. This is heightened when the priest faces across the altar and they can see as well as hear what he does, and so enter more fully into the action. All this does not mean that the function of the priest is belittled. It is still he who speaks the words of the Church's effective "remembering" of Christ's Saving Work, and he who performs the actions for the people. In other words it is the priest who links what is done in that particular building with the Universal Church, and with what Christ did and is doing. But he does this with the people. The glory of Christ is not lessened by the fact that He is surrounded by the Saints, but rather they, who are in Heaven by His Power, reflect and enrich His glory. Similarly the true glory of the priesthood, in the narrower sense, is not heightened by isolation from the people he represents. By sharing in his priestly act they enrich it, and this is especially true when we remember that all Christian Priesthood, both that of the whole Body, and that of the priest in a specialised sense, is but a reflection of that of our High Priest, who invites us all to share in His Priestly Mission of redemption. Though their liturgies, their contributions to the total act, may be different, priest and people—and deacon, reader, choir, organist, acolyte, vergers, floorsweeper, and all who bear any responsibility in the Church—are all dependent upon each other as they do this act expressing and effecting their Union in Christ. Unity is not uniformity and when one of the group of people round the altar, with a special function to perform, has to fulfil that duty, he will be acting differently from the others present. But diversity is not licence to behave in an individualistic or arbitrary manner, and those who are taking part in the corporate act of the Church will not wander off into private prayers, but will pray with the priest the prayers of the Church. Whatever anyone, or any one group of people, does that is different from others must enrich and not disintegrate the corporate offering of the congregation as a whole.

It has already been stressed that by celebrating facing the people we are demonstrating a unity with more parts of the Church than we do by any other way. It is worth recording that when,

under the displacement of population under the Groundnut scheme, some African Christians, trained in "Western Use" and others trained by an Evangelical society, were drafted into the same area, the only way of celebrating acceptable to both sides was facing the people. It was felt by the responsible authority that it would be fatal to provide different Uses, for that would suggest that these Christians belonged to different Churches, and there would be no true unity. Through "Across the Altar" they could meet and communicate at the same altar. This is only one example of the way that the Liturgical Movement is cutting across all the old party, and even denominational alignments, so that people who would once have been isolated from each other in separate camps find that they now have things in common, and far more than that, real unity of outlook. Again, whatever one thinks of the Church of South India, it is at least another example that common ground is found between very different traditions by celebrating over the altar.

OBJECTIONS

In this section it is proposed to put some of the common objections to celebrating facing the people, and to attempt to answer them.

1. *The Church rejected, in its wisdom, this way of celebrating, because the Eastward Position was found to be so much more reverent. Why are you trying to put the clock back?*

The whole point of this booklet is to state that it was not a wise decision. The Church is not inevitably evolving towards perfection, any more than is the secular state, but neither is it slowly sinking into corruption. It is of Divine origin, but the sin of the men and women who are its members is constantly distorting its nature and dragging it down. But we have been promised by our Lord that "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" despite the sins of Peter and those who follow. In the Spirit, it renews itself in prayer and penitence. Those who work along liturgical lines, believe that this movement is being used by God to renew the Church. And surely it is a sentimental idea of reverence, quite contrary to the Incarnation, that finds the mysterious (in our modern sense) more holy than the seen. The truly Mysterious, the sense of God working in and through the natural order, through bread and wine and men, is not lessened because the action of the Eucharist is seen.

2. *The Church of England soon rejected this peculiar aberration of celebrating across the table which the Reformers tried to foist on it. Why should you be more successful now?*

In the Reformation period celebration across the altar was associated with the wilder negations of Protestantism. The east-

ward position was supposed to be the only Catholic one, both by the conservatives who tried to retain as much of the old ways as possible, and by those who were trying to keep as much connection as possible between the Reformed English Church and the Orthodox and Roman Catholics. In the sixteenth century the restoration of the holy table to the "traditional" position for the altar in the sanctuary was an assertion that we were a Catholic Church. But in our day this way of celebrating is not confined to either side of the Catholic-Protestant tension. It is within the Roman Church that the chief stimulus for the modern revival comes, whilst in Protestantism it is already firmly established. We can judge it on its merits without prejudice.

3. *Isn't there enough liturgical chaos in the Church of England without adding still another variant to confuse the man in the pew?*

It would certainly be a foolish man who wished to add just another way of celebrating. But this way of celebrating has been experienced as a force for unity, as we saw in the story about Africa. It is common ground, in place of the separate compartments into which "Low Church" and "High Church" were once divided. It may for the moment be just one more variant, but in the long run it will be a potent force for unity, not necessarily because everyone will quickly give up their present practices, but because through it the different traditions will come to some understanding on common ground, of what the others are driving at. It has been proved that Unity cannot be imposed, and that it is very difficult to impose uniformity. No factor promoting Unity should be despised.

4. *Surely it isn't right that the priest should put himself in the place of God, as if we were going to worship him?*

A less exaggerated form of this would be to say that celebration over the altar stresses some aspects of the Eucharist, but that the eastward position is the only one that brings out the aspect "in which the priest leads the worshippers in offering the great 'sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving' to God." The quotation is from *Liturgy and Worship*, page 308. This sort of objection arises from thinking of a "facing the people" celebration according to a symbolism that doesn't belong to it. In orientated worship God is thought of as "out there," and the whole design of a mediaeval church served to emphasise this conception. After this way of thought had been broken by the Reformation and the Georgian auditory Church, it was reintroduced with the Gothic revival, and still tends to be the normal way that people visualise worship. God is "out there" beyond the east window, and the people face towards Him with the priest at their head. This would be a harmless enough "mystical" interpretation of the present situation, pro-

vided that it is clearly understood that ceremonial is not provided to fit any imaginary interpretation, but is strictly practical. An "interpretation" of the new arrangement will soon spring up, in fact it is already to hand in the Bible. Our Lord said, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 20). This is what is perfectly acted out in celebration facing the people. So far from the priest putting himself in the place of God, he no longer comes between the people and the sacramental focus of the Presence of God. We all equally surround the holy table and the sacramental gifts, the priest on his side, and the laity on theirs, and there is nothing between any of them and the table and the sacramental Presence.

5. Isn't there enough exhortation and edification in our Rite without making the whole Eucharist something didactic? What we want is something to deepen the sense of worship of our congregations.

Another form of this is to say that celebration over the altar is excellent for Children's Mass, but of course you would expect them to grow beyond this way when they had learnt what the Eucharist was all about, and they could then be expected to do some real worship. This is an objection that combines most of the others that have been already mentioned. Celebration facing the people is advocated for no other reason than that it is the best way that we know to worship God. If it has other advantages, that children—and adults too—can see what is done, whilst in other ways of celebrating they have to learn it from a film strip or take it on trust, these are secondary. In saying this it is assumed that we pray with the understanding.

DANGERS

There is a real danger, at the present moment, that celebration over the altar will become the latest fashion, the latest stunt, the newest way of showing that we are right up to the minute with our importations from the Continent. If the bishops mishandle the situation too, it might become the latest disloyalty with which to defy them. If this way of celebrating is introduced for any lesser motive than that we believe it the best way for us to worship God, it will do positive harm.

Sentiment plays much too large a part in English religion, and that of other nations very probably, and many people hang on to ways of worship that they knew as children just because they are familiar with it. Any change is bad, even a change to something better! If we allow this sentiment its head there could never be any development, and we are living in an age of rapid change in all things, including theology and liturgy. Those of us who

see that our ways of worship must alter to express these developments, or reversions to ancient truths, must remember that what may seem a reasonable and intelligible return to an ancient practice of the Church to a person of some historical and theological culture may seem an entirely exotic and alien new expression to the man in the pew. Great patience, understanding, and love must be prayed for by the priest who contemplates changes, and he must be especially careful to see that what he intends to be a source of unity to his people does not result in tension or schism.

It has been stressed several times in this booklet that the priest facing the people is only one small aspect of a whole nexus of ideas, which must be taught and practised and fostered in all sorts of ways before the virtues of this way of celebrating will be understood at all by the people. It will not increase the corporate spirit of a parish one jot if the celebrant gets behind the altar, unless first the people are beginning to know what the real unity of a congregation means. But if they are already trying to live and work together and to bring God's redemption to bear on the world in which they are placed, they will see in this way of worship something that increasingly helps them to understand and carry out this corporate vocation.

On the other hand, one does not cease to practise the Eucharist because some members of the congregation have very deficient ideas of what is done there. Modern opinion does not favour excluding children from Eucharistic worship until they can "understand" it. We know that only the spiritually dead will be satisfied that they understand fully this great Mystery, and also that in their simple way quite young children get an idea of what is being done, enter into it, and by practising it learn. It is by practising it, and by keeping our minds open to instruction of all kinds, that our understanding grows and our prayer deepens. One does not wait for every member of the congregation to be able to pass an examination on the virtues of celebration over the altar before it is introduced, but one takes advantage of some opportunity when it can be done with the fullest possible support of the whole parish, and continues to teach its implications until the end of time.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRACTICAL

Celebration across the altar is something quite apart from the Rite used. Whatever variant of the 1662 order already in use in a parish, or Rite authorised in other parts of the Anglican Communion, could continue to be used facing the people. It does, however, draw attention to the words used, and any deficiencies in a Rite would be more difficult to gloss over, so that legitimate demands for revision might become more urgent. Also, priests who have been used to farcing the Roman Canon silently into the 1662 Rite will find that the "private" nature of such a practice is absolutely contrary to the spirit of this way of celebrating. In many churches in France the Canon is now said aloud, or if it is said silently, a second priest reads aloud a French translation, or a few congregations say the Canon in French all together whilst the priest fulfils the rubric by saying the Latin silently. To say the prayers aloud does not mean that they must be bellowed or ranted; they should be said just loud enough for everyone to be able to hear, with enough natural expression to make them intelligible, and said no faster than the congregation can follow the thoughts expressed.

To a very wide extent, too, the ceremonial can be an adaptation of what has been customary in any church. Evangelicals find they can celebrate across the altar with very little adaptation of the ceremonial they used before, except that the priest never kneels behind the table. "Interim Rite" has been made the basis of the suggestions in the fourth section because most of the Anglican revisions are elaborations of it, and it is likely to be the temporary solution for those priests who wish to celebrate over the altar, and who have been used to some adaptation of the ceremonial of the Western Church.

THE ALTAR AND SANCTUARY

It is very important that the altar and sanctuary arrangements should not be obviously makeshift, particularly if facing the people is introduced as an "experimental use," and done only on special occasions with a temporary altar. Anything makeshift gives the impression that the "old" way of celebrating is the "real" one, and that this is a sort of play-acting.

The table arranged for celebration from behind should be in full view of as large a part of the congregation as possible. It

is better that it should be outside the screen, if there is one, but in other churches the top of the chancel steps might be a good position. The congregation need not all be in front of the altar, but can surround it on all sides. In fact, a solitary priest behind the altar, facing the rest of the congregation, might give a suggestion of the priest and people being in opposition. This can be broken down by clerical and/or lay assistants, whether vested or in lay dress, forming a link between the priest and the people. In some places those lay members of the congregation who take part in the Offertory Procession remain at the side of the altar for the Eucharistic Prayer (see Fig. 9). It might really be more helpful to call this way of celebrating "around the altar" rather than "across the altar." There is no reason why the choir should not be behind the altar, or perhaps in chancel stalls on either side of it, but they must not act as a buffer separating the altar from the people.

The altar should be raised a little, at least on one step, but dramatising the altar by raising it on many steps would not be suitable. It is convenient that the step or footpace on which the altar stands should be carried as far back as the back wall or the screen. The chairs for the ministers, or more permanent *sedilia*, are arranged along this wall. They, or at least the centre chair (the priest's or bishop's) might well be raised an extra step, especially if the celebrant is to pray or preach from his chair. Seats for the servers can be arranged along the back wall or screen, or, even better, at the sides.

The altar itself, in the modern French fashion, is generally made to look an obvious table, emphasising the fact that the Mass is a meal, a heavenly banquet, and derives from the Last Supper which was the dedication to the Sacrifice of Calvary. No frontal is then used. If sticklers for the English Canon 82 of 1604 want a "decent carpet" over the altar, the full seventeenth-century form, which has been revived in recent years, is very suitable. If the nineteenth-century or mediaeval form is used, the frontal should be, of course, on the people's side, or there could be one each side. Lace belongs to a totally different style of altar, but the Fair Linen Cloth can be made to hang down not more than six inches at the front and back, but almost to the floor at the ends. A squarer form of altar than the mediaeval one is suitable, and the sixteenth- or seventeenth-century "Holy Table," if raised a little, is often ideal.

We are not bound to have a cross or crucifix on the altar. When the Roman rubrics have to be obeyed it almost always obscures the action to some extent, however cleverly designed. The figure of the crucifix, in France, is usually faced towards the people. A big crucifix (or *Pantocrator*) hanging above the altar or on the wall behind is a much more satisfactory solution. Only two candles are usual, even in France, or none may be used. Parishes of an archaeological turn of mind may like to follow the ancient

custom of using the portable torches as altar lights, standing them beside the table when they are not being used elsewhere, and the processional crucifix can be placed in a stand behind the altar, or better, behind the celebrant's chair, if there is no large figure on the wall. If it is placed between the altar and the people, the processional cross makes an altar cross that obscures the action less than any other kind.

No flowers, nor anything except what is to be used directly for the celebration, should stand upon the altar, but bowls of flowers can stand near the altar on the floor, so long as they do not obstruct free movement.

The Roman rubric demanding Reservation in a tabernacle on the altar is always a difficulty, and is one of the reasons why a temporary altar for the liturgical celebrations is preferred. If it is desired to Reserve over the main altar a hanging pyx is the best solution for us, if a faculty for one is allowed.

The credence table will stand on the "Gospel" side of the sanctuary, *i.e.*, the opposite of the position to which we have become accustomed, so that the servers naturally approach the celebrant's right hand.

THE CONGREGATION

The late mediaeval idea of kneeling throughout the Mass, except for the Gospel, and each person isolating himself as much as possible from his fellow worshippers by closing his eyes and burying his head in a chair, is quite contrary to the spirit of the liturgical worship. As the liturgical spirit grows in the congregation, the primitive position of standing for formalised liturgical prayer, will be found to be the most natural. However, this is something that had better grow gradually. Already in most liturgical churches the people stand for the Offertory, and from the *Sursum Corda* to the *Sanctus*. This could well be extended for the whole of the Canon. The Servers, certainly, should stand throughout, except, possibly, for the Confession and Blessing.

The table is the focus of worship, and, at least at those parts of the service where all have hitherto turned to the east, they will now face the altar.

THE SERVERS

It is of the essence of good serving that the servers should not draw attention to themselves, either by obtrusive movement, or by any unnecessary movement. They will have seats as shown in Figs. 9 and 10, or at the side. They need do no more than stand quietly at the seats until they are needed to fulfil some function. However, the acolytes can stand each side of the table and raise the candles from the Offertory to the Communion, and during the

same time the thurifer can stand at the head of the congregation, swinging his censer between them and the altar, so long as he kneels when they do and in other ways sees that he does not obstruct their view or distract their attention. When the servers have to pass across the altar they do so on the people's side of it

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE PRIEST'S CEREMONIAL

One of the first tasks of the early liturgical movement in the Roman Church was to discover, in their liturgical chaos, what was the "correct" way of doing everything, according to their rubrics and the interpretations of them by the Congregation of Rites. In England, Adrian Fortescue's book on the ceremonies of the Roman Rite is the best-known fruit of these studies. Without going into the rights and wrongs of transferring the "correct" use of one rite to another to which it does not apply, one needs only to point out that in the Roman Church itself the Liturgical Movement went on to ask quite different questions. These questions moved through "Why was this ceremony introduced?" or "What was the original function of this ceremony?" to "What is the relevance of this ceremony to the people inside our churches today, and how can we best restore its full meaning?" and "What is the missionary force of this ceremony to the unconverted; does it illuminate what we are doing?" In France and elsewhere today, many of the traditional ceremonies are given greater prominence than formerly (such as the so-called Lesser Elevation), or what had been lost is being revived (such as Offertory Processions of various kinds), whilst many of the accepted ceremonies are being "played down" and there is pressure to remove them from the Mass. But these alterations in the emphasis of the Mass are not just according to the whim of the celebrant or incumbent. The importance of a ceremony is judged on theological and missionary grounds, and although there is great emphasis on a return to the primitive, this is not done for merely archaeological reasons. If a ceremony is revived, it is because it is now being used as it was originally intended and it illuminates what is done at the Eucharist, or it helps people to enter into what is being done and so to pray better with Christ and His Church. In the belief that these principles are sound, they are first argued below in general, and then applied to one particular rite. In the very use of these principles themselves, one cannot be so conveniently cut and dried as in the old days of "correctness," and each parish must, within the traditional frame, adopt such ceremonies as are likely to illuminate what is being done and assist corporate devotion.

When celebrating over the altar the priest will find that for practical reasons he must modify what has previously been his custom. The Evangelical will find that his actions must be rather more formalised, or they will draw people's attention to the priest

himself, instead of what he is doing. All must avoid carelessness over personal habits of discipline; the thoughtless scratching of a tickling nose will now be very obvious and distracting. The Catholic will be told that genuflecting behind the table makes him look like a jack-in-the-box, and multiple crossings are quite meaningless and fussy.

The solution of many difficulties is to go back to the primitive. During the period when celebration with the back to the people was usual some practices were elaborated for mystical reasons, and so the sign of the cross, the Christian way of pointing, was multiplied into three (for the Blessed Trinity) or five (for the five Wounds), whilst others were simplified because they were meaningless when the people couldn't see them. The primitive is often unsuitable when done with the back to the people, but over the altar its logic and functionalism can be recognised.

THE ATTITUDE FOR PRAYER

The ancient posture for the priest (and originally for the laity) during prayer can be seen in the "Orant" murals and Icons, or it is described in 1 Kings 8: 22. The hands are raised level with the head, the palms of the hands are half-way between facing forwards and facing together, the wrists slightly bent back, and, unless reading from the book is necessary, the eyes are raised to "heaven." This is quite meaningless when viewed from behind, and we find that in mediaeval times it was modified first to the position of one crucified, and then reduced to a position easier to hold where the hands are level with the shoulders. It is this "Roman" gesture that is meaningless when seen from the front, but the "Orant" gesture is extremely expressive and helps towards the realisation of a sense of the transcendence of God, which some people suspect is lacking in this way of celebrating. The French use the version of this gesture modified by the "mystical" idea that it represents the Crucified, with the hands facing forward, but this gives the unfortunate suggestion that the priest is pushing the people away from him.

By convention the "Orant" gesture is used only for the prayers that belong to the most ancient strata. When "modern" additions were made in the Mass in the Gallican period of the sixth and seventh centuries the new Germanic gesture of prayer—the hands held together in what has been called the "stained glass saint" attitude—was introduced, but conservatism refused to change the gesture that had always accompanied the prayers of the Canon and the Collect. This distinction has been preserved in the Roman Mass, and we have latterly become used to it. It is an interesting and historical relic and harmless, though it has no absolute logic.

Kneeling for formalised Eucharistic Prayer is a still later idea.

In none of the ancient rites, nor in the present Orthodox or Roman uses, does the priest kneel. If the Anglican priest tries to obey the rubrics in this, and kneel behind the table, the effect is very unfortunate. It is to be hoped that permission will be given in our Church to ignore the present instructions to kneel for the Confession and Prayer of Humble Access, and that a deep bow may be substituted.

REVERENCES

It has already been said that, across the altar, genuflections give the impression of a jack-in-the-box. The "Sarum Bow" is not dignified when performed with the back to the people, but it is perfectly adapted for its purpose when the priest faces across the altar. It is obviously a relic of ancient practice, which in less conservative places than Salisbury had been replaced by genuflection, because this was more seemly when viewed from behind the priest.

The beating of the breast is an obviously expressive gesture to accompany words of penitence and self-depreciation. The significance of the gesture is more obvious when seen from the front, and the people can share in it, but no modifications are necessary in the way it is done.

The sign of the cross is merely the Christian way of indicating what is being referred to. It is *this* bread and wine I am praying about, it is *you* I am blessing. By signing himself with the cross the recipient of absolution or a blessing acts his Amen, and also acknowledges that it is only by reason of the death of Christ on the Cross that the words have any meaning. At the end of the Creed we sign ourselves as Christians by the same gesture. When the priest makes the sign, on himself or over things, he uses his right hand, of course, and brings his left one down on to the altar, or brings it across his breast.

When celebrating over the altar all fussy multiple crossings must be avoided, and a large, clear sign of the cross made over the thing indicated or over the people. There is no need to make crosses over the bread and wine separately.

TWO IMPORTANT GESTURES

(a) THE GESTURE OF IDENTIFICATION

One of the oldest gestures at the Eucharist, dating right back to Hippolytus, is that by which the priest identifies himself and the people with their offering of bread and wine, by laying his hands on them. In the Roman Mass this gesture is still there, but it has lost its original meaning by being displaced, and by the whole purpose of the Offertory being mistaken. The very title Offertory has given rise to the idea that there are two offerings in the Eucharist.

The only offering is during the Canon, and we shall see in the next section that it is acted out in gesture by the Great Elevation. The "Offertory" is that point in the Eucharist where we, the Church at X, identify ourselves with our gifts of bread and wine. By so doing we endow them with meaning, so that they represent the wholeness of our lives, as well as the whole of God's creation for which we are responsible. Then, during the great Eucharistic Prayer, our gifts of bread and wine, with all the richness of meaning we have given them, are identified with, caught into, the One, full, perfect, and sufficient sacrificial Offering of the Saving events "remembered," *i.e.*, effectively brought back, in that great prayer thanking and praising God for what He is and what He has done for us. The gesture by which the priest, as the representative of the people, identifies himself and them with the bread and wine is taken over from the ceremony of Jewish sacrifice. The first act in the Jewish sacrifice was for the worshipper to identify himself with the animal that was to represent him, to be part of him before God, and he did this by laying his hand on its head. It is the same gesture, and a parallel idea of identification, which has come to us in Ordination and Confirmation. In the Roman Mass the ancient Offertory prayers, the drawing together of the living and the departed, in union with whom we are to identify ourselves with this bread and wine, and the expression of the reasons for which we do this, have become disjointed and are represented by the first five prayers of the Canon. The ancient gesture of identification is found at the *Hanc Igitur* and *Quam Oblationem* in the form of an extension of the hands over the oblations without actually touching them. Because *Quam Oblationem* is claimed to be the Roman Epiclesis, the purpose of the ancient gesture has been distorted until it is thought of as an invocation of the Holy Spirit. In the 1549 Book the invocation is more direct, "*Hear us (O merciful Father) we beseech thee; and with thy Holy Spirit and Word vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these gifts and creatures of bread and wine,*" and the gesture, now quite meaningless, has through this been carried over to the "*Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee*" of our present rite, when the Roman ceremonial is copied. Meanwhile in the Gallican period, a new set of "Offertory" prayers was added to the Roman Mass, confusedly offering the bread and wine to God, accompanied by many crossings of the bread and wine and of the priest himself.

A further complication comes in when one asks what is the relation of the rubric "*and here he is to lay his hand upon all the bread,*" and the similar instruction to lay his hand upon every vessel containing wine, during the Manual Acts, to the ancient gesture of identification.

It seems to the writer that the best Anglican clarification of all this is for the priest to touch or "*lay his hands upon every vessel*"

on or in which is bread or wine to be offered at the appropriate words in an offertory prayer, if one is said. The best of the Anglican Offertory prayers is that in the Irish Book, the 11th, 13th and 14th verses of the first book of Chronicles, or the following extraction from it would be suitable for corporate recitation "All that is in the heaven and the earth is thine, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee." This expresses that it is our gift, and that it is the offering back to God of His own, but if we are to express the identification of our lives with the bread and wine, and the very important point that we only offer it so that the gifts and we may be used by God (thus countering the criticism that the elaboration of the offertory is open to Pelagian interpretation) we shall have to seek authority for a prayer which covers the following points: "O Holy Father, all that is in the heaven and earth is thine, and of thine own do we give back to thee. In this bread and wine we dedicate to thee, ourselves, our lives, and all created things for which thou hast made us responsible. Use them and us, Good Lord, that, being caught up into the Saving Work of thine Incarnate Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we and they may be used for the restoration of all things."

On the other hand, if the Manual Act of laying the hand on all the bread and every vessel is an offertory gesture carried into the closest association with Consecration and Communion, and something appropriate is needed to accompany the "*here beginneth the offertory*" which was inserted later in the traditional place, the priest can sign the bread and wine after they are made ready with the sign of the cross, immediately followed by one over the people and one on himself.

From what has been said above it is obvious nonsense to carry over the gesture of identification to the Epiclesis merely because this begins with the formula "*Hear us,*" as it does in most Anglican rites.

(b) THE ELEVATIONS

The Elevations at the "Words of Consecration" are, of course, only a late mediaeval addition to the ceremonial, and were invented to show the Sacrament to the people when the Mass had become a private action of the priest, said in silence, and hidden from the people by his body. When the people can see all the time, and the whole point of celebration over the altar is that they should be able to do so, there seems to be no point in this ceremony. However, without subscribing to any particular theory of Consecration, in answer to any particular formula within the Consecration Prayer, it does seem appropriate to reverence the Sacrament at the Words of Institution, for these are our Lord's pledge that it is through the Sacrament that He gives Himself to us.

Though the Elevations have recently become so common in

our churches, the Anglican formularies are, of course, opposed to them. In the later Middle Ages, the Mass was distorted by concentrating attention on one moment and one aspect of the Mass as interpreted by scholastic theology. Even in the Roman Church where, of course, they are ordered by rubric, they are being "played down" under the influence of the Liturgical Movement, in order that what has become known as the "Lesser Elevation" may become the visual climax of the Canon, which at the same time restores it to become known as the "Great Elevation." This other elevation is at least as early as the fifth century, and is seen in its ancient position in the Liturgy of S. John Chrysostom, and other ancient liturgies, where it is the accompaniment of a verbal formula of offering. It is not a showing to the people, but an elevation in offering to God, and when retored to accompany a verbal formula of offering it makes a most appropriate gesture to accompany the climax of the man-to-God action of the Eucharist. It is not complicated by the doctrinal controversies which surround the mediaeval elevations.

In the present Roman Mass this ancient ceremony, like the identification gesture, has been shifted from its ancient position. The history is obscure, but the theory which seems most probable to the writer is that it was shifted to the Doxology at the end of the Canon at the same time that it was "played down" to become the Lesser Elevation. This was probably done so as not to draw attention to the fact that the original form of offering in the Roman Mass refers to the oblations as bread and wine. This became embarrassing when Consecration was thought of in terms of change, because what had become the Body and Blood of Christ was offered after the Consecration as bread and wine. Doubtless a great deal of controversy on this point still lies ahead of us, but, when we get behind the mediaeval and reformation controversies to the theology of the early Church, the liturgical evidence seems to indicate that if a fully acceptable formula of Consecration is ever reached it will be in such terms as this: this bread and wine, whilst they remain bread and wine, are no longer merely such, for they are in the Eucharist used by God as His Sacramental Body and Blood; that through which He gives His very life to us. But for practical purposes the Great Elevation is one of offering, and it must accompany the verbal formula of offering. The solution suggested below for the Interim Rite is not entirely satisfactory as it somewhat forces the meaning of the words, but in those revised Anglican rites which have a formula of offering associated with the Epiclesis, *i.e.*, immediately following the Anaphora, there is no doubt that this is where the Great Elevation should be performed.

The Great Elevation is done by holding the priest's Host between the finger and thumb of the right hand over the chalice which is held in the left hand. Both of them are then raised together

as high as possible, whilst the eyes are raised "to Heaven." In places where leavened bread is still used, or where it has been restored, an older form of the ceremony can be used. The paten is held in the right hand and the chalice in the left, then, with arms crossed at the wrists, they are raised as high as is convenient. At a High Mass the fifth-century version could be used, the arch-deacon (or deacon, or a concelebrating priest) holds the chalice, and the bishop (or priest) the paten and, with wrists crossed, they raise them together.

THE OFFERING AND INVOCATION GESTURES

There are two further gestures that need explanation. At a number of places, such as the beginning of the Creed and Gloria, the priest brings his hands down together, almost to the level of the top of the altar, and then raises them, opening them as he does so, with the palms now turned upward, until they are just above the level of his shoulders. This is very expressive of the offering of ourselves to God, and is here called the Gesture of Offering.

When the priest says "The Lord be with you" he is directed in the modern rituals to open his "folded" hands—*i.e.*, in the "stained glass" attitude—until they are just wider than his shoulders, and then to bring them together again. It is possible that the original form of this gesture was to open and raise the hands as high as the head, then to bring them down together almost to the top of the table, then to extend them, widening the gap between them as it is done, towards the people, but only raising them very slightly. The palms for this second part of the gesture are facing upwards, and the wrists bent back. The effect of this gesture is to suggest that the Spirit is plucked down from heaven, and directed towards the people. This has been called the Invocation Gesture in the next section.

INCENSE

If incense is used it is as well to return to an earlier method of censuring the altar. The present Roman way is adapted for a long altar against the wall. When it is possible to walk round the altar the priest would cense the altar at the side at which he is standing with three double swings—one to the centre, one to the right, and one to the left. He would then hand the censer to the deacon at his right (or himself continue if there is not one), who would walk round the altar, and at each side stop and cense with three double swings as before. The people would be censed as usual, and any representation of God or a Saint. The double swing was probably originally a good swing in the direction of the object or person to be censed, followed by a smaller, controlling swing. It is not necessary to shorten the chain and clank the censer against it.

The censuring of the oblations could still be with the customary

three crosses and three circles, unless it is felt that, as the signs of the cross are reduced to bare simplicity, so one cross and one circle are in keeping here. The altar is not censured at the offertory, unless there are relics, but the servers and people are censured as an expression of the truth that they are all being offered to God with the bread and wine.

SUGGESTED CEREMONIAL FOR INTERIM RITE

If the direction of the Entrance makes it convenient, it is best that the

(Preparation) (if said) with the

Our Father and Prayer for Purity should be said at the head of the people, facing in the same direction as them, so that the priest does not go behind the altar until after it has been said.

(Introit) At sung celebrations the Introit, if used, would cover this movement to the back of the altar, and the preliminary censuring.

If this is inconvenient, the priest can go directly to his place behind the altar and say the Preparation there, and the Introit now takes on its ancient function and covers the actual entrance of the priest.

(Lesser Entrance) The deacon or a server can carry in the Holy Bible (or a Gospel Book or Missal) from which the lessons are to be read, and lay it on the table.

The priest remains at the centre of the altar throughout the celebration, either at the table or at his seat immediately behind, except when he reads the Epistle or Gospel.

Kyries or the Law. Hands closed.

(Gloria in excelsis) Ceremonial exactly as at end, if used here.

(The Lord be with you) Invocation gesture.

Collect. The priest uses the "Orant" gesture either at his seat or at the altar. He closes his hands and bows slightly at "Jesus Christ our Lord," etc.

Epistle. The sub-deacon, on the priest's left, steps forward and reads the Epistle at the altar, at the "Epistle" side, or at the side of the altar, or at an ambo or lectern at the chancel arch, or in the nave. If the priest reads it himself he moves to his left and reads it from that side of the altar—in other words the "Epistle side" remains as before. It was not altered when the Ministers came round to the people's side of the altar, and we must not fall into the same error as the Roman Catholics and reverse it when we go behind again.

(Gradual, etc.) (See Note A) Hands closed.

Note A. The ancient psalmody is a valuable restoration to the Eucharist, but it is the choir's liturgy. Rather than that the priest should say it when there is no choir, it should be said by all the congregation, or by a server, reader, or other layman on behalf of the people.

Gospel. The Gospel Book is taken from the altar and given to the deacon at the priest's right and he reads it in a corresponding position to that where the Epistle was read. It is suitable that the Gospel should be read with more elaborate ceremonial than the Epistle, and other servers should accompany the deacon, carrying lights and incense if that is the custom. If the priest must read it himself he moves to his right and reads it from the "Gospel" side. There is a quite ancient tradition that the Gospel should be sung half turned to the (liturgical) north, but if this is followed, it must not be forgotten that the original orientation was for the priest to be facing east. (E.g. Fig. 1.) The north was then on his left, which meant that the Gospel was read across the church, and not into a blank wall. This was done originally not for any "mystical" reason of the north representing the place of darkness, and so paganism, but for the simple reason that the men were standing in the north half of the church and it was read towards them as the most important people present, so that they could more easily hear. But as men and women are very rarely separated in our churches, and few priests would follow St. Paul's assessment of the relative importance of men and women without apology, it is only archaeological interest that would continue this custom.

The Invocation gesture is used for "The Lord be with you," if said. The sign of the cross on Book, lips and heart, the reader blessing himself, as it were, with the Holy Words, is harmless. The kissing of the book at the end is very ancient, and at one time all present would have venerated the Book.

Creed. Offering gesture at the Intonation, then hands closed. Bow at Incarnatus, and sign of cross on self at end.

Sermon. If a deacon is present he would give out notices, etc. Sitting was the ancient attitude for judgement, ruling and teaching, and the bishop used to preach, sitting, in his chair behind the altar. Architecture and convenience would have real importance when deciding whether the Incumbent (see Note B) should keep this custom, or use the pulpit. If the deacon preaches, or another priest than the celebrant, he would do so from an ambo or the pulpit.

Note B. In the modern Anglican parish the incumbent is the man sent, with executive authority, to act for the bishop. It is appropriate that, except when he gives place to his diocesan, he should perform this liturgy as if he was the bishop whose place he is filling. The parish priest of today has much the same relationship to the local Church as the primitive bishop, and our bishops, thanks to the size of the dioceses, are almost inevitably distant and infrequent visitors, so their relationship is more like that of the Metropolitans in the period of which we are thinking.

Offertory. If the Gospel Book or Bible has been on the table for the first part of the service it is removed with some solemnity to a convenient place, and the Corporal and the Chalice brought to the altar from the credence table (unless the made-up Chalice is used for the Offertory Procession) before the procession of the bread and wine is begun.

If there is a procession of the oblations in any form, the Chalice, or the cruets, as well as the money collection, would be brought to the people's side of the altar, and handed across to the priest by the deacon or a server. Otherwise the priest's movements in making up the Chalice, and for the lavabo, are as usual to his right. This means, of course, that from the people's viewpoint everything is reversed from the old ways. This will also be true for the Ablutions whenever they are taken.

When the oblations are arranged, the priest lays his hand upon any bread to be consecrated, and upon any vessel containing wine to be consecrated, whilst he says a prayer of identification silently, or some authorised offertory prayer, or whilst offertory devotions are being said by the deacon, the congregation, or a layman.

Prayer for the Church. This prayer can be said by the deacon, if there is one, standing at the head of the people in the nave. This is especially appropriate if the prayer is in the form of a litany, as it is in the new Indian Book. Whilst this is done the priest stands with "folded" hands until he says the collect at the end with the Orant gesture.

If he must say the prayer himself he does so at the centre of the altar with the Orant gesture throughout.

Ye that do truly. This should also be said by the deacon, if there is one, turning to the people to do so. He says it with closed hands, as does the priest if he must say it himself.

Confession. Bow low, with hands closed.

Absolution. Hands together. Large sign of cross over people at "pardon and deliver . . ."

Comfortable Words. Hands together.

(The Lord be with you) Invocation gesture.

Lift up your hearts. Offering gesture leading to Orant.

Preface. Orant.

Sanctus (and Benedictus). Hands together.

Consecration Prayer. Orant, bringing hands together and bowing at the Holy Name when it occurs, and the following:
at "creatures of bread and wine" One large sign of the cross over the oblations.

"who in the same night" Cleans thumb and first finger of both hands on the front corners of the Corporal.

The Manual Acts are done so that everyone can see them. Bow deeply after each of the Words of Institution.
(For Epiclesis, see Note C.)

Prayer of Oblation. Continue with Orant, except for:
at "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" One large cross over the oblations.

"here we offer and present" Bow low, bringing hands together.

"And although we be unworthy" Beat breast.

"Accept this our bounden duty and service" Great Elevation (see Note D†).

"through Jesus Christ . . ." to end. Hands together and bow.

Our Father. Orant (till the paten is taken up at "give us this day our daily bread," if the bread has been consecrated on the Corporal). Fraction and Commixture during the doxology.

(O Lamb of God) Bow and beat breast at each repetition.

We do not presume. Bow very low, hands together.

Communion of Priest and People.

(The Lord be with you) Invocation gesture.

Prayer of Thanksgiving. Orant, close hands at end (see Note E†).

Gloria in excelsis. Offering gesture at Intonation, then hands together. Bow at "we worship thee," "Jesus Christ" and "most high in the glory of God the Father." Sign of cross at end on himself.

Blessing. Large sign of cross over people at "The Blessing."

SOME VARIANTS ON THE CEREMONIAL DETAILED ABOVE

Some priests find it desirable to stress the fact that the Eucharistic Service that we know is a double one, first the service of the Word, and then that of the Sacrament. This was certainly brought out in the ancient ceremonials, and the following suggestions are ways in which we can adapt them to our modern use.

The holy table can be left bare until the Offertory. The fair linens are then spread by servers, and the candles brought to the altar, or lit if they are not portable lights which have been used to carry in front of the Gospel Book. The priest, in his version,

Note C. That the holding of the hands over the elements is not appropriate to accompany the Epiclesis has already been mentioned. For the Epiclesis an appropriate gesture would be to sign the elements when the Spirit is invoked upon them, and over the people when it is invoked upon them.

† Note D. When the 1662 order is used without the Prayer of Oblation in this position, or any alternative to it, the Great Elevation could follow the second of the Words of Institution, so that it was associated with the people's Amen. This would be far more appropriate than the separate mediaeval elevations, which are sometimes supposed to be of an offertory nature.

‡ Note E. This is treating the Anglican Prayer of Thanksgiving as if it is an extension of the Canon. The style of prayer seems to indicate this treatment, rather than making it a post-communion collect.

conducts the whole of the first part of the service from his seat, including the collect, and does not approach the altar until he goes there to arrange the gifts at the Offertory. In this case the Epistle and Gospel would not be read from the altar, but from ambos, the chancel arch, or nave, or from the seats behind the altar.

Another variant is to borrow from the Syrian ceremonial, and conduct the first part of the service from the central aisle amongst the people, or at the front of the pews. A table, not necessarily very large, would be arranged where it was convenient and covered with a linen cloth. The Gospel Book is brought in at the Solemn Entrance (the Lesser Entry) and placed upon the table, flanked with candles. At the Offertory the candles are carried to the Eucharistic table, which is now vested, whilst the smaller table is removed to the side. The priest would go to the altar at the Offertory and he can celebrate either over the table or in the eastward position.

A simple version of this, linked with Anglican seventeenth-century practice, would be to conduct the first part of the service from the choir stalls or prayer desk, with or without a table for the Gospel Book in the midst of the choir.

CONCELEBRATION

Concelebration is not necessarily linked with celebration over the altar, but it goes far back into the history of the Church, and is a way of celebrating that has been neglected in the west (apart from the Ordination of Priests in the Roman Church), but which could usefully be reintroduced for certain occasions, such as the visit of the diocesan bishop to a parish, or when several priests are present, and the western form of High Mass is not suitable.

Concelebration is not really "liturgically pure." As we saw in Chapter Two it arose when priests asserted a right to do on all occasions what was really a special privilege when they took the place of the bishop. There is a virtue in our western ways in that we see no objection to a priest acting as deacon, or any of the lesser orders, when there is another priest to act as celebrant. He does not cease to be a deacon, or a layman, when he becomes a priest. There is one danger in this, however, that the priesthood should absorb the lesser orders into itself. We see this danger materialising when it is expected that the sub-deacon shall always be a man in higher orders, and the laity are squeezed from their rightful place at the altar. There is equal danger in the position taken by the Orthodox, and used by the Romans to justify private Masses, that the priest should always function as a priest. The advantage of Concelebration is that several priests can act as priests whilst the outward corporate nature of the Eucharist is maintained.

One of the priests, or the bishop if he is present, must act as presiding celebrant, but all vest in chasubles if they are available

and that is the use of the church, or they wear stoles priestwise. Needless to say, the chasubles need not be all of the same colour, though no doubt it would look more impressive if they were. At the altar the other priests stand or sit flanking the president. If there is a deacon present as well, he will stand aside, and only go up to the president's side when he has some definite task to perform, and during the Canon. It is of the essence of this way of celebrating that the service should be apportioned among the different priests, as well as the deacons and sub-deacons, present. The main collect of the day, and the Eucharistic Prayer will be sung by the president, who will also give the Absolution and Blessing. The other priests can sing subsidiary collects, read the lessons, including the Gospel, say the Prayer for the Church, the Prayer of Thanksgiving, etc. For the Eucharistic Canon the president will say the prayers in a voice loud enough to be heard. The concelebrating priests will not say any words audibly while the prayers of the Church are being expressed by one in the name of all. To do so is unnecessary and would be distracting. At the Offertory they will hold their hands over the oblations from where they stand, and, if possible, they will place their hands beneath the chalice to show that they all join in the Great Elevation.