

## CHAPTER V

### The Roman Mass

Throughout the history of Christianity, the reenactment of the Lord's Supper—the Communion service—has been the most important and solemn ceremony of the Church. The Communion rite itself, known as the Eucharist, has constituted the nucleus of liturgical actions in many forms, called by many names. We need not concern ourselves with its various designations in different branches of the Eastern Church, but the origin of the Latin *missa*—in English, *Mass*—warrants a brief explanation. In very early times, the celebration of the Eucharist was either called an *offering* or a *sacrifice*, and in the third and fourth centuries it was often known simply as “the Lord's” (*dominicum*). It is curious that the colorless term *missa* should have replaced these more descriptive designations. The word simply means “dismissal” and appears in the closing formula *Ite, missa est* (Go, it is the dismissal) with which the congregation is sent away at the conclusion of the service. By the end of the fourth century, apparently, the term meant both the dismissal of the assembly and the end of the ceremony, and in the fifth century it designated any divine service, including the Offices. Gradually, however, *missa* was restricted to the celebration of the Eucharist and replaced every other name for that ceremony in the Christian lands owing allegiance to Rome.

As the most sacred part of the Catholic divine service, the Roman Mass developed a ceremonial rite that made it the central artistic achievement of Christian culture. In that achievement, music has always played an extremely important role. Indeed, the Mass has occasioned the composition of more music by more composers than any other liturgical service. This is, of course, especially true in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, but music for the Mass is by no means limited to the plainchant and polyphony of these periods. The ancient texts have continued to inspire composers from Bach and Beethoven to Stravinsky.

Let us consider the basic structure of the Mass in some detail in order to understand the significant contributions of plainchant and polyphony

The celebrant at the altar with his two assistants. From a Sarum Missal of the early fourteenth century (Morgan Library).



has “any consciously determined and accomplished plan,” but a living thing, to which “men of many centuries and speaking many languages have all contributed.”<sup>1</sup> The latest indications that the Mass is constantly developing are the changes authorized by the Second Vatican Council (1962–63). We must never think of the Mass, therefore, as an artistic achievement in the sense of a completed form, fixed and unchangeable for all time.

We must also remember that, even in a given historical period, the ceremonies of the Mass could and did vary considerably. Although the basic structure might remain the same, a pontifical Mass—that is, one celebrated by a bishop with numerous assistants—would obviously be much more elaborate than a Mass performed by a single priest. Other differences reflected the season of the Church year, the importance of the particular day, or the function of the Mass itself. The Requiem Mass, for example, differs markedly from the High Mass of a joyous festival. Still other differences arose from the size of the congregation, the number of assisting clergy, the presence of a trained choir, the size and physical arrangement of the place of worship, and local attitudes toward the role the congregation should play in the service.

Despite sporadic efforts throughout the Middle Ages to bring about liturgical uniformity in the celebration of the Mass, the Church remained remarkably tolerant of different usages consciously introduced. St. Gregory wrote that “in one faith, diverse usage is in no way harmful

times.<sup>2</sup> Not until the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century was the luxuriant growth of the Middle Ages pruned away and a simplified, uniform Mass liturgy imposed with almost complete success on the Roman Catholic Church as a whole. It is with the growth, not its suppression, that we are concerned, however, and we may now turn our attention to the form of the Mass as it developed during the first thousand years of the Christian era.

### THE EARLY FORM OF THE MASS

We do not know exactly how the Apostles and the primitive Church carried out Christ's command to repeat the sacrament of the bread and wine "for a commemoration of me." Apparently they celebrated it at first in connection with a meal at which the Jewish ritual for community meals was combined with ceremonial elements of the Passover feast. The latter customarily began with the blessing of unleavened bread, which was then broken and shared with all present. Similarly, the meal closed with a blessing over a cup of wine from which all present then drank. Another important part of the Passover ceremony was the singing of the *Hallel* (psalms of praise), with those at table responding "Alleluia" after each half-verse.

As Christian groups grew in size, the connection with meals began to disappear, until Communion was finally celebrated only at special religious services. In this process, the leaders of the young religion naturally continued to use the ritual practices of the Jewish faith with which they were familiar. The consecration and prayers associated with Communion adapted Jewish formulas and responses to Christian needs. The "Amen" response (So be it) even remained untranslated. From the Sabbath service of the synagogue came the practice of Biblical readings from the Law and the Prophets, with singing in between. These readings formed the nucleus of the fore-Mass that preceded the Communion ceremony itself. Thus, the outlines of the later Mass liturgy began to take shape.

The fore-Mass usually consisted of three readings from the Bible, but now the emphasis fell on the New Testament, especially the Epistles and Gospels. Although the various liturgies differed widely in their choice of texts, the final lesson was invariably from a Gospel, after which came a homily (sermon) and prayer. Each of the first two readings was followed by the responsorial singing of a psalm. The function of the fore-Mass was twofold: to prepare the minds of the faithful for Communion, and to provide instruction in the rudiments of Christianity. Those receiving such instruction were known as *catechumens*, and hence the fore-Mass is sometimes called the Mass of the Catechumens. After

the closing prayer, the catechumens were dismissed, for only the faithful might partake of Communion.

The Communion ceremony itself was celebrated to the accompaniment of special prayers that gradually developed into the invariable form known as the Canon of the Mass. Its beginning, however, remained changeable and became what is now called the Preface. From a very early date it included the threefold Sanctus from the vision of Isaiah.<sup>3</sup> Here we have another element of the Jewish Sabbath service that was taken over with its text adapted and expanded to meet Christian needs. Behind this chant and the prayers of praise lay the idea that the bread and wine of the Communion service was a sacrifice to the Lord, which, in turn, led to the offering of gifts—originally animals and fruits of the field—before the Eucharistic prayers. We find accounts of such offerings by the faithful from the beginning of the third century, and the practice developed into an important part of the early Mass: the offertory procession. Thus began the process of growth and elaboration in the Mass that was to continue for many centuries. In order to make that growth more easily understood, here is an outline of the Mass structure that evolved during the first three or four centuries:

#### Fore-Mass or Mass of the Catechumens

Introductory greeting  
Lesson 1: the Prophets  
Responsorial psalm  
Lesson 2: Epistle  
Responsorial psalm  
Lesson 3: Gospel  
Sermon  
Prayer  
Dismissal of catechumens

#### Sacrifice-Mass or Communion (Eucharist) of the Faithful

The offering of gifts	(Offertory)
Prayer over the offerings	(Secret)
Eucharistic prayers of praise and consecration	(Preface) (Sanctus) (Canon)
Communion rites	
Psalm accompanying communion of faithful	(Communion)
Prayer	(Postcommunion)
Dismissal of the faithful	( <i>Ite, missa est</i> )

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASS TO ITS COMPLETED FORM ABOUT A.D. 1000

The most important addition to the structure of the Mass outlined above took place at the very beginning of the service. As late as the fifth century in Rome the Mass began directly with the readings. Gradually, however, a number of unrelated items were assembled into what we may call the entrance or opening ceremonies. These ceremonies apparently developed everywhere at about the same time, presumably motivated only by the idea that the readings needed some sort of introduction. The shape of the entrance ceremonies in Rome seems to be directly connected with the so-called stational Masses of the sixth and seventh centuries. On each of the great feast days, the pope celebrated Mass at a different Roman church (station), to which the papal court came in procession. The congregation normally came in seven processions from the seven regions of Rome, but on certain penitential days, all assembled at a central point and proceeded to the church where the service was to be held. Particularly on these latter occasions, it was customary to sing litanies which used the phrase *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy) as a refrain. Once the pope had arrived at the church and been vested, a further procession moved from the entrance intoning the Introit, a psalm sung antiphonally.

Rather than being left over from the time when the Roman liturgy was performed in Greek, the Kyrie seems to have been introduced from the East in the fifth century, perhaps by way of Milan. At any rate, in the present Ambrosian liturgy, during the Lenten period, a litany closing with a threefold *Kyrie eleison* follows the *Ingressa* (=Introit). In the sixth century, the Roman liturgy introduced a litany to be used in several places, including the opening ceremonies of the Mass. At times it was complete, while at other times it was reduced to a ninefold invocation that became the standard form of the Kyrie.

Like the Kyrie, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (Glory to God in the highest) did not originate as part of the Mass. It is one of the few surviving remnants, along with the slightly later *Te Deum*, of a rich literature of ancient hymns written in imitation of Biblical lyrics. Like the *Te Deum*, the Gloria was a song of praise and was included in the Mass celebrated by a bishop on particularly festive occasions. Later, its use was extended to other feast days and Sundays, even when the celebrant was a priest. The Gloria is still omitted, however, on weekdays (ferias), in Masses for the Dead, and in periods such as Advent and Lent when its text is inappropriate.

It is usual in liturgical rites for both the service as a whole and its major subdivisions to culminate with prayer. Thus we find that the opening ceremonies end with a Collect, "a gathering together, by the priest, of the preceding petitions of the people."<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the newly developed opening ceremonies, the service of readings was subject to few radical changes in the later centuries of the first millennium. By the sixth century, the number of readings was reduced from three to two, but traces of the old practice remain in the two intervening chants—Gradual and Alleluia or Tract, which now come one after the other. Originally a chant of the Easter season, the Alleluia gradually came into use throughout the year and on special feast days. It is replaced by a Tract only in penitential seasons such as Lent, when its joyous text, like that of the Gloria, would be inappropriate. Beginning in the ninth century, the Alleluia was often followed by a sequence, a musical and textual expansion of the liturgy to be discussed in detail in Chapter VI.

One other change in the service of readings involves the closing prayers and dismissal formulas. Although the fore-Mass continued to be called the Mass of the Catechumens, its dismissal formulas disappeared as congregations came to consist entirely of the faithful. Eventually, too, the Credo replaced the closing prayers of the fore-Mass. All that remained of these prayers was the single word *Oremus* (Let us pray), followed immediately by the Offertory. It should be noted, however, that the Church has always regarded the Credo as being appropriate only for Sundays and important feasts. Even today, it is not used for ferial Masses.

Although the form and contents of the prayers and ritual actions accompanying the Offertory and Communion changed considerably, only one new item was added to the sacrifice-Mass: the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God). It was brought from the East by the influx of clerics from lands overrun by the Moslems, and only became part of the Roman Mass in the late seventh century. The *Agnus Dei* originally accompanied the breaking of bread, but when the introduction of unleavened bread in small particles made that rite superfluous, it was used to fill the interval between the Consecration and Communion.

A final change came with the substitution of *Benedicamus Domino* (Let us bless the Lord) for the older dismissal formula *Ite, missa est* when the Mass had no Gloria. Apparently unknown in Rome before A.D. 1000, the *Benedicamus* formula may have originated in the Gallican liturgy. In addition to its occasional use in the Mass, it was also the standard dismissal formula for the Offices.

Early in the eleventh century, then, the structure of the Mass had become essentially what it remained until recent returns to some of the older forms. In the following outline of that structure, items with texts that change from day to day (Proper) are marked with a P; the unchanging texts (Ordinary) are marked with an O. Items printed in capital letter are sung to free melodies; asterisks identify those sung to recitation.

*Form of the Mass c. 1000 A.D.*

Fore-Mass	
Entrance ceremonies	
INTROIT	P
KYRIE	O
GLORIA	O
Collect*	P
Service of readings	
Epistle*	P
GRADUAL	P
ALLELUIA	P
or TRACT	P
(SEQUENCE)	P
Gospel*	P
Sermon (optional)	
CREDO	O
Sacrifice-Mass	
Offertory rites	
OFFERTORY	P
Prayers and Psalm 25 (Little canon)	O
Secret	P
Eucharistic prayers	
Preface*	P
SANCTUS	O
Canon	O
Communion cycle	
Pater noster*	O
AGNUS DEI	O
COMMUNION	P
Prayers	O
Postcommunion*	P
ITE, MISSA EST	O
or BENEDICAMUS	O

### PROPER CHANTS OF THE MASS: FORM AND FUNCTION

The chants that belong to the Proper of the Mass are those whose texts change from day to day according to the seasons of the Church year. For the most part, these chants, or at least their texts, are among the oldest parts of the Mass. They all stem from the ancient practices of psalmody, although in some cases those practices are now unrecognizable. As the Mass developed, the styles and forms of the Proper chants continually altered to fit the changing situations. Some account of their evolution is necessary if we are to understand the chants as they now exist, but it is their final and present form that is our primary concern.

Originally, the chants of the Proper represented the two basic types of psalmody, antiphonal and responsorial, with the choice of type depending on the function of the particular chant. Antiphonal psalmody accompanied various actions in the Mass: the entrance and offertory processions and the Communion of the faithful. Responsorial psalmody, as in the Offices, followed the reading of Lessons. Because the division into types produced distinctive musical characteristics, we shall consider the chants of each type as a unit, instead of discussing them in consecutive order.

### ANTIPHONAL CHANTS OF THE PROPER

The three antiphonal chants of the Mass—Introit, Offertory, and Communion—constitute the newer portion of the musical Proper. As we have seen, St. Ambrose first brought antiphonal singing from the East to Milan, and according to tradition Pope Celestine I (d. 432) introduced it in Rome. Apparently the antiphonal chants were always performed by the choir and have therefore preserved their musical style more consistently than other chants of the Mass. Their forms, however, have undergone radical amputations.

Originally, Introit, Offertory, and Communion all consisted of a complete psalm with the doxology and a pre-verse or antiphon at the beginning and end. Whether the antiphon was also repeated between the psalm verses remains an open question, since practices varied from place to place. At any rate, all three antiphonal chants were designed to accompany actions of indeterminate length that might well be different each time. Thus it is that even the earliest Roman ordinals direct the bishop, when a particular action is nearing its close, to signal the choir to skip to the doxology and the final antiphon. As the different ceremonies were themselves changed and shortened over the centuries, the accompanying chants became more and more curtailed. Finally, the Offertory and Communion were reduced to nothing but the antiphon, and only the Introit retained a vestige of its original form.

### INTROIT

The shortening of the Introit psalm took place during the eighth and ninth centuries and occurred more rapidly in some places than in others. For many churches, it was not possible or desirable to conduct processions with the pomp of the papal liturgy, and eventually, the Introit came to be sung after the priest reached the foot of the altar. It thus be-



The Introit *Puer natus est*, from an illuminated manuscript c. 1375 (Morgan Library).

cessional chant. Perhaps for this reason, it remained closer to its original form than the other two antiphonal chants. The first verse of the psalm and the doxology were retained, along with the enclosing antiphon. The resulting form is AVDA.<sup>5</sup>

## OFFERTORY

Antiphonal psalmody to accompany the Offertory procession seems to have originated in much the same manner as for the Introit. However, the Offertory underwent a curious and unique development: it is the only antiphonal chant that adopted the form and style of responsorial psalmody. We do not know when or why this change occurred, but it was evidently completed before the first chantbooks with musical notation appeared. As with other responsorial chants, musical elaboration of the solo verses led to a great reduction in their number. Instead of a complete psalm, therefore, the Offertories in medieval manuscripts

5. It should be noted that the Benedictine monastic liturgy calls for repetition of the antiphon between the verse and doxology. The Introit is so performed in recordings of various Masses made in Germany by Benedictine choirs (Archive Production, I:

have from one to four verses, with the latter part of the respond ( $R_b$ ) being repeated after each verse. The complete form of an Offertory with three verses would then be  $R_{ab} V_1 R_b V_2 R_b V_3 R_b$ . So extended a form could not be maintained as the Offertory procession fell into disuse, but the Offertory verses do not begin to disappear until the eleventh century. Although they persisted in exceptional cases throughout the Middle Ages, only the respond (originally, antiphon) remained in later times. In the liturgical reform of the sixteenth century the Offertory retained one verse in the Mass for the Dead (LU, p. 1813), and Offertory verses are still present in both the Ambrosian and Hispanic rites.

It is particularly regrettable that the Offertory verses were never restored to use.<sup>6</sup> In their complete form, the Offertories are among the most interesting and unusual chants of the entire repertory. Perhaps their most striking feature (which, in fact, occurs nowhere else in Gregorian Chant) is the frequent repetition of words and phrases. There may be one or several repetitions, with the same or with different music. Although such repetitions are particularly characteristic of the now discarded verses, they are occasionally to be found in the responds as well (see LU, pp. 480 and 514).<sup>7</sup>

Similar repetitions of melody only occur in many of the extended melismas in the Offertory verses. The form *aab* was particularly favored, but other and longer forms were also frequent.

Most of the characteristics of the complete Offertories do not appear in the older responsorial chants—the Office Responsories, Graduals, and Tracts. These characteristics testify not only to the later introduction of responsorial singing in the Offertories, but also to a new creative spirit. Instead of drawing on common melodic formulas that emphasize group characteristics, composers now use both textual and musical repetition to organize each chant into an individual and unified work of art. Perhaps it is just their personal and even dramatic nature that has kept the Offertory verses from regaining their former position.

## COMMUNION

The Communion is without doubt the oldest of the three Mass chants sung antiphonally by the choir. Originally, it seems to have had the same form as the Introit, and both chants often used the same psalm, but with different antiphons. However, the Communion lost its psalm much sooner than the Introit or Offertory; and by the twelfth century, it was almost universally reduced to just the antiphon as the congrega-

6. They are published in a book that is neither readily available nor entirely reliable: C. Ott, *Offertoriale sive versus offertorium* (Tournai, 1935).

tion came to receive Communion only infrequently. Eventually, the Communion chant came to be regarded as a conclusion rather than an accompaniment and was even called the antiphon after Communion or simply Postcommunion. (The present Postcommunion is a short prayer that is either spoken or sung to a reciting tone—see AMM, No. 21).

It is probably their age, not their concluding function, that accounts for the general characteristics of the Communion chants. As a rule, they are short and relatively simple in style. Many of them are no more elaborate than Office antiphons, although a few are extended with melismas of moderate length (for example, *Panis, quem ego dedero*—The bread which I shall have given—LU, p. 1043). Another indication of their antiquity is a modal ambiguity that led to disagreement among medieval sources as to the mode of certain Communion antiphons.<sup>8</sup>

#### RESPONSORIAL CHANTS OF THE MASS

As was pointed out before, responsorial psalmody following scriptural readings goes back to practices of the Jewish synagogue. In the early Christian Church, the people sang simple, short responds between the psalm verses sung by a soloist. With the introduction of the *schola cantorum*, however, the responds became choral chants, the first instance of a procedure that eventually eliminated most congregational singing in the Mass by replacing the simple melodies that the people could sing with more elaborate chants suitable only for a trained choir. Artistic considerations may also have been influential here. Even in St. Augustine's time (354–430), solo singers were becoming notorious for creating richly embellished melodies.<sup>9</sup> Assigning the responds to the choir made it possible to reduce sharply the stylistic contrast between solo and choral sections.

Complete psalms disappeared from the responsorial chants of the Mass even sooner than from the antiphonal, but for different, primarily musical reasons. Never limited by an accompanying action, responsorial psalmody could be of any length. Nevertheless, a complete psalm that would not have been unduly long in the original method of performance became impractical in the extended ornamental style of the chants for choir and solo singer. Another factor that undoubtedly contributed to shortening the texts was the disappearance of the Lesson between the Gradual and the Alleluia. As a result, the two chants occupy a moment when the action of the Mass gives way before a great lyrical effusion. The Gradual and Alleluia are indeed “the jewels of the Roman Mass,” and in their richness the plainchant Mass attains its greatest splendor.

#### GRADUAL

The chant following the first Lesson was originally called a Responsory (*responsorium*). Later manuscripts designate it as *responsorium graduale*, or simply *graduale*, from which it acquired the name that distinguishes it from other responsorial chants. Opinions differ as to the origin of the term *graduale*, but the most commonly accepted thought is that it derived from the position of the soloist on the step (*gradus*) of the pulpit rather than in the pulpit itself, which was reserved for the reader of the Gospel.

In its reduced form, the Gradual came to consist of a choral respond followed by a solo verse. Repetition of the respond after the verse persisted until the thirteenth century, but soon thereafter it disappeared entirely. At this time developed the method of performance common in later times. After the usual solo intonation, the choir sings the major part of the respond. One or more soloists then sing the verse until the final phrase, at which point the choir joins in to provide a more impressive conclusion. Modern chantbooks provide for an optional repetition of the respond “if the responsorial method is preferred” (LU, p. xv). In this case, the cantors complete the verse alone, after which the choir sings the full respond.

As a class, Graduals are the most elaborate and melismatic of all chants. Even in the choral responds, melismas of twenty to thirty notes are not uncommon, and, as befits solo chants, the verses are even more highly melismatic. The verses also tend to lie more frequently in the upper part of the range than the responds. Some characteristic Graduals that we shall meet later in polyphonic settings are *Viderunt omnes* (All have seen), for the third Mass of Christmas (LU, p. 409), and *Sederunt principes* (The princes have sat), for the Feast of St. Stephen (LU, p. 416). An extreme example of melismatic development may be seen in the Gradual *Clamaverunt iusti* (The Righteous have cried aloud; LU, p. 1170).

One of the interesting aspects of the Graduals is their use of the centonization technique that is characteristic of the Office responsories.<sup>10</sup> In the Graduals, however, centonization is applied much more consistently and obviously than in the responsories. A number of standard phrases or formulas supply the melodic material for Graduals in a given mode. Certain formulas serve only as introductory or concluding phrases, while others serve as internal links that may be freely combined and rearranged. In some modes, centonization appears principally in the verses, with the responds being freer but occasionally using standard cadential formulas. In modes 3, 4, 7, and 8, however, both responds and verses make use of standard phrases, which occasionally recur in each

*Dominum* (Bless the Lord; LU, p. 1654) the melisma after the first "ejus" in the respond reappears intact after the word "Dominum" in the verse. Moreover, the final melismas of the two sections are identical.

The use of standard phrases in combination with extensions, variations, and freely composed passages makes of each Gradual an individual chant that yet bears a strong family resemblance to other members of its group. As we have already remarked, this method of composition is essentially Oriental and was probably adopted from Jewish musical practices. That it is so consistently evident in the Graduals attests to their antiquity as a class in comparison with the Offertories and, even more, the Alleluias, in which centonization is conspicuously absent.

## ALLELUIA

Alleluia is the Latin spelling of the Hebrew *Hallelu Jah* (Praise ye Jehovah). As an expression of praise, it was and is used in a great variety of ways in all Christian liturgies. Perhaps because of the association of Alleluia psalms with the Jewish Passover, Western liturgies have made particular use of the Alleluia in Paschal Time—that is, from Easter to Pentecost (Whitsunday or Whitsun). In this season, the word is added at the end of every chant, both in the Offices and the Proper of the Mass. Moreover, from Saturday in Easter Week to Pentecost, an Alleluia replaces the Gradual, so that Masses at this time have two Alleluias between the Epistle and the Gospel (see, for example, the Mass for the fourth Sunday after Easter, LU, p. 827). At other seasons, use of the Alleluia is more restrained; but it functions as an independent chant of the Mass Proper throughout the year, except for penitential days and seasons such as Lent.

The Alleluias as they are performed today are even more clearly responsorial than the Graduals. After the cantors sing Alleluia, the choir repeats it, continuing with an extended melisma, the *jubilus* (pl. *jubilii*).<sup>11</sup> The cantors then sing the major part of the verse, with the choir joining in for the final phrase. Again the cantors sing Alleluia, but this time, as a closing respond, the choir sings only the jubilus. As in the Gradual, the concluding choral respond of the Alleluia often disappeared in the later Middle Ages. This was normal procedure, as it still is, when a Sequence followed the Alleluia (see the Easter Mass, LU, p. 780). But the repetition also tended to disappear on other occasions, especially days that were not marked by any particular solemnity. Now, with rare exceptions, the *Liber* prescribes responsorial performance as outlined above for the Alleluia.

Much might be said about the historical development of Alleluias, the choice of texts for their verses, and the adaptation of different texts to the same melody. Above all, musical forms in the jubili and melodic relationships between the Alleluia and its verse are particularly interesting and worthy of detailed study.

## TRACT

Whether the Alleluia replaced the Tract or vice versa is a question we may leave to the liturgiologists. By the time liturgical Mass books made their appearance, the Alleluia had obviously been deemed inappropriate for the pre-Lenten and Lenten seasons, as well as for some other penitential occasions. Then, a Tract rather than an Alleluia follows the Gradual. This should not be taken to mean, as some medieval commentators concluded, that Tracts were necessarily penitential and sorrowful in themselves. The Tract for Quinquagesima Sunday, for example, consists of the first three verses of Psalm 99 (100): "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." It is also noteworthy that, on Holy Saturday and the Vigil of Pentecost (Whitsun Eve), the two chants between the Lessons are an Alleluia followed by a Tract (see LU, pp. 759–60 and 860).<sup>12</sup>

Opinions differ as to both the original method of performing the Tracts and the derivation of their name. Medieval commentators saw in the word *tractus* references either to a drawn-out (protracted) style of singing or to a continuous performance without respond or antiphon to serve as a refrain. This was certainly a later method of performance; and, as a result, modern scholars often cite the Tracts as a rare instance of direct psalmody in the Roman liturgy. There is clear evidence, however, that some Tracts were originally sung responsorially and were even identified as *responsorium* or *responsorium graduale* in the earliest manuscripts.<sup>13</sup> It is quite possible, therefore, that the Tracts represent an early stage of responsorial psalmody from which the responses were later dropped. Modern chantbooks compound the confusion by directing that the verses be sung alternately by the two sides of the choir or by cantors and full choir.

In their final form, the Tracts consist of a series of psalm verses, ranging in number from two to fourteen. Only rarely is a complete psalm used, but in any given Tract all the verses come from the same psalm. It is noteworthy that the opening verse is not so designated; the symbol for *versus* ( ∇ ) appears only with the second and succeeding verses. In the case of Tracts that were originally called Responsories, the undesig-

12. In the revised liturgy for Holy Week, the Saturday Mass is now the "Mass of the



nated opening section must have been a respond, all or part of which served as a refrain between the verses following. Three examples that may be cited are the Tract for Wednesday of Holy Week and the two Tracts for Good Friday (LU, pp. 614, 695, and 697). These were evidently Responsories with several verses in which abbreviation was achieved, not by dropping verses, but by abandoning the repetitive principle of responsorial performance.<sup>14</sup> Even so, Tracts with several verses are among the longest chants in the repertory. On the first Sunday of Lent, for example, the Tract, which includes all of Psalm 90 (91)—He that dwelleth in the secret place—occupies almost three and one-half pages in the *Liber Usualis* (533–36).

One of the features that distinguishes the Tracts from all other types of chant is their restriction to only two modes, the second and eighth. Along with this modal limitation goes a more systematic application of centonization technique than is to be found anywhere else. Willi Apel has calculated that there are only nineteen melodic formulas for the sixty verses of Tracts in Mode 8, and twenty-two for the eighty verses of Tracts in Mode 2.<sup>15</sup> Adherence to these formulas is so strict that each Tract consists almost entirely of a regulated succession of standard phrases.

Melodically, the Tracts tend to be rather ornate. Some of the chants, presumably the oldest, begin many of their phrases with recitativelike passages reminiscent of psalm tones. Almost invariably, however, these same phrases cadence with elaborate melismatic formulas. This style may perhaps be seen most clearly in the five Tracts for Holy Saturday.<sup>16</sup> The majority of Tracts do not combine these syllabic and melismatic extremes but flow smoothly in a neumatic style that frequently expands into melismas of considerable length (see, for example, the Tract for the first Sunday of Lent cited above). Quite obviously a style such as this can only have originated in solo song. It would seem, therefore, that the Tracts preserve that song as it was used in the Mass before its further elaboration in Graduals, Offertories, and Alleluias.

## ORDINARY OF THE MASS

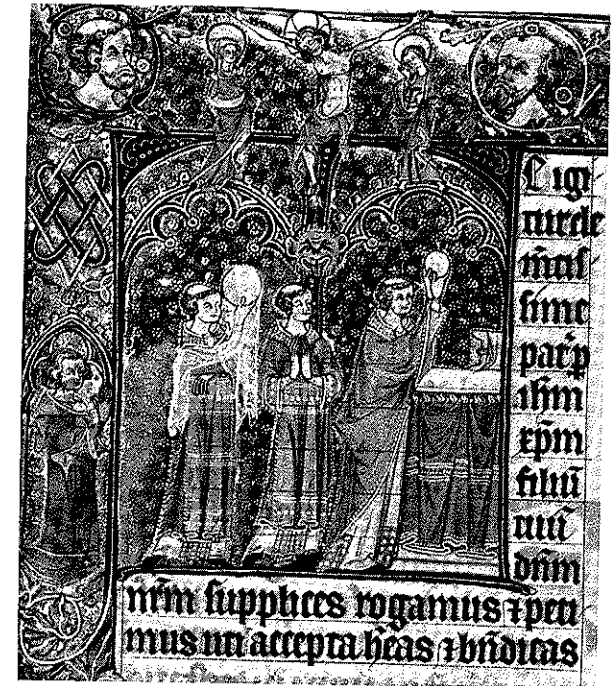
The five chant texts that belong to the Ordinary—Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei—provided the basis for the many polyphonic Masses composed in later periods. Unchanging texts that could be used

14. In the 1961 edition of LU, the Tract for Wednesday of Holy Week is still so called (p. 619), but the two for Good Friday are identified as Responsories (pp. 721 and 725).

15. Apel, GC, p. 330.

16. See *ibid.*, pp. 315–18. In older editions of LU, the Tracts are to be found on pp. 745, 748, 751, 753, and 760. In the revised liturgy (1961 edition) for the Paschal Vigil, the

The most solemn moment in the Mass, the elevation of the Host, shown in this miniature from a Sarum Missal of the early fourteenth century (Morgan Library).



repeatedly were naturally more attractive to composers of elaborate musical settings than the texts of the Proper, which appeared but once a year. In the plainchant repertory, however, the situation is entirely different. Here, the Proper chants are of primary concern, especially the responsorial chants between the Lessons, which, as we have seen, form the musical high point of the Mass. The chants of the Ordinary, taken as a group, are generally less elaborate musically, but we must discuss them in some detail nevertheless. Not only do they, or their texts, form the basis of the later polyphonic Mass, but they also represent the continuing development of plainchant composition.

All the musical items of the Ordinary were originally intended for congregational singing. They were introduced at various times over a period of several centuries, the Credo being the last to be officially authorized by Rome in 1014. It is not possible to say exactly when the singing of these texts passed from the congregation to the assisting clergy or to the trained choir. Undoubtedly, this was a gradual process that took place at different times in different places. For some chants it began as early as the eighth century, and it must have been nearly completed by the end of the eleventh, at least in the larger churches and monasteries. It is from such places, from the tenth century on, that we get manuscript evidence of new melodies for the Ordinary texts.

It is not surprising that composers seized the opportunity to write new melodies for these texts. The chants of the Proper had been firmly established, and additions could be made only with the institution of a new feast. Although such occasions were not rare, they provided an in-



the exception of the Alleluia, were by this time so rigidly fixed in their traditional forms and styles that composers often merely adapted old melodies to the texts of the new feasts. No such restrictions inhibited composers when the chants of the Ordinary became the property of the choir. Therefore, they could and did write a great many new melodies of which the modern chantbooks present but a small selection.

The Ordinary chants in the *Liber Usualis* appear in groups that we may call Mass formularies or, for convenience, simply Masses (see Appendix A, Part 3). These groups, which do not include the Credo, call for some comment. It used to be thought that they were an invention of modern editors, but recent scholarship has shown that such formularies originated in medieval practice. Most manuscripts put all the chants of each type together, as is now done with the *ad libitum* chants in the *Liber Usualis*. In some sources one finds an arrangement in pairs: Kyrie-Gloria, and Sanctus-Agnus Dei—and occasionally in the later Middle Ages complete formularies correspond to those in the modern chantbooks. Whatever the medieval arrangement may have been, however, formularies existed in fact whenever individual chants were assigned a particular liturgical use. This began to happen as early as the eleventh century.

The usual explanation for the omission of the Credo from the Mass formularies has been that, because of its late adoption by Rome, it was considered an outsider not to be accepted among the other Ordinary chants. Actually, the Credo had been universally adopted when the Mass formularies were assembled, and its omission is probably to be explained on purely practical grounds. Different settings of the Credo were rare in medieval times, and a chantbook might contain up to twenty Mass formularies but only one or two Credo melodies. Obviously, copying the same Credo in several different formularies would have wasted a great deal of time and parchment. The same situation exists in the *Liber Usualis*. There are eighteen Mass formularies, but only Credo I, the “authentic tone,” is normally used. The formularies, at least those for use on Sundays and major feasts, are thus incomplete, and the Credo must be added, no matter where it appears in medieval manuscripts or modern chantbooks.

It seems quite obvious that, for whatever reasons the Ordinary chants were assembled in groups, musical unity was not one of them. We will do well, therefore, to avoid using the term *Mass cycles* for collections that are no more true cycles than are the Proper chants of a particular feast. The designation *formulary*, on the other hand, suggests with reasonable accuracy what these collections really are: compilations of disparate chants into somewhat arbitrary and variable groupings with pre-

cedure: “Chants from one Mass may be used together with those from others”; or *ad libitum* chants may be substituted “to add greater solemnity” (LU, p. 78). This latter statement suggests what is perhaps the basic criterion for assembling a Mass formulary: the principle that the rank of a feast, its solemnity, should be matched by the elaborateness of its chants. Given the permissible variability, however, it follows that we must consider the different items of the Ordinary separately rather than as members of the formularies in which they appear.

## KYRIE ELEISON

Of some 226 catalogued melodies for the Kyrie, only 30 are included in the *Liber Usualis*. Nevertheless, this small number proves to be representative of the most important stylistic and formal characteristics of the repertory as a whole. Each of the three acclamations—*Kyrie eleison*, *Christe eleison*, *Kyrie eleison*—is sung three times, so that the complete chant has nine sections in all. This textual arrangement obviously provided composers with an ideal framework for creating distinct musical forms. In the simplest, and presumably oldest, of such forms the same melody serves for the first eight acclamations, with either a variation or a completely different melody for the ninth. The only example of this form still in use is the Kyrie of the Requiem Mass (LU, p. 1807). The last “Kyrie eleison” begins with a new melodic outline but closes with the final phrase of the other eight acclamations. The form may thus be indicated as *aaa aaa aaa'*; that is, the final melody may be considered as a repeat of *a* with a varied beginning. The repetitive nature of this form suggests that it may have been the usual one for congregational singing, and some even simpler melodies probably served the same purpose. A characteristic Kyrie of this type is illustrated in Example V-1. It has been suggested that the rather unexpected closing melody served as a link with one of the oldest Gloria melodies, as shown in the example. (In medieval practice, “Kyrie eleison” was normally elided to make a six-syllable phrase.)

### Example V-1<sup>17</sup>

Ky - ri - e - le - i - son, iij.  
Chri - ste e - le - i - son, iij.  
Ky - ri - e - le - i - son, i, Ky - ri - e - le - i - son.          Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

As a rule, the later and more elaborate melodies display more complex musical forms. Almost all Kyries that do not have the simple form