

SIDELIGHTS OF RECENT GELASIAN STUDY

A recent issue of *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* carried a short notice of Antoine Chavasse's enormous book, *Le sacramentaire gélasien* (1958), a work which regards the primitive core of this Roman book as being made for priests (not for a bishop), and claims that it was in use in the Roman churches in the seventh century. Without being at all sure that I understand the problems involved in these conclusions, I am inclined to believe that Chavasse has here gone a long way to clearing up the whole Gelasian question.

While students of the Latin liturgy study the old books from this new point of view, I propose to set down briefly some incidental sidelights noted in this area of late. It is a narrowing search which would seem to be almost over now.

I

For starting point let us take a carefully measured judgment of Mr. E. A. Lowe, in the vein that he calls "pure paleography," which has made him justly famous. Mentioning four MSS, he wrote in 1926: "Whoever is fortunate enough to fix the exact home of the above MSS will, I believe, either have discovered, or be on the way to discovering, the center whence comes the oldest extant copy of the oldest Roman Mass-book."¹ The codex dates "ca. 750" and is often associated with the Abbey of St. Denis, near Paris, but without paleographical evidence. Mr. Lowe's interest in the MS is chiefly in the handwriting, but he knows that liturgists have their own reasons for cherishing it. These he expressed as follows at the opening of the article just mentioned:

The importance of the Gelasian Sacramentary in the history of western liturgy is a commonplace to students of Christian worship. It is the earliest Roman Mass-book that has come down to us. It has not, however, reached us in its original form, but with modifications and additions made by generation after generation, in an effort to adapt it for the use of countries remote from Rome.

Be it noted here at once that this implication of repeated editions "generation after generation" is now known to be too sweeping an assumption.

The codex here dealt with is designated as *Reginensis 316* from its shelf mark in the Vatican Library collection, deriving from a former Queen Christina of Sweden. It usually goes by a name given it by scholars, the Gelasian

¹ E. A. Lowe, "The Vatican MS. of the Gelasian Sacramentary and Its Supplement at Paris," *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926) 357-73. The sentence first quoted is on p. 373.

Sacramentary, in patent reference to the Leonine and Gregorian Sacramentaries. A sacramentary, or *Liber sacramentorum*, was a passing style of celebrant's manual, having only what then fell to the officiant himself. For the Mass it needed, besides the Canon, only Collects, Prefaces, etc., but neither Scripture lessons nor choral chants. The MS *Reg. 316*, the only one of its kind in existence, is arranged in three indexed books, set off carefully from each other. It is often called the Old Gelasian to distinguish it from the so-called Young or Eighth-century Gelasian. Quite a few copies of this version survive, all arranged into one continuous book. Both styles of the Gelasian were made obsolete by the enlarged Roman Mass-book circulated by Charlemagne in his domains at the end of the eighth century.

When Mr. Lowe began (1934) the publication of his paleographical guide to Latin MSS prior to the ninth century, the collection *Codices latini antiquiores*, now approaching completion, his first volume dealt with the Vatican City holdings. *Reg. 316* is there handled as 105.² He surely did not feel he had found the home of his work, for he wrote simply: "Written in France. Closely akin to a series of MSS believed to come from North-East France, the ornamentation suggesting the Corbie school."

"Pure paleography" was due for an assist from the students of vellum illumination. Brønsted had noted, in 1924, that a celebrated psalter in the British Museum bears a striking page of ornamentation which "has its counterpart in the framework of the Merovingian Sacramentarium Gelasianum, Vatican *Reg. lat. 316*, fol. 3."³ With searching strongly stimulated, surprises were not long in following, partly from the handwriting and partly from the illumination.

When Hildebald was Archbishop of Cologne (785-819), he commissioned many codices for his library, some of which are still extant at Cologne or elsewhere. A number of these are signed by their scribes, nuns or canonesses. Such distinctive writing and superior work now permit a new classification of eighth-century codices as "Nuns' Script." Prof. Bischoff of Munich began collecting the relevant data and sharing it with Mr. Lowe behind the scene. *Reg. 316* is found to be securely attached to this group of MSS, both in its handwriting and in its ornamentation. In 1953, when Volume 6 of *Codices latini antiquiores* appeared, Lowe called attention to "the attractive suggestion made by Dr. Bischoff."⁴ "The scriptorium . . . must, of course, have

² E. A. Lowe, *Codices latini antiquiores* 1 (Oxford, 1934) n. 105.

³ J. Brønsted, *Early English Ornaments* (Copenhagen-London, 1924) p. 103; cited from C. Nordenfalk, "A Note on the Stockholm Codex Aureus," *Nordisk Tidskrift för Bok- och Biblioteksväsen* 38 (1951) 148.

⁴ E. A. Lowe, *op. cit.* 6 (1953) Introduction, p. xxii.

been a convent of importance. The one that would seem the likeliest is the nunnery at Chelles near Paris which was patronized by the court and is known to have cultivated the art of writing."⁵

In 1957 Bischoff put into writing his convincing paleographical and illumination data on these nuns' MSS, and, with a certain propriety, it appears in a series on art history.⁶

Lowe's latest volumes (8 and 9) cover the Cologne codices. He calls attention to his own previous note, and proceeds to add to the number of known nuns' MSS.⁷ Up to now the sisters have had the last word in the search. It is certain that *Reg. 316* is a nun's handiwork, and that, in all likelihood, she lived at Chelles. If Mr. Lowe faces 1960 feeling that one must keep looking for the home of *Reg. 316*, he also feels (I am confident) that this quest is nearing its end.

II

When invited to deliver a lecture at Oxford and Cambridge in January, 1951, Abbot Capelle took as his topic "L'Oeuvre liturgique de s. Gélase," a discourse subsequently printed⁸ and further refined.⁹ After dealing with traditional information on Pope Gelasius I (492-96) and the liturgy, the speaker made passing reference to recent research, with some of which, naturally, he found himself in only partial agreement.

A thick volume of commemorative essays in honor of Dom Mohlberg had come out as *Festschrift* in 1948, and an overflow volume followed in 1949. In the first of these Mohlberg volumes H. Schmidt,¹⁰ professor at the Gregorian University, presented the view that the Sundays after Pentecost (missing from *Reg. 316*) are a Gallo-Roman, not a Roman arrangement. This view has not won wide acceptance.

Abbot Capelle was anxious to discuss the sensation just caused in liturgical circles by the article by Antoine Chavasse¹¹ in 1950 tracing whole blocks of Masses in the Leonine Sacramentary to specific popes in the mid-sixth cen-

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ B. Bischoff, "Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften und das Skriptorium von Chelles," in *Karolingische und ottonische Kunst* (Wiesbaden, 1957) pp. 395-411.

⁷ E. A. Lowe, *op. cit.* 8 (1959) ix; 9 (1960) v.

⁸ B. Capelle, O.S.B., "L'Oeuvre liturgique de s. Gélase," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 2 (1959) 129-44.

⁹ B. Capelle, O.S.B., "Retouches gélasiennes dans le Sacramentaire léonien," *Revue bénédictine* 61 (1951) 3-14.

¹⁰ H. Schmidt, S.J., "Die Sonntage nach Pfingsten in den römischen Sakramentaren," *Miscellanea liturgica in honorem L. Cuniberti Mohlberg* 1 (Rome, 1948) 451-93.

¹¹ A. Chavasse, "Messes du Pape Vigile dans le Léonien," *Ephemerides liturgicae* 64 (1950) 161-213.

ture. No less than sixty-eight Masses, at least, are to be ascribed to Popes Silverius and Vigilius, who together fill the years 536-55. The Abbot took leave by predicting many another surprise in matters liturgical, and of course his own hand has not failed in bringing them about.

An unpleasant surprise ensued in October, 1951—the death of Abbé Emmanuel Bourque. This Mohlberg-trained scholar had had Part 1 of his dissertation published in the August *Studi di antichità cristiana* (1949); Part 2 came posthumously from Laval University in 1952.¹²

When Pope Gregory I sent Augustine and company to evangelize Britain, just what Mass-book did they take along? Dom Henry Ashworth of Quarr Abbey has written widely on that general theme in late years,¹³ most of his topics, however, sound less frightening than the query asked at Oxford's Patristic Congress: "Did St. Gregory the Great Compose a Sacramentary?" These articles, in revision, might well pass into book form; the one appealing most to me is "The Influence of the Lombard Invasions on the Gregorian Sacramentary."¹⁴

A Gregorian University dissertation by A. P. Lang¹⁵ came on the market just ahead of Chavasse's volume. This bulwark of quiet, patient scholarship is a permanent reminder that much of the literary charm of the prayers of *Reg. 316* derives from Leo.

Since 1910 Dom Alban Dold had been enlarging our knowledge (chiefly in things liturgical) by deciphering and publishing things in *Texte und Arbeiten* from Beuron. In 1958 it was high time that someone, Klaus Gamber in this case, set about collecting these *Fragmenta Doldiana* in the handy *Sakramentartypen* now available.¹⁶ One need not take too seriously all the types distinguished by individual MSS, but no one can miss the convenience of this list.

Margaret Deanesly and Paul Grosjean, S.J.¹⁷ (Bollandist expert for Great Britain and Ireland) have been collaborating on an important article: "The Canterbury Edition of the Answers of Pope Gregory I to Augustine." They

¹² E. Bourque, *Etude sur les sacramentaires romains* 1 (Vatican City, 1949); 2 (Quebec, 1952).

¹³ H. Ashworth, O.S.B., "Did St. Gregory the Great Compose a Sacramentary?", *Studia patristica* 2 (*Texte und Untersuchungen* 64 [1957]) 1-16.

¹⁴ H. Ashworth, O.S.B., "The Influence of the Lombard Invasions on the Gregorian Sacramentary," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 36 (March, 1954) 305-27.

¹⁵ A. P. Lang, S.V.D., *Leo der Grosse und die Texte des Altgelasianums* (Kaldenkirchen, 1957).

¹⁶ K. Gamber, *Sakramentartypen (Texte und Arbeiten* 49-50; Beuron, 1958).

¹⁷ M. Deanesly and P. Grosjean, S.J., "The Canterbury Edition of the Answers of Pope Gregory I to St. Augustine," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 10 (Apr., 1959) 1-49, 40.

strongly defend the authenticity of that much-discussed letter giving Augustine freedom to pick things suitable which he found in the rites he saw in Gaul, and to weave them like a garland for the cradle of the infant Church in England. The authors take for granted that a sacramentary like *Reg. 316*, "or an early form of the Gregorian," would have been a suitable basis for supplementation. They are puzzled by some of the positions taken by Gamber.¹⁸ *Reg. 316*, we recall, dates "ca. 750."

J. H. Crehan asked last year how we would be inclined to translate "*Canon dominicus papae Gelasi*."¹⁹ The words stand over the Canon of the Mass in the Stowe Missal, Ireland's oldest Mass-book. Fr. Crehan's own translation is hinted at by the words I have here set in italics. *Dominicum*, as a noun, is a very old name for Mass; its use here, as an adjective, is a hint from a new quarter of unsuspected antiquity in Irish documents.

"The Gelasian Sacramentary," says Fr. Jungmann in his one-volume version of *Missarum sollemnia* (1959),²⁰ "is a real and proper Mass-book." Thanks to Lowe and Bischoff we know that it comes from a nuns' scriptorium in the Paris area of about 750; thanks to Lang and Chavasse we are finding out how much Mass history is enfolded in its pages.

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¹⁸ K. Gamber, *Wege zum Urgregorianum (Texte und Arbeiten 46)*; Beuron, 1956).

¹⁹ J. H. Crehan, S.J., "Canon dominicus papae Gelasi," *Vigiliae christianae* 12 (1958) 45-48.

²⁰ J. A. Jungmann, S.J., *The Mass of the Roman Rite* (New York, 1959) p. 46.