

Some reflections based on a comparative description of the anaphora of the first millennium

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1. Introduction: The Anaphora, their number and use

The abundance of anaphora is one of the characteristics of Eastern rites, which at first glance differentiates them considerably from Western rites, particularly the Roman rite. In fact, in Eastern liturgies, although no element within the anaphora changes depending on the feast or liturgical season, more than one anaphora is used, alternating them according to the liturgical year or the celebrant's choice, as appropriate. Only the Armenian rite currently has a single, unique and unchanging anaphora, after the other 11 present in the two codes of this rite that have come down to us from antiquity fell into disuse. In the other Eastern rites, there is a remarkable multiplicity of anaphora. The extreme case is undoubtedly represented by the Syrian tradition, as there are about 80 anaphora, of which the Jacobites normally use about thirty. Catholics used twenty-five anaphora in Assemani's time (1709-1782), but the 1843 missal contains only seven; the 1922 missal also contains seven anaphora, but has replaced four of them with others belonging to the rich treasure of its tradition. The anaphora par excellence in the Syriac rite is that of St James, used on Sundays and feast days of the Lord, as well as for the ordination of a priest, during his first Mass and when the liturgy is celebrated for the first time at an altar; for feasts of the Virgin Mary, the anaphora of St. John the Evangelist is often used. Otherwise, the choice of anaphora is left to the discretion of the celebrant, although, in general, on ordinary days, that of the twelve Apostles is commonly used.

Among other rites, we also find a certain variety of anaphora, although their number is more limited. Thus, among Ethiopian Catholics, we find seventeen anaphora (of which the Monophysites recognise only fourteen).

The first edition of the Maronite missal (1594) included fourteen anaphora, most of which coincide with the corresponding Syriac ones; the second edition of 1716 retains the same number, but replaces three of them.

The Copts and Chaldeans have only three anaphora each, which they use only on specific occasions. The Byzantine rite has preserved only two anaphora, that of St. John Chrysostom and

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that of St. Basil, the former having supplanted the latter in the Middle Ages and currently used only on ten occasions during the liturgical year. In some places of the Byzantine rite, the custom of celebrating the feast of St James with a specific liturgy has been introduced, centred on the Anaphora of St James.

The two churches of India, Malabar and Malankara, use the Eastern and Western Syriac liturgies respectively.

In the Western Church, the only rite that has survived without adopting the Roman canon is the Mozarabic rite; even in this rite there is a great variety of anaphora, due to the fact that — with the exception of the introductory dialogue, the *Sanctus* and the account of the Institution — the "canon" is composed of variable parts that change almost every Mass within an otherwise fixed structure. In this way, the content of the entire anaphora varies from day to day, as was the case in the ancient Gallican rite of the first millennium and probably also in the Celtic rite. Thus, most of the content of what would structurally be the anaphora does not properly belong *to the Ordo Missae*, but to the 'proper', to use the terminology of the Roman rite.

The Roman Canon itself, although it currently has much greater stability, has some variable parts with short texts specific to certain feasts. The fact that in current Missals the now scarce texts of the prefaces and the variants of the *Hanc Igitur* and *Communicantes* can be inserted without typographical difficulty *into the Ordo Missae* leads us to consider them as part of it; but in reality they also belong to *their own section*, even if, for practical reasons, the usual arrangement is advisable. In fact, the oldest evidence of Roman liturgical texts, what is improperly called *the Leonine Sacramentary* (6th century), includes these texts in *its own* (given the incompleteness of the only surviving copy, we do not know what *the Ordo missae* of this sacramentary would be like, assuming it contained one). It could not be otherwise, given that in the part that has come down to us we find as many as 267 prefaces, practically one for each Mass, and in some cases more than one for Masses for the same saint or for the same feast; for example, the feast of Saint Cecilia has five different Mass formularies, each with its own preface (fol. 120r-122r), but in other cases there are even more². There are also almost a dozen *Hanc igitur* propri in this Sacramentary.

2. Compositional characteristics

Let us now look at the compositional characteristics of the multitude of anaphora mentioned above.

² For example, there are 28 forms for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul and 14 for the feast of Saint Lawrence.

The structure of the anaphora can be divided into two sections: in the first, God is praised for his divine nature and thanked for creation and redemption. The second section is an invocation that focuses on the transformation of the gifts into the body and blood of Christ.

The most widespread type in the East is that of the Antiochian tradition, used by the Western Syrians, Byzantines and Armenians who, in a sense, refer to the metropolis of Antioch as their 'mother church'. This tradition is represented by the anaphora of St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. James, the Armenian anaphora, but also the Coptic anaphora of St. Basil and the first and third anaphora of the Chaldeans and Malabars. Although each has its own characteristics and wording, they all have a common structure and certain fundamental themes that constitute their doctrinal subject matter. These already appear in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

Below is a list of these fundamental themes, which is, of course, only a summary, since no one anaphora contains them all, but some anaphora contain some and others contain others; moreover, their order is frequently altered.

After the introductory dialogue, which generally ends with the response of the faithful, "it is right and just," the idea is taken up again with the formula, "It is truly right and just."

The prayer is addressed to God the Father (although the Son and the Holy Spirit are sometimes mentioned) with the expression "Creator" or "Lord of Creation", with the possibility of a more or less detailed account (in the case of *the Apostolic Constitutions*, extremely detailed) of the work of creation.

Subsequently, the works accomplished by God in favour of humanity are recalled:

He created man from nothing, endowed him with intelligence and free will, and placed him in Paradise; after his fall into sin, he did not abandon him, but rather gave him the law, the prophets, the priesthood and prefigurative holocausts.

But above all, he finally gave him his own Son, who humbled himself by becoming incarnate and dwelling among men, accomplished the 'economy' (of salvation), taught the precepts, destroyed idolatry, led to the knowledge of the Father, and acquired a chosen people through baptism.

Finally, he gave himself up to passion for us, died, descended into hell, rose again, ascended into heaven, sat at the right hand of the Father, and will return to judge men according to their deeds.

This long account is interrupted at a certain point (the exact place varies depending on the anaphora) by the singing of the Sanctus: men, joining the heavenly hierarchies, sing the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy...".

Once finished, the celebrant resumes his prayer with the expression "You are Holy" or "truly, You are Holy...", and generally invokes the three persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Lord, as the crowning achievement of the entire work of salvation, left the memorial of his Passion, so the account of the Institution follows: the words spoken by the Lord during the Last Supper are reproduced, at the end of which the formula "Do this" or "Every time..." etc. is said.

This is followed by the anamnesis, which may include: the saving sufferings of Our Lord, the cross, the burial for three days, the resurrection, the ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his second coming.

It often concludes with the expression "we offer you what is yours from what is yours, in all things and for all things" or something similar.

Structurally, these "Antiochene" anaphora are characterised by the "account of the institution" being inserted into the first anaphoric section, i.e. at the end of the account of the work of salvation.

The words of consecration are followed by the Epiclesis; subsequently, the commemorations (*diptychi*) take place.

As for the intercessions, the review of the Church of Antioch, at least from the 6th century onwards, begins to divide them into six fixed parts, in which first a supplication is made for the ecclesiastical hierarchy, for the living faithful and for kings; then the saints, doctors and the deceased are remembered.

The 'Alexandrian' type of anaphora, i.e. those used by churches that refer to the metropolis of Alexandria as their mother church, have the characteristic of inserting the 'institution narrative' into the second anaphoric section, the 'epiclesis', after the commemorations (*diptychs*) have been made. two epicleses can also be observed in this second section: the first is a transition to the "account of the institution", while the second is the actual invocation for the "transformation" of the gifts and of those participating in the Eucharist, which is therefore found at the end of the anaphora.

Over time, the practice of reciting the anaphora (in whole or in part) in a low voice became widespread. It seems that the Syriac Orthodox Church was the first to adopt silent anaphora towards the end of the 5th century.

Although the pattern seen, with its variations in terms of the order of the elements and its content, is the fundamental one, there are some cases in the varied world of anaphora that deviate from it considerably.

The extreme example of this is undoubtedly the 'Marian' anaphora found in the Ethiopian liturgy (of the Virgin Mary, Daughter of God, of Our Lady Mary, Mother of God), in which all the elements are centred on the Virgin.

As a curiosity, we mention the so-called 'Liturgy of St Peter', found in some Greek and Slavic manuscripts. In it, we find the Roman canon slightly modified so as to be arranged in the manner of an Eastern anaphora. The oldest surviving manuscript of the Liturgy of St Peter dates from around 1050. Adapted to Eastern liturgical norms, this translation produced a "mixed liturgy," also known to the Athonite monks but used mainly in its area of origin, namely southern Italy. Modified to conform to local Byzantine rites, in the 16th century it was further recast according to the Roman order.

Among the three anaphora added to the second edition of the Maronite Missal (1716) is the so-called "Anaphora Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae" (anaphora della Chiesa romana), composed specifically for this edition by André Scandar, Maronite archpriest, professor of Arabic at the Sapienza University of Rome and official interpreter of the Congregation for *the Propagation of the Faith*, who, mixing traditions, took some elements from the Roman canon and inserted them into the structure of a Syriac anaphora.

In another Maronite anaphora, that of "St. Peter", also known by the Syriac term "sharar", the priest addresses the Son in the second person, instead of addressing the Father as usual.

But the most puzzling case is undoubtedly that of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari. The oldest manuscripts that have come down to us contain no trace of the story of the institution and therefore of the words of consecration.

In the Malabar tradition, the account was inserted, under the influence of Latin missionaries, into the Missal corrected in accordance with the provisions of the Synod of Diamper/Rozian in the 16th century; the account is placed between the anaphora and the rites of fraction.

In the printed Chaldean Missals (Mosul 1901 and 1936) and Syro-Malabar Missals (1962 and 1986), it was instead inserted into the second prayer of the anaphora.

However, non-Catholics in the Eastern Church continue to use the anaphora without the institution narrative.

Scholars offer three main explanations for the absence of this account in the anaphora: it never contained it (E. Ratcliff, G. Dix). It was originally present but has been lost (A. Raes, B. Botte, Bouyer, Dalmais). In the Maronite anaphora "Sharar," one might find the position and form of the missing account (W. F. Macomber).

3. Attempts to answer the question of the origin of the anaphora

Already in St Justin's description of Christian prayer, just a century after the beginning of Christianity, we find a fundamental two-part pattern, in continuity with biblical antecedents.

The link between Christian worship and Jewish liturgy has long been taken for granted. But for some time now, studies have been specifically aimed at discovering which Jewish liturgical structures should be related to the Christian Eucharist and in particular to the anaphora.

First of all, there is a common element that distinguishes Christian worship and Jewish liturgy from the religious practices of pagan antiquity:

Prayer, as old as mankind itself, responds to our deepest needs. In ancient civilisations such as Egypt and Babylon, ritual prayer played a fundamental role in ceremonies and sacrifices, often endowed with magical powers and reserved for expert priests. Scholar Joseph Heinemann points out that Jewish prayer is distinguished by its monotheistic vision, intimacy with God, and absence of magic or bargaining with the deity.

In fact, during the Second Temple period, regular communal worship was established, an extraordinary innovation that transformed prayer into an autonomous act of worship alongside the sacrifices of the Temple. After the destruction of the Temple, prayer replaced sacrifices, becoming central to Jewish religious life. The rabbis established precise rules, making communal prayer obligatory and accessible, even for those who prayed alone, but always as part of the communal 'we'.

Jewish worship influenced early Christian liturgies, which, however, differed in the prominent role of *the leiturgos* as an intermediary with God. The formula of *the berakhah*, introduced to distinguish fixed prayers from personal ones, became standard in the third century CE, but the synagogue continued to balance uniformity and variety, welcoming poetic elements to maintain freshness and fluidity in worship.

With regard to the history of the origins of Christian worship, worship historians have been particularly interested in the link between Christian and Jewish liturgical prayer. Since the 17th century, the thesis has been put forward that the former originated directly from the latter.

4. Dix and Bouyer: The anaphora derived from Jewish prayers

But it was mainly through the study of the Anglican monk Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*³, that research on the Christian Eucharist came to the fore in order to find the genesis,

³ Gregory Dix. *The Shape of the Liturgy*. London, Dacre Press, 1945.

development and main forms of the Eucharist. The fundamental point on which Dix focuses his attention is precisely that of the derivation of the anaphora from the Jewish liturgy of the table.

The work of Louis Bouyer⁴ falls within the same field. He believes that the Jewish roots of Christian Eucharistic prayer are beyond question: "The first formulas of the Christian Eucharist [...] are nothing more than Jewish formulas, applied, with the addition of a few words, to a new content"⁵. But while Dix limited his research to the Jewish prayer surrounding the blessing of the table, Bouyer turns his attention to all the Jewish prayers we know: the *berakot* of the table, but also those related to the proclamation of *the Shema* and the *Tefillah*, the "prayer par excellence" recited three times a day. He also notes a similarity between the "Alexandrian" type of anaphora and the 18 blessings of *the Tefillah*, especially in the intercessory prayers of the anaphora, observing a parallel in order and content⁶.

Many other studies could be placed along the same lines, revealing an intention and a method: to illuminate the totality of the Anaphora by extending its connections with Jewish liturgy as far as possible.

4. Ligier and the genesis of the Anaphora

In the same period (mid-1960s), Louis Ligier⁷, after careful textual comparisons, observed that a research method aimed at maximising the relationship between Jewish prayers and Christian anaphora risks being rather suited to finding similarities and underestimating differences and peculiarities. He insists, for example, on emphasising how the 'institution narrative' is an element that transforms the style of prayer and makes a 'mechanical' derivation from Jewish blessings untenable. However, from a formal point of view, he identifies the institution narrative in the Anaphora with a significant element of Jewish table prayers: 'narrative embolisms' (embolon: graft). It follows that the genesis and development of the Anaphora went from an initial preponderance of the characteristic pattern of Jewish table prayers (*birkat ha-mazon*) to a pattern in which the "institution story" embolism became the constant and central element.

5. Audet and the *berakah* as archetype

⁴ Louis Bouyer. *Eucharist. Theology and Spirituality of Eucharistic Prayer*. Paris, Desclée, 1966.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ L. Ligier, *Around the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Eastern Anaphora and Jewish Anamnesis of Kippur*, in "Nouvelle Revue Théologique"* 82 (1960) 40-55; Idem, *From the Last Supper of Jesus to the Anaphora of the Church*, in "La Maison-Dieu" 87 (1966) 7-49; Idem, *From the Lord's Supper to the Eucharist*, in "Assemblées du Seigneur" 1 (1968) 19-57.

In tracing this status quaestionis, particular emphasis must be given to the study by J.P. Audet⁸. He does not dwell on each of the "blessings", but asserts that it is the "literary genre" of the "blessing" (Beraka), reconstructed by him in its structure and laws, that produced the literary genre of the Christian anaphora.

This literary genre has the following characteristics:

1. Prayer addressed to God, characterised by a verb of address and action (to bring) consisting of the participle *bârûk* (blessed);
2. the motivation, description and proclamation of the reason why God is "blessed", that is, what God has done, give rise to the inner attitude expressed in the first part of the blessing: the feeling, says Audet, of "thanksgiving".

According to Audet, the *berakah*, in its further cultural development, acquires a third moment or part: that of supplication or epiclesis; at the end, there will also be a concluding, doxological moment.

This tripartite structure would be completed, according to our author, by the fact that in New Testament terminology and subsequently in Christian anaphora, the Hebrew term *barak* (בָּרַךְ to bless, to give thanks, or even to prostrate oneself or kneel) is translated by the group of verbs εὐλογεῖν (*eulogein*) and εὐχαριστεῖν (*eucharistein*), and these have an identity of content, both projecting them onto the root *barak*: that of praise. However, the thesis has met with opposition, with some scholars refusing to identify *eucharistein* with *barak*, arguing that the inclusion of this verb in the Old Testament tradition does not come through *barak* but through *yadah* (יָדָה)⁹. Only in this way does *eucharistein* retain its meaning of praise, thanksgiving and, above all, its denser and more important meaning, namely sacrifice.

6. Giraud and the history of forms

Cesare Giraud, who for many years systematically researched the origins of anaphora, defined his research as an "essay on comparative liturgy"¹⁰, more precisely an application of the

⁸ J. P. Audet, *Historical sketch of the literary genre of the Jewish "blessing" and the "Christian Eucharist"*, in "Revue Biblique" 65 (1958) 371-399; Idem, *Literary genre and cultic forms of the Eucharist*. "Nova et vetera," in *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 80 (1966) 353-385.

⁹ This verb has a number of meanings. The literal meaning of "yadah" cf. יָד (yad, hand) is to stretch out or extend the hand and then "throw" or "shoot", but more frequently, in a religious context, it refers to praising, giving thanks or confessing (the name of God (Hiphil) or sins (Hithpael)).

¹⁰ Cesare Giraud, SJ. "Genesis and structure of the anaphora in the light of the comparative method. History of a research project: methodology, findings and open questions" in F. TAFT and G. WINCKLER (eds.), *Comparative Liturgy: Fifty Years after Anton Baumstark (1872-1948)*, OCA 265, Rome 2001, pp. 563-582.

comparative method to anaphoric texts, in light of the history of forms. According to him, "In this research into the genesis of liturgical formulas, it is not possible to proceed by means of single and exclusive archetypal models, but rather by means of a series of equally archetypal models. And so we study the continuity between the Old Testament confession, the berakah and the Christian anaphora"¹¹. The anaphora is, first and foremost, a literary fact that develops from Old Testament Hebrew models, passing through the blessing, to Christian liturgy.

From consideration of the forms dependent on the typology of the Old Testament covenant, the fundamental bipartite structure of the covenant prayer emerges, which is divided into a protasis in the indicative (or anamnestic-celebratory section, as he calls it) and an apodosis in the imperative (or epiclesis section). In turn, the two parts of the two-part structure are reciprocally linked by a relationship of 'legal consequentiality', often highlighted by the recurrence of the logical-temporal particle 'and now'. In fact, the protasis in the indicative mood (or anamnestic-celebratory section) legally establishes the apodosis in the imperative mood (or epiclesis section). There is a mirror relationship between the two: one is made for the other.

Thus, he identifies in the Eucharistic Prayer a "eucological matrix" that derives from the Old Testament תּוֹדָה (*todah*), understood as the vassal's confession to the sovereign in a covenant structure. This is divided into two sections: anamnestic-celebratory praise (recalling God's faithfulness and the people's unfaithfulness) and the epiclesis petition (invoking divine intervention based on this memory). This bipartite form reveals a literary and theological richness shared between Old Testament, Jewish and Christian prayer.

Todah — from the root יָדָה (*yadah*, to confess) — has a meaning that expresses interpersonal relationship; it effectively means 'to confess the Lord' and 'to confess one's sin': it is the attitude of a people who know they are 'allied' with God.

In the New Testament, *yadah* became *eucharistein*, to give thanks, which is understood as going far beyond the basic meaning of gratitude or thanksgiving for a gift. "Fare eucaristia" certainly means "giving thanks", but above all it means confessing God's faithfulness and confessing our unfaithfulness; it means recalling a saving action that involves the interpersonal relationships between God and man, relationships that have unfolded in a "history of salvation".

Jewish prayer favours the verb *eulogein* (to bless) over *eucharistein* (to confess), even though at the celebratory level they are interchangeable. The New Testament texts, on the other hand, perhaps

¹¹ Ibid.

in order to maintain distance from Judaism, have favoured the ancient 'confess' and linked it *to eucharistein*, producing an unstable balance in the process of substitution.

But often in the prayers of the Old Testament and Judaism, the praying community, in order to theologically support the petition it is making, inserts (grafts) a biblical text of promise and does so by directly quoting the word of God, who speaks in the first person. This element is technically called embolism (*embolon*: grafting), as Ligier had already observed. Such "grafting" is widely attested in Old Testament eucology, throughout Jewish eucology, and in Christian anaphoric and non-anaphoric eucology. In Christian anaphora, the very words, in the first person, of the "text of the promise" with which the Lord, on the eve of his passion, prophetically gave himself in the sign of the broken bread and the cup of blood shed for the forgiveness of sins, to reunite the scattered children of God (Jn 11:53), are inserted as an embolism.

Giraud adds that the anaphora should be considered "in parallel with the formulas of non-anaphoric eucology, such as, for example, the blessing of the font, the blessing of the chrism, the blessing of the spouses, the prayers of absolution, especially Eastern (but also Western), the prayers of the anointing of the sick, the formulas of ordination, *the Roman Exultet*, etc. All these formulas are in fact subject to the same literary form.

Giraud's methodological approach, set out in several of his writings, attempts to indicate a non-mechanistic genesis of the anaphora, identified at the level of continuity in the literary oratorical structure of the formulas that refer to the Old Testament 'confession'.

7. The liturgy of the Synagogue and the Christian anaphora. Hypotheses, difficulties

According to authors such as Bouyer, Jewish synagogue prayer was already established in the first century, and the Eucharistic rite of the early Christians simply borrowed its first part from a synagogue-type service.

However, in the mid-20th century, scientific studies on the history of synagogue liturgy were initiated for the first time by Jewish scholars, notably Joseph Heinemann, in extensive publications, but particularly in his seminal volume *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns*¹², as well as in his teaching.

¹² Heinemann, Joseph. *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Studia judaica): 9. Berlin -New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1977. A revision of the work originally published in Hebrew under the title: *Ha-Tefilah bi-tequfat ha-Tana'im yeha-Amora'im*. See also *Literature of the Synagogue Edited, with introductions and notes, by Joseph Heinemann with Jakob J. Petuchowski*. Behrman House, Inc., New York, 1975. Reprint by Gorgias Press 2006. Introduction by Richard S. Sarason. Also important is his work on the revised Hebrew edition of 1972 of Ismar Elbogen's classic study of 1913, *Jewish Liturgy in its Historical Development*.

These studies have highlighted the excessive simplification of theories that assumed that Jewish prayer had remained unchanged for eight or nine centuries, given that the oldest known complete Jewish ritual is the compilation by Amram Gaon, which dates back only to the 9th century, i.e. a century after the oldest manuscript of *the Gelasian Sacramentary* and several centuries after the Christian anaphora attested in papyri such as those from Strasbourg, Barcelona and Manchester.

From an earlier period, we have some manuscripts found by chance in 1896 in *the genizah* of a synagogue in Cairo, an ancient Christian church that had been converted into a synagogue in 882: some of these may date back to the 8th century. As for Amram Gaon (the head of the yeshiva of Sura, in Mesopotamia), he was commissioned by the Jews of Spain to document the order of prayers and their laws; however, we do not have a manuscript with the original version of *the siddur*, but only living versions filtered through the traditions of its users. For this reason, it is impossible to know which words Amram actually wrote.

Finally, in 1486, the Soncino family in Italy printed the first *siddur*, which revolutionised the way Jews prayed. Prayers, which were initially the preserve of those able to memorise them and then those who had access to rare manuscripts, became available to everyone.

A congregation of worshippers could participate more fully than ever before, rather than simply listening passively to *the chazan* and reciting a few refrains. Printing standardised the *siddur* and at the same time contributed to the spread of new prayers.

In essence, we know no more about Jewish liturgies of the first three centuries than we do about Christian liturgies of the same period. Such knowledge is gained by attempting to establish the prehistory of later texts through the liturgical discussions reported in the Mishnah (late 2nd century) and the Talmud (4th-5th centuries), but it is inevitably based on many conjectures that have long been presented uncritically as certainties. We can therefore see that it is very risky to draw overly precise conclusions from a comparison of ancient Christian liturgical texts with the Jewish rituals known to us today.

At the same time, however, sometimes the influence of Jewish ritual did not consist in Christians adopting the same customs as Jews, but in doing the opposite in order to distinguish themselves from them; at other times, it may have been the Jews who had to differentiate their practices from those of Christians. However, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that there are simply cases of completely independent parallel developments, without causal relationships. Finally, today we can see that early Christianity and Tannaitic Judaism are two religions that formed in the same period and under the same conditions: there is no reason not to hypothesise a parallel and reciprocal

development of the two religions, during which Judaism sometimes internalised the ideas of its rival rather than the other way around.

On the other hand, there has been a tendency among many Christian scholars, as among many Jewish scholars in the past, to limit their investigation of Jewish antecedents exclusively to the rabbinic traditions found in the Mishnah, the Talmud, and other writings. Although it was these traditions that shaped later Jewish orthodoxy and, consequently, created the impression that they also constituted the mainstream of Jewish practice at the beginning of the first century, we must be careful not to take this impression as fact. Most often, the influences seem to come from the traditions of Jewish movements present in the first century but which disappeared from circulation after the destruction of the Temple, rather than from the rabbinic traditions codified as Orthodox Judaism in later centuries. The renowned liturgist Paul Bradshaw states that "We have no reason to suppose that the early Christian converts came from the Pharisaic party, and from the controversies documented in the New Testament, we have every reason to expect the opposite, and so we must look to what we know about other forms of Jewish belief and practice in the first century to identify possible influences on early Christian worship traditions"¹³.

This is confirmed by the fact that a recent, albeit controversial, school of Jewish studies has argued that the rabbinic movement remained peripheral in Jewish society at least until the third or fourth century CE, and even then it gained influence very gradually and only became socially and religiously dominant in the sixth century or even later. It is possible that further discoveries are still to be made in research in this field.

In a 2007 lecture¹⁴, Bradshaw himself, seeking to arrive at a more realistic assessment and avoid many of the false conclusions that have often been reached, said:

Part of the problem stems from the tendency of some Christian scholars to continue using outdated Jewish study material to demonstrate a connection between practices. Although many of the Jewish texts used to draw parallels were only known from sources dating back to periods much later than the first century, this was not considered a problem in the past: previous generations of Jewish scholars believed that Jewish liturgical tradition had shown remarkable stability over the centuries, and therefore a reference to a custom in the Talmud

¹³ See Paul Bradshaw, *La Liturgie chrétienne en ses origines*, Cerf, 1995.

¹⁴ Paul Bradshaw, "Jewish Influence on Early Christian Liturgy: A Reappraisal," in *Liturgies in East and West. Ecumenical relevance of early liturgical development*, pp. 47-60. Proceedings of the International Symposium Vindobonense I, Vienna, 17-20 November 2007. Feulner, Hans-Jürgen [ed.]. - Münster i. W. (2013).

could safely be taken as proof of its existence many centuries earlier, especially if what was said about it was attributed to some figure from antiquity¹⁵.

Bradshaw therefore believes it is urgent to arrive at a more realistic assessment and to revisit many of the false conclusions that have been reached¹⁶. It is now recognised by mainstream Jewish scholarship that, like Christian liturgy, Jewish practices have undergone significant changes and developments throughout their history, especially after the destruction of the Temple, which brought about a fundamental transformation of Judaism.

For example, Jewish scholars today almost unanimously agree that the later Passover Seder did not exist during the Second Temple period, and although some have attempted to reconstruct the ritual model of the festival before the destruction of the Temple, even these efforts have been questioned. Therefore, more cautious scholars would hesitate to draw any direct parallels between the Last Supper and the rabbinic Seder. Equally doomed to failure are the frequent attempts to find close verbal similarities between late Jewish prayer texts and those of the early Christians.

Similarly—and I quote Bradshaw once again—even what appear to be the earliest Christian prayers for meals, contained in the ecclesiastical order known as *the Didache*, have been the subject of particular attention in the attempt to find parallels. Bouyer, for example, made the surprising claim that only a few words and phrases have been changed here from the presumed Hebrew original, the *Birkat ha-mazon*, or grace after meals. This claim has become, in the light of current research, patently false¹⁷.

8. The elusive canon: The origin and primitive form of the Roman Canon, various hypotheses

A glance is enough to realise that the Roman Canon has a very different structure from the fairly linear and clear one of the Eastern anaphora described above. However, medieval scholars did not discuss the historical question of the Canon; they accepted the text as it was, considering it in some way sacred (sometimes attributing it, at least in general terms, to St Peter himself), limiting themselves to commenting on it and interpreting it mystically and theologically. Similarly, more recent authors such as Gehr and Thalhoffer, belonging to the old school, were content to explain additions or changes here and there, mainly on the basis of information transmitted by *the Liber Pontificalis*; however, they were not interested in investigating the origin and development of the entire Canon.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

On the other hand, as early as the beginning of the 20th century, scholars began to wonder whether the order received was the original one. Duchesne, for example, thought at the end of the 19th century that many parts of the Roman Canon were not in their original position¹⁸.

Further analysis of the structure of the Canon and the order of the prayers that compose it, comparison with other ancient prayers, and some variations in its text in the different versions that have been handed down to us confirm the impression that many parts are not in their original position, which would indicate the presence of historical development.

In fact, both internal reasons (greater consistency of some elements of the Canon when reorganised according to a more natural or logical order) and external reasons (comparison with other rites in which parallel passages, often corresponding exactly, are found in a different order) have been found.

Various theories have been proposed to explain what the ancient order of the elements of the Canon was, why and when it was changed. Although at the beginning of the 20th century it was generally accepted that a reworking had taken place, there are different theories regarding the specific reconstructions proposed and the dating of this reworking. Another question that can only be addressed through conjecture is that of the relationship between the Roman Canon and other ancient liturgical Anaphora.

The scholar faced with all these various hypotheses will not find it easy to determine which of them is most likely. All, or almost all, have at least some degree of probability, but all present difficulties, generally because the documents at our disposal can be interpreted in different ways.

Many authors are optimistic that they can resolve all the difficulties with their own theory. Drews, for example, is emblematic. In presenting his solution, which he considers "definitive," he says: "All the efforts that interpreters of the Mass have made so far have been in vain; but now I hope that their work has come to an end." However, four years later, after reading Baumstark's theory, he changed his mind on an important point and modified his own theory.

Fortescue, who had been ironic about Drews' case, says: "We will not add further confusion by proposing another solution which, like its predecessors, should resolve all difficulties and supplant the others." However, he declares: "It seems possible to discover, at least by conjecture, something more about the origin of our rite. It can be considered certain and accepted by all parties that our Canon is not now in the form in which it was originally composed. It is a rearrangement and almost certainly a fragment. The Mass we celebrate today is a greatly abbreviated and reworked form." He

¹⁸ Cf. Louis Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien: étude sur la liturgie latine avant Charlemagne*. Paris: Thorin. 1889.

continues: "We can, with reasonable certainty, distinguish two phases in this development: First, the text of the Canon in Latin was composed or translated from Greek. This produced at least most of the prayers we know, but in a different order. Second, at some point these prayers were rearranged (and shortened if they were not already) to form the Gelasian Canon."

Among the theories proposed to explain this, Fortescue distinguishes two main lines of thought:

There is the school of the French Benedictines Dom Cagin and Abbot Cabrol, which seeks the solution in the Gallican rite; and the school of most German scholars, which looks to the Eastern rites (Antioch or Alexandria).

The main issue on which these schools diverge is the original place of the now scattered prayers that made up the Intercession (i.e. the two *Mementos*, the *Communicantes*, the *Nobis quoque*).

The Benedictines believe that these prayers were once recited during the Offertory, while the Germans believe that they always belonged to the Canon, but were once in a different order.

Pope Innocent I's letter to Decentius is perhaps the document on which the question revolves in the fifth century: in fact, there is an important statement on the reading of *the diptychs* and therefore on the place of the Intercession. Decentius used to place it before the form of the Consecration, as does *de Sacramentis*. But Innocent seems to say that it should come after: "First the offerings must be made, and then those in whose favour the offerings have been made should be named; therefore they should be named during the holy mysteries, not in the part that comes before, so that we may open the way for the prayers that follow through the mysteries themselves."

Since the current state of Roman Intercession is one of the main problems of the Mass, this statement is of great importance, yet we are far from having resolved the issue: If Innocent only means that Intercession should be made in the Canon instead of before it, as Abbot Cabrol and Dom Cagin think, there is no doubt that there is much to be said in favour of their theory. But if he means that it should follow the Consecration, we have clear proof that in Rome the order of Jerusalem-Antioch (and that of *the Apostolic Constitutions*) was once maintained.

It seems to Fortescue that Innocent meant precisely this; the last words appear decisive: "ut ipsis mysteriis viam futuris precibus aperiamus". He cannot see how this can be understood otherwise than to mean that prayers follow the Consecration. "This brings us," concludes Fortescue, "to the main element of Drews' theory. All in all, it seems to be more probable than any other."

But, Fortescue continues, "the question is such that perhaps people will always have different opinions", so his conclusion is mainly a regret that we cannot be certain about the origin of our Canon.

In the end, the only thing that can be said that is not pure conjecture is what he himself said at the beginning: "One could start with the *Gelasian Sacramentary* as our primary source and say that we do not know how, when, or where the Roman Mass as it appears to us was composed. This would avoid any problems."¹⁹ Even though, as we have seen, Fortescue himself could not resist the temptation to comment on the hypotheses put forward.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Herbert Lucas, S.J., while taking an eminently apologetic position, did not fail to make some important observations on the scientific rigour of some of these positions: "It should never be forgotten that, although the exercise of reasonable conjecture cannot be completely ruled out, conjecture is, after all, only admissible when there is no direct or indirect evidence; and, above all, that one should never resort to conjecture except when there are strong and positive grounds for believing that there is a real problem to be solved. In the case of liturgical formulas, for example, the mere fact that a scholar imagines that he can arrange a series of prayers in a more logical order, or that he could improve their wording, does not in itself constitute sufficient reason to undertake the task of conjectural reconstruction"²⁰ . He continues, quoting Brightman: "It is easy to compare the Roman paragraphs with their parallels in the Syriac rite, and then rearrange them in Syriac order; but this hardly proves that they were ever placed in that order"²¹ .

Furthermore, great caution must be exercised so that excessive weight is not given to examples of simple verbal parallelism between prayers that may be found in two or more liturgies. And rightly so, for such verbal parallelism in itself proves nothing: parallels can be found almost everywhere. An author may list the most obvious parallels between Rome and Jerusalem and, based on these, reconstruct the Canon following the lines of the liturgy of St James. This seems convincing, until it is discovered that another author identifies equally obvious similarities with Alexandria, Gaul or Spain, proposing an equally ingenious reorganisation according to their order.

On the other hand, internal reasons, such as the criterion of 'greater consistency', are largely subjective. What may seem a convincing explanation to some is not sufficiently objective to convince everyone.

¹⁹ "One could begin with the Gelasian book as our first source and say that we do not know how, when or where the Roman Mass as shown there was composed. This would save all trouble." Adrian Fortescue *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy*. London; New York: Longmans, Green. 1914.

²⁰ Herbert Lucas s.j. *Holy Mass: The Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Roman Liturgy*. St. Louis: B. Herder; London: Manresa Press. 1914

²¹ Ibid.

Lucas concludes: 'The assumption seems to be in favour of those who want to defend a certain more or less perfect organic unity for the Roman Canon, rather than in favour of that class of writers who imagine they see in it a sort of mishmash, most of whose component parts are thought to have been somehow displaced from their rightful place. They are, I cannot help thinking, symptomatic of a certain critical unease that is characteristic of our time, and which can easily lead even the most erudite scholars too far into the realm of unfounded conjecture. [...]'

More recently, Giraudo, who, as we have said, has worked extensively on the comparative study of anaphora, will say that attention to the evolution of literary form is capable of "shedding full light even on the complex structure of the Roman canon, dispensing us from hypothesising those implausible shifts that Baumstark, Drews and Dom Cagin were so fond of". He therefore classifies anaphora into two groups²² :

- Anaphora with anamnestic dynamics: these are the Antiochene or Syro-Western anaphora and, at least tendentially, the Hispanic, Gallican and Ambrosian anaphora, whose very linear structure is easy to understand.

- Anaphoras with epicleptic dynamics: these are the Chaldean anaphoras (Addai, Mari and Sarar), the Alexandrian anaphoras and the Roman canon.

9. Difficulties inherent in any attempt at historical reconstruction

At this point, allow me to digress on a matter that I believe to be of great importance. Sometimes those who do historical research have an attitude reminiscent of someone reading a detective novel who tries to deduce the identity of the murderer. In this case, it would be logical to assume that the culprit must necessarily be one of the characters mentioned at some point in the story, even if, in the end, in the most successful works of the genre, it is the one we least imagine. But there will never be a case of such a clumsy plot that, at the end of the story, the murderer turns out to be someone who has never appeared on the scene before, who has not only never been mentioned, but who is not even related to any of the characters in the story.

In real life, however, it cannot be ruled out that the 'culprit' of a crime may be a completely unknown person, of whom nothing has ever been heard; indeed, this is often the case.

And this is precisely what often happens in historical research and reconstruction: the author of a given text does not necessarily have to be one of the well-known authors of the time; the temptation

²² Ibid.

to systematically attribute it to one of them would denote the inappropriate attitude of the crime novel reader I just mentioned.

Another valid comparison is that of the researcher who finds himself faced with the material he has collected as if he were faced with a jumble of pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that he has found by chance and is determined to combine and fit together, without remembering that he has no certainty that the pieces he has found are complete, or even that they all belong to a single puzzle. In this regard, we could apply the words that Shakespeare puts into Hamlet's mouth: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy'.

10. A key element that is often overlooked: oral culture as a cultural context

The aforementioned Heinemann warned scholars not to apply the tools of textual criticism, developed for written transmission, to Jewish liturgical formularies, which derive from orality. This can be seen when, once fixed in written form, these formularies retain oral characteristics in literary resources such as parallelisms, symmetries and synonyms.

The same criterion should be applied to ancient Christian liturgy, which also developed in an oral culture. Giraudo warns of the dangers of a mistaken view: "the systematic search for the so-called primitive text, often obtained at the cost of forced amputations, always ends up producing one more text, which is not validated by any tradition"²³.

Metzger describes the inherent difficulties as follows:

The vestiges that have escaped various causes of destruction and deterioration due to time represent only a part, sometimes an extremely small part, of the monuments and writings that may have existed in a given place at a given time. Furthermore, modern Christians who want to study the liturgy of the early centuries must perform a real mental acrobatic feat. They are so accustomed to written, complete and obligatory rituals that they risk projecting the current functioning of the liturgy onto the early centuries of the Church. The truth is that for the first millennium, liturgy was organised according to practices very different from our own: oral tradition and institutional autonomy were the rule. For this reason, the documentation available on the early centuries is necessarily limited, and its

²³ Ibid.

interpretation is all the more difficult as one constantly wonders whether it is a sufficiently representative sample.²⁴

Oral culture is in fact a fundamental aspect of understanding the liturgy of the first millennium. But concepts such as learning and transmission 'by heart', which are closely linked to it, do not in this case have the meaning that they evoke for us, namely a fixed text that is learned by faithfully memorising it and then repeated verbatim. In fact, oral culture always includes, to some extent, an element of 'improvisation' that leads to an inevitable variability of the text, which, while retaining its essential identity, is 'embodied' in different formulations. "Faithful reproduction" in these cultures is not synonymous with "literalism" (which, as the name itself suggests, presupposes the existence of "letters", which by definition do not exist here, since we are talking about "oral" transmission).

Even the term 'improvisation', which, as we have just said, is closely linked to oral culture, is a source of misunderstanding. This is because in the modern era, 'improvisation' is the exact opposite of the idea of 'prediction'; it is synonymous with 'unpredictability', 'thoughtlessness', something that has not been prepared in advance and in many contexts has deservedly acquired a strongly negative connotation.

But in oral culture (predominant in ancient culture, but still present in recent times among some peoples), it is exactly the opposite: improvisation implies advance preparation, not in terms of detailed prediction of what is to be said or done in each of its parts and details, but in the long and difficult acquisition of the habit that allowed improvisation to always be 'under control'.

The difference between improvisation and reading a previously established text (and this applies to both literature and music) could be compared to the difference between someone who is only able to read correctly a text written in a language whose phonetics, pronunciation rules and vocabulary they know at least vaguely, and someone who is able to convey the same content by speaking in a language they have mastered.

²⁴ "One should not forget either the destruction that can be termed natural, through the wear and tear on the books destined not to remain in good order in libraries but to pass from hand to hand for repeated use. As a result, the vestiges that have escaped the various causes of destruction and the deterioration due to time represent only a part, sometimes extremely small, of the monuments and writings that may have existed in a given place at a given time. Furthermore, modern Christians who want to study the liturgy of the first centuries must turn a real mental somersault. They are so used to written rituals, complete and obligatory, that they risk projecting the present mode of functioning onto the first centuries of the Church. The truth is that for the first millennium, the liturgy was organised according to practices other than our own: oral tradition and institutional autonomy were the rule. For this reason, the available documentation concerning the early centuries is necessarily limited, and its interpretation is all the more difficult as one is constantly wondering whether it amounts to a sufficiently representative sample." Marcel Metzger. *History of the Liturgy. The Major Stages*. The Liturgical Press. Collegeville, Minnesota, 1997, p. 8.

In the case of improvisation, what is "planned", what is already "arranged", is the rules of improvisation, its "grammar"; once this has been mastered, it is possible to express content faithfully without having a fixed text. It should be noted that these rules also provide effective protection against mediocrity.

Improvisation, as it was understood in that context, far from 'making things easier', makes them much more complex, since it is not a matter of spontaneously doing whatever comes to mind. On the one hand, it is necessary to know the rules of improvisation, which involves a long process of acquiring these rules; on the other hand, one must have a sufficient store of elements (equivalent to the 'vocabulary' in the example above) to use to give content to this improvisation and, above all, one must be able to predict, as one goes along, where one is going to end up.

Giraud says the following about this wealth of resources:

If we did not believe in such resources, we would have to say that ancient man, when he spoke to God, was crude, capable only of stringing together a few words. Instead, the opposite is true: the man who depends on oral tradition is refined, a walking theological library. When he speaks, he does nothing more than read from his *mens theologica* what ancestral revelation and the experience of faith of his fathers have handed down to him²⁵.

This rich world of oral culture and its characteristics have been ignored in recent centuries, when memory and improvisation were thought to be something imperfect and defective in the world of communication, as if they were only a work of 'failed' written culture. Written transmission and the subsequent process of decoding an already fixed text have now become the paradigm of fidelity to the 'original'..

It was only at the beginning of the 20th century that oral culture began to be seriously studied and its cultural richness and, above all, its importance for understanding ancient cultures began to be discovered. A pioneer in this regard was the French Jesuit Marcel Jousse (1886-1961), who was born in a rural area of France that still preserved much of its oral culture. He reflected on it after acquiring a profound scientific education and conducting studies in the sociology of language. He was particularly interested in what he called "verbomotor" peoples²⁶, applying himself above all to the study of the transmission of religious culture in biblical and subsequent Judaism, proposing new ways of understanding this literature that could be applied to difficult topics such as the "synoptic

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The only work he published was: *Études de psychologie linguistique. Le Style oral rythmique et némotique chez les Verbo-moteurs*. Paris, Gabriel Beauchesne, Éditeur, 1925. Posthumously Marcel Jousse, *L'anthropologie du geste*. Volume I Paris: Les Éditions Resma, 1969. The three volumes were subsequently published together by Gallimard in 2008.

question" in the study of the New Testament. He was professor of linguistic anthropology at *the École d'Anthropologie* and director of *the Laboratoire de rythmo-pédagogique de Paris*. His courses at *the École d'Anthropologie de Paris*, the Sorbonne and the *Collège de France* between 1920 and 1950 were always very popular²⁷ .

Subsequently, other researchers also devoted themselves to the study of oral cultures, both from antiquity and the Middle Ages, and from geographically isolated peoples. The popularisation of some of these aspects of cultural contrast reached its peak with the publication in 1962 of Marshal McLuhan's widely read work *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*²⁸ .

In the 1960s, Joseph Heinemann highlighted the importance of taking oral culture into account in the context of Jewish liturgy: according to him, Jewish prayers were originally creations of ordinary people. The characteristic idioms and forms of prayer, and indeed the statutory prayers of the synagogue themselves, were not primarily the product of deliberation by rabbis in their academies, but rather spontaneous improvisations on the spot by people who gathered on various occasions to pray in the synagogue. Since there were numerous occasions and places of worship, it was natural that they would give rise to an abundance of prayers, which presented a wide variety of forms, styles and models.

Thus, the first phase of the development of their liturgy was characterised by diversity and variety, and the task of the rabbis was to systematise and impose order on this multiplicity of forms, models and structures. According to Heinemann, this task was undertaken retrospectively; only after the numerous prayers had been created and had become familiar to the masses did the Sages decide that the time had come to establish some measure of uniformity and standardisation. Only then did they proceed to carefully inspect the existing forms and models, disqualifying some and accepting others, deciding which prayers should be mandatory on which occasions and with which prayers a man 'fulfilled his obligations'. This process of standardisation took place only gradually.

Although some of his conclusions have been disputed by more recent Jewish scholars — for example, that a direct evolutionary line could be traced from what he called 'the creations of ordinary people' to later rabbinical prayer texts — much of what he wrote has become generally accepted, particularly the view that there was never a single original standard text of Jewish prayers,

²⁷ The Marcel Jousse Association published his original unpublished courses distributed as follows: 12 lessons *École d'Anthropobiologie* 1948, 246 lessons at the Sorbonne 1931-1957, 300 lessons at the *École de Hautes Études* 1934-1945, 351 lessons at *the École d'Anthropologie* 1932-1951 and approximately 90 lectures at *the Laboratoire de rythmo-pédagogique*. A total of 20,000 pages.

²⁸ McLuhan, Marshall. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the making of typographic man*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press. 1962

but rather a wide range of variations existing among different Jewish groups. Some of these earlier variations can in fact be identified in later prescriptions.

Heinemann sees the work of the early rabbis as establishing the basic structure and content of each of the main liturgical sections—the sequence of the Amidah and the blessings surrounding the recitation of the Shema—including the number and thematic progression of the individual blessings and their opening and closing blessing formulas, but not their exact wording. According to Heinemann, the precise wording of the prayers would have been improvised each time by those reciting them, certainly using common phrases and stereotypical vocabulary, with the repetition of certain felicitous expressions, as is typical of recitation and oral transmission.

Many scholars today accept a more limited version of Heinemann's thesis on the initial fluidity in the precise wording of prayers, but this author's lasting contribution to Jewish liturgical studies was his work on the rhetoric and style of different genres of prayer (their rhetorical 'forms and patterns'). He convincingly associated different rhetorical and stylistic features with the different functions and situational contexts of prayer genres (such as public prayer, private prayer, litanies to be recited in procession, penitential prayers for situations of extreme need, etc.).

In the Catholic sphere, it was not until 1981, with the work of Allan Bouley, O.S.B., bearing the suggestive title *From Freedom to Formula: The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer from Oral Improvisation to Written Texts*²⁹, that the issue was addressed in a systematic and in-depth manner. By clearly establishing the coexistence of free prayer, individual written prayer and the beginning of fixed formulas, the classical Eucharistic anaphora can now be understood in terms that do not require a direct link between the fragmentary and disparate manuscript evidence. This provides a balance to works that deal with the Eucharistic prayer solely through textual study and resolve issues in terms of fixed formulas.

On the other hand, an attempt is made to identify the reasons that led free and individual prayer to give way to fixed formulas that would be the same in the East as in the West: concern for orthodoxy, the influence of the dominant ecclesiastical seats, the frequency of celebrations, and the limited gifts of the celebrant.

To conclude, I would like to show you a concrete example of this profound identity, rigorously faithful to the content but at the same time decidedly far from the 'literalism' as we understand it in modern times of written culture, and especially of the press.

²⁹ Allan Bouley. *From Freedom to Formula: The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer from Oral Improvisation to Written Texts*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981. Studies in Christian Antiquity, Vol. 21.

To this end, I have chosen to use the account of the institution of the Eucharist containing the words of the Consecration, comparing how it appears in a sample taken from the forest of Eastern and Western anaphora that have come down to us. Not only because these words constitute a central part of the anaphora, but also because they are intended to faithfully reproduce the text transmitted by Sacred Scripture. But there is a further peculiarity in that this text has come down to us in four different versions (the three synoptic Gospels and St Paul), which in turn show the same phenomenon we described above: essential unity and identity, but concretised in very different editorial forms.

In particular, I would like to emphasise how, on the one hand, the liturgical texts reproduce elements from the four scriptural sources, combining them quite freely and even adding new terms and secondary expressions that are completely absent from the scriptural texts, and how, on the other hand, they present passages with 'intersecting' coincidences between the Eastern and Western formulations.

Conclusions

There is an urgent need for a serious revision of the methodology used to study the development of liturgy in the first millennium, and in particular of the anaphora. The methodology usually employed, which seeks to restore a hypothetical 'urtext' by applying the principles developed in the 19th century to produce a 'critical edition' of a classical text, presupposes the existence, at some point, of a single text produced by a Virgil, Cicero or Horace. However, this method, applied to liturgical texts (both Christian and Jewish) that originated in a totally different context, is clearly inadequate. It is therefore necessary to revise the usual view, taking into account the characteristics of the oral culture in which liturgical texts originated and which was present in some form until the Carolingian era and even afterwards (it would be interesting to apply this perspective, for example, to the study of the abundant variants of more recent texts such as the "apologies" and other texts corresponding to the so-called "soft parts" of the liturgy). A reading in the light of oral culture, which, although more limited over time, was still predominant, and of its 'close relative': improvisation based on pre-established patterns, could shed light on aspects in which the essential identity and, at the same time, the addition or subtraction of elements, as well as variations in vocabulary and expressions, cannot be sufficiently explained if viewed as textual variants due to the intervention of a copyist in a context of written culture.

On the other hand, these texts, despite having originated in an oral context that we believe is essential to take into account, were gradually fixed in writing; this fact should not be overlooked

either, as the initially oral texts then came to constitute a hybrid reality from the point of view of their transmission, ultimately leading to the written text alone, which is why they should be considered as texts linked not only to orality but also to writing.

Explanatory note on the tables

To give an example of the coincidences and discrepancies between anaphora of different origins that could be explained by the hypothesis of improvisation in the context of oral culture, we will take an element that, with the exception of the aforementioned case of the anaphora of Addai and Mari, is common to all: the words of institution and their context.

First, we will compare the Roman canon with the four passages from Scripture that serve as its source (for this, we will follow the Latin text of the *Vetus Latina*).

The Roman canon coincides mainly with the text of the Gospel of Matthew, with the exception of the words "Simili modo postquam cœnatum est", which find a parallel only in I Cor and Luke, both of which report the same text: "Similiter ... postquam cœnavit".

On the other hand, the "pro vobis" of the consecration of *the Sanguis* is found only in the Gospel of Mark.

We will then compare the Roman Canon with other anaphora of the Western and Eastern traditions.

We will see that most of the elements of the Roman Canon that are not present in Scripture³⁰, are also found in one or another of the parallel anaphora. These elements coincide rather with the text of St. Paul from I Corinthians, which is in a column at the end.

In the second table, the columns correspond to Western rites: Roman, Gallican, Mozarabic, and the text cited in *De Sacramentis* IV, 6, 27, now considered authentic to Saint Ambrose.

Then there are the following examples of the Antiochian type: Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Maronite anaphora known as 'Sharar', the text of the *Constitutiones Apostolicae* and that of Hippolytus.

Finally, the group of anaphora from the Alexandrian tradition (the one preserved in the John Rylands Library dates from the 6th century), *the Anaphora Cyrilli Alexandrini*, the recensio *Coptica Anaphorae S. Marci Graecae*, *the Anaphora Basilii Caesariensis Alexandrina*, all of which are compared with that of St. Mark, which, repeated in the first column, serves as a link between the two groups.

The texts are taken from Hänggi, Pahl *Præx eucharistica; textus e variis liturgiis antiquioribus selecti* Fribourg, Éditions universitaires, 1968.

³⁰ The text of the canon includes in brackets the wording of the Canon for Holy Thursday and the parts added by a later hand in the so-called "Canon dominicus papae Gelasii" (Missale di Stowe Roy. Irish Acad. Dublin, Ms. D II 3).

Explanation of fonts and symbols used:

Bold: elements in common with biblical sources or with another anaphora.

Italics: found only in the Roman canon compared to the other examples in the table.

Underlined: elements in common but moved.

CANON ROMANUS	<i>Mt.</i>	<i>Mc.</i>	<i>Lc.</i>	<i>ICo.</i>
	<p>Prima autem die azymorum [...]</p> <p>Vespere autem facto,</p> <p>discumbebat cum duodecim discipulis suis.</p> <p>Et edentibus illis[...]</p>	<p>Et primo die azymorum quando Pascha immolabant, Vespere autem facto, venit <u>cum duodecim</u>. Et discumbentibus eis,</p> <p>et manducantibus...</p>	<p>Venit autem dies azymorum, in qua necesse erat <u>occidi</u> pascha. [...]. Et cum facta esset hora, discubuit, et duodecim apostoli cum eo. [...]</p> <p>Et accepto calice gratias egit, et dixit : Accipite, et dividite inter vos. Dico enim vobis quod non bibam de generatione vitis donec regnum Dei veniat.</p>	<p>Ego enim accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis, quoniam</p>
<p><i>Qui pridie quam pateretur,</i></p> <p>accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas et elevatis oculis in cælum ad te</p>	<p>Cœnantibus autem eis, accepit Iesus panem</p>	<p>manducantibus illis accepit Iesus panem</p>	<p>et accepto pane</p>	<p>Dominus Iesus in qua nocte tradebatur accepit panem</p>

<p><i>Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem tibi gratias agens benedixit fregit deditque discipulis suis dicens:</i></p>	<p>et gratias agens et benedixit ac fregit deditque discipulis suis dicens</p>	<p>et benedicens fregit et dedit eis dicens</p>	<p>gratias egit et fregit et dedit eis dicens</p>	<p>et gratias agens fregit et dixit</p>
<p>Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: Hoc est enim corpus meum</p>	<p>Accipite et comedite Hoc est corpus meum</p>	<p>Sumite Hoc est corpus meum</p>	<p>Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis datur. Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.</p>	<p>Accipite et manducate Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur. Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.</p>
<p>Simili modo <u>postquam cœnatum est accipiens et hunc præclarum calicem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas:</u> <i>item tibi gratias agens benedixit deditque discipulis suis dicens:</i></p>	<p>et accipiens calicem gratias egit et dedit illis dicens:</p>	<p>et accepto calice gratias agens dedit eis et biberunt ex illo omnes Et ait illis:</p>	<p>Similiter et calicem, postquam cœnavit dicens:</p>	<p>Similiter et calicem, postquam cœnavit dicens:</p>

<p><i>Accipite et bibite ex eo omnes.</i> Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei, novi et æterni testamenti <i>mysterium fidei:</i> qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum</p>	<p>Bibite ex hoc omnes Hic est enim sanguis meus, novi testamenti qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum</p>	<p>Hic est sanguis meus, novi testamenti qui pro multis effundetur.</p>	<p>Hic est calix novum testamentum in sanguine meo qui pro vobis fundetur.</p>	<p>Hic calix novum testamentum est in <u>meo sanguine</u></p>
<p><i>Hæc <u>quotiescumque</u> feceritis in mei memoriam <u>facietis.</u></i></p>	<p><i>Dico autem vobis: non bibam amodo de hoc genimine vitis usque in diem illum, cum illud bibam vobiscum novum in regno Patris mei. (Cf. Mc. Supra)</i></p>		<p>[Hoc facite in meam commemorationem] <i>[Vide supra]</i> <i>[Dico enim vobis quod non bibam de generatione vitis donec regnum Dei veniat.]</i> <i>[Vide supra]</i></p>	<p>Hoc facite quotiescumque bibetis in meam commemorationem. Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis donec veniat.</p>

MARCI EVAN.	Theod. Mops.	Sharar	Const. Apost.	Hyppol.	ICor
<p>Qui ipse Dominus et Deus, et summus rex noster Iesus Christus nocte qua tradebat seipsum pro peccatis nostris,</p> <p>et mortem pro omnibus subibat carne,</p>	<p>Qui cum apostolis suis</p> <p>ea nocte qua traditus est,</p>	<p>Memoriam facimus, Domine, passionis tuae,</p> <p>quemadmodum docuisti nos.</p> <p>In qua nocte tradebaris Iudaeis,</p>	<p>Memores igitur eorum, quae propter nos pertulit, gratias agimus tibi, Deus omnipotens, non quantum debemus, sed quantum possumus, et mandatum eius implemus.</p> <p>In qua enim nocte tradebatur,</p>	<p>Qui</p> <p>cumque traderetur</p> <p>voluntariae passioni, ut mortem solvat</p> <p>et vincula diaboli dirumpat, et infernum calcet et iustos illuminet, et terminum figat et resurrectionem manifestet,</p>	<p>Ego enim accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis, quoniam</p> <p>Dominus</p> <p>Iesus in qua nocte tradebatur</p>

<p>recumbens cum sanctis discipulis et apostolis,</p> <p>accepit pa- nem in sanctas, et immaculatas, et inculpatas manus suas, suspiciens in caelum ad te Patrem suum, Deumque nostrum et Deum universorum, gratias egit, benedixit,</p> <p>sanctificavit, fregit, deditque sanctis et beatis discipulis et apostolis dicens:</p>	<p>celebravit mysterium hoc magnum, tremendum, sanctum et divinum: accipiens pa- nem</p> <p>in manibus suis sanctis,</p> <p>benedixit</p> <p>et fregit, deditque</p> <p>discipulis suis</p> <p>et dixit:</p>	<p>accepisti, Domine, pa- nem in manus tuas puras et sanctas,</p> <p>et elevasti oculos in caelum ad Patrem tuum glorio- sum,</p> <p>benedixisti, signasti, sanctificasti, Domine, fregisti et dedisti</p> <p>discipulis tuis, beatis apostolis, et dixisti eis:</p>	<p>sumpsit pa- nem</p> <p>sanctis et immaculatis</p> <p>manibus suis et elevatis oculis ad te, Deum suum et Patrem,</p> <p>fregit ac dedit</p> <p>discipulis</p> <p>dicens:</p>	<p>accipiens pa- nem,</p> <p>gratias tibi agens</p> <p>dixit:</p>	<p>accepit pa- nem</p> <p>et gratias agens</p> <p>fregit</p> <p>et dixit</p>
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<p>Accipite, comedite. Hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis frangitur, et distribuitur in remissionem peccatorum.</p>	<p>Hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vita mundi frangitur in remissionem peccatorum.</p>	<p>Hic panis est corpus meum, quod pro mundi vita frangitur et datur, et erit sumentibus in remissionem delictorum et veniam peccatorum; accipite et manducate ex hoc, et sit vobis ad vitam aeternam.</p>	<p>Hoc est mysterium novi testamenti, accipite ex eo, manducate: hoc est corpus meum, quod pro multis frangitur in remissionem peccatorum.</p>	<p>Accipite, manducate, Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis confringetur.</p>	<p>Accipite et manducate Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur. Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.</p>
<p>Similiter et calicem postquam cenavit accipiens, miscensque vino et aqua, suspiciens in caelum ad te Patrem suum, Deumque nostrum, et Deum universorum, gratias egit, benedixit,</p>	<p>Similiter et super calicem gratias egit,</p>	<p>Etiam super calicem similiter</p>	<p>Similiter calicem ex vino et aqua mixtum</p>	<p>Similiter et calicem</p>	<p>Similiter et calicem, postquam cœnavit</p>

<p>sanctificavit, implevit Spiritu sancto, et tradidit sanctis et beatis discipulis suis et apostolis dicens:</p>	<p>et dedit illis</p>	<p>laudasti, glorificasti</p>	<p>sanctificavit et dedit iis</p>		
<p>dixitque:</p>	<p>dixitque:</p>	<p>et dixisti, Domine:</p>	<p>dicens:</p>	<p>dicens:</p>	<p>dicens:</p>
<p>Bibite ex eo omnes. Hic est</p> <p>sanguis meus Novi testamenti, qui pro vobis et multis effunditur, et distribuitur in remissionem peccatorum.</p> <p>Hoc facite</p>	<p>Hic est</p> <p>sanguis meus novi testamenti, qui pro multis effunditur</p> <p>in remissionem peccatorum. Accipite igitur vos omnes, edite ex hoc pane, et bibite ex hoc calice,</p> <p>et ita facite quotiescumque congregabimini</p>	<p>Hic calix</p> <p>[est] sanguis meus testamenti novi, qui pro multis effundetur</p> <p>in remissionem peccatorum; accipite</p> <p>et bibite ex eo omnes, et prosit ad redemptio- nem delictorum et ad remissionem peccato- rum, et ad vitam aeter- nam. Amen.</p>	<p>Bibite ex eo omnes, hic est</p> <p>sanguis meus, qui pro multis effunditur</p> <p>in remissionem peccatorum;</p> <p>hoc facite</p>	<p>Hic est</p> <p>sanguis meus, qui pro vobis effunditur.</p> <p>Quando hoc facitis,</p>	<p>Hic calix novum testamen- tum est in meo sanguine.</p> <p>Hoc facite quotiescumque bibetis</p>

in meam commemorationem.	in mei memoriam.		in meam commemorationem;	meam commemorationem facitis.	in meam commemorationem.
Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, et calicem bibetis, mortem meam annuntiabitis, et resurrectionem meam, et ascensionem confitebimini, donec veniam.		Quotiescumque enim ex hoc sancto corpore illo manducaveritis, et ex hoc calice vitae et redemptionis biberitis, mortis et resurrectionis Domini vestri memoriam faciatis usque ad diem magnum adventus eius. P.: Mortis tuae, Domine, memoriam facimus, etc.	Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc et bibetis hunc calicem, mortem meam annuntiabitis, donec veniam.		Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis donec veniat.

MARC (Vide supra)	J. RYLANDS LIBR.	CYR. ALEX.	BAS. ALEX.	ICor
Qui ipse	Quoniam ipse	Quippe Filius tuus unigenitus		
Dominus et Deus,	Dominus et Deus	Dominus, Deus,		
et summus rex noster	et salvator	salvator		
	et summus rex noster	et rex noster		
Iesus Christus	Iesus Christus,	omnium Iesus Christus,		Dominus Iesus
			Reliquit nobis hoc magnum pietatis mysterium.	
nocte qua tradebat seipsum	nocte qua tradebat seipsum	ea nocte qua tradidit se ipsum,	Cum enim traditurus foret se ipsum	in qua nocte tradebatur
		ut pateretur		
pro peccatis nostris, et mortem	pro peccatis nostris et perferebat mortem	pro peccatis nostris, ante mortem, quam propria sua voluntate suscepit pro nobis omnibus. <i>P.: Credimus.</i>	in mortem	
			pro mundi vita. <i>P.: Credimus.</i>	
pro omnibus subibat carne, recumbens cum sanctis discipulis et apostolis, accepit panem	pro omnibus,		Accipit panem	accepit panem
	panem accepit	Accipit panem in manus suas		
in sanctas, et immaculatas, et inculpatas	in sanctas et immaculatas	sanctas, immaculatas,	in sanctas, immaculatas,	
		puras, beatas,	et beatas	
	et intemeratas			
manus suas,	manus suas,	et vivificantes,	suas manus,	

<p>suspiciens in caelum</p> <p>ad te Patrem suum, Deumque nostrum et Deum universorum, gratias egit, benedixit,</p> <p>sanctificavit,</p> <p>fregit, deditque sanctis et beatis discipulis et apostolis dicens: (elata voce) Accipite, comedite.</p> <p>Hoc est corpus meum,</p> <p>quod pro vobis frangitur,</p> <p>et distribuitur in remissionem peccatorum. <i>P.: Amen.</i></p> <p>Similiter et calicem postquam caenavit accipiens,</p>	<p>suspexit in caelum</p> <p>ad te, Deus, suum Patrem,</p> <p>gratias egit, benedixit,</p> <p>sanctificavit,</p> <p>fregit, dedit sanctis discipulis et apostolis dicens: Accipite, manducate ex hoc omnes.</p> <p>Hoc meum est corpus novi testamenti, et quod pro multis distribuitur in remissionem peccatorum.</p> <p>Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.</p> <p>Similiter, postquam cenavit, accepit calicem,</p>	<p>et suspexit in caelum,</p> <p>ad te Deum Patrem suum,</p> <p>et omnium Dominum, et gratias egit. <i>P.: Amen.</i> Et benedixit illum. <i>P.: Amen.</i> Et sanctificavit illum. <i>P.: Amen.</i> Et fregit illum, et dedit illum suis discipulis sanctis, et apostolis puris dicens: Accipite, manducate ex eo vos omnes.</p> <p>Hoc est corpus meum</p> <p>quod pro vobis frangitur, et pro multis tradetur</p> <p>in remissionem peccatorum.</p> <p>Hoc facite in meam commemorationem. <i>P.: Amen.</i></p> <p>Similiter et calicem post cenam,</p>	<p>cumque aspexisset in excelsa caelorum</p> <p>ad te Patrem suum, Deum nostrum et Deum universorum, gratias egit. <i>P.: Amen.</i> Benedixit. <i>P.: Amen.</i> Sanctificavit. <i>P.: Amen.</i> Fregit, dedit sanctis suis discipulis et apostolis dicens: Accipite, manducate.</p> <p>Hoc est corpus meum</p> <p>quod pro vobis et multis frangitur et datur</p> <p>in remissionem peccatorum.</p> <p>Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.</p> <p>Similiter et calicem postquam cenasset,</p>	<p>et gratias agens</p> <p>fregit</p> <p>et dixit Accipite et manducate</p> <p>Hoc est corpus meum</p> <p>quod pro vobis tradetur.</p> <p>Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.</p> <p>Similiter et calicem, postquam cœnavit</p>
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<p>miscensque vino et aqua, suspiciens in caelum ad te Patrem suum, Deumque nostrum, et Deum universorum, gratias egit, benedixit, sanctificavit, implevit Spiritu sancto, et tradidit sanctis et beatis discipulis suis et apos- tolis dicens: Bibite ex eo omnes. Hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti, qui pro vobis et multis effunditur, et distribuitur in remissionem pecca- torum. P.: Amen. Hoc facite in meam commemora- tionem.</p>	<p>gratias egit, communicavit cum propriis suis discipulis et apos- tolis dicens: Bibite omnes ex eo. Hic meus est sanguis qui pro vobis et pro multis effunditur et datur in remissionem pecca- torum. Hoc facite in meam commemora- tionem.</p>	<p>miscuit vino et aqua, et gratias egit. <i>P.: Amen.</i> et benedixit eum. P.: Amen. et sanctificavit eum. P.: Amen. et gustavit, deditque eum suis, praeclaris, sanctis discipulis et apos- tolis dicens: Accipite, bibite ex eo vos omnes. Hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti, qui pro vobis effunditur et pro multis dabitur in remissionem pecca- torum. Hoc facite in meam commemora- tionem. <i>Amen.</i></p>	<p>cum miscuisset ex vino et aqua, gratias egit. <i>P.: Amen.</i> benedixit. P.: Amen. sanctificavit. P.: Amen. gustavit, et iterum dedit sanctis suis discipulis et apos- tolis dicens: Accipite, bibite ex eo omnes. Hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti qui pro vobis et multis effunditur in remissionem pecca- torum. Hoc facite in meam commemora- tionem.</p>	<p>dicens: Hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine. Hoc facite quotiescumque bibetis in meam commemora- tionem.</p>
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<p>Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, et calicem bibetis,</p> <p>mortem meam annuntiabitis,</p> <p>et resurrectionem meam, et ascensionem confitebimini,</p> <p>donec veniam.</p>	<p>Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, bibetis autem et calicem hunc,</p> <p>meam mortem annuntiate</p> <p>et meam resurrectionem</p> <p>confitemini.</p>	<p>Quotiescumque enim manducabitis ex hoc pane, et bibetis ex hoc calice,</p> <p>annuntiate mortem meam,</p> <p>et confitemini resurrectionem meam,</p> <p>et memoriam mei agite, donec veniam.</p>	<p>Quotiescumque enim manducaveritis panem hunc et calicem hunc bibetis,</p> <p>mortem meam annuntiatis</p> <p>et resurrectionem, ascensionemque meam confitemini,</p> <p>donec veniam.</p> <p><i>P.: Amen. Amen. Amen.</i></p> <p><i>Mortem tuam, Domine (annuntiamus et tuam sanctam resurrectionem atque ascensionem confitemur).</i></p>	<p>Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, et calicem bibetis,</p> <p>mortem Domini annuntiabitis</p> <p>Donec veniat.</p>
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