

**XXI.—Medieval Processional Hymns Before 1100**

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The evolution of the Latin processional hymn is traced from the sixth century to the year 1100. The origins appear in Gaul and other parts of western Europe. In the ninth century the processional hymn is developed as a part of the contemporary revival and growth of Latin hymns. It is linked also to the Carolingian movements for musical, literary and liturgical reform. St. Gall is an important center, but the use of processional hymns is general in western Christendom. Hymns for certain special ceremonies are grouped with processional hymns as extra-liturgical, the whole constituting a third and separate group of medieval hymns additional to the hymns for the offices and the sequences for the mass.

Although the Latin hymn had been a feature of Christian worship from the fourth century, psalms and biblical antiphons were, at first, used exclusively in medieval processions. This was true of the station processions which had developed in the vicinity of Rome to places made sacred by martyrdom and also of the litany processions of supplication which arose in Gaul. We have no record of non-scriptural hymns in use for processional purposes earlier than the sixth century. So strong was the influence of the precedent calling for biblical hymns, even to the close of the medieval period, that the non-scriptural processional hymn, after its recognition, seems to have taken a subordinate place. The authentic Latin hymn written by Ambrose or his imitators in the fourth and fifth centuries was the hymn destined to be used in the canonical hours of monastic worship enjoined by St. Benedict. It later became the breviary hymn with a liturgical recognition. Processional practice was, so to speak, extra-liturgical and the specific processional hymn, as yet, unwritten.

Gaul was the place of first appearance of Latin medieval processional hymns. Just as Prudentius in Spain at the close of the fourth century had written the *Cathemerinon* and *Peristephanon*, collections of hymns and sacred poems later to be appropriated for liturgical use, so in the sixth century Fortunatus wrote his *Carmina* which provided, among others, the models and inspiration for two important groups in later processional hymnody. The occasional nature of the *Carmina*, the absence of ecclesiastical pretensions, the joy and fervor which infuse the religious poems in the collection,

suitied them peculiarly to processional purposes, for which, in fact, certain ones were intended.

The former of these, *Tempora florifero rutilant distincta sereno* (Carm. 3.9), originally written for the Easter baptismal ceremony and dedicated to Felix, Bishop of Nantes, provided the cento beginning *Salve, festa dies, toto venerabilis aevo*, an Easter processional hymn which was used in its original form throughout the Middle Ages and afforded, moreover, in centos, adaptations and imitations, a chief source of supply of hymns for processional use in a wide variety of festivals.<sup>1</sup>

*Vexilla regis prodeunt* (Carm. 2.7), *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis* (Carm. 2.2) and *Crux benedicta* (Carm. 2.1), written by Fortunatus for the reception at Poitiers of a relic reputed to be of the true Cross, rival *Salve festa dies* in importance and influence. Radegunda, founder of the Convent of Notre Dame at Poitiers, as it is related in her biography, was desirous of having a relic of the Cross brought from Constantinople. Her request, sanctioned by King Sigibert and by Maroveus, Bishop of Poitiers, was transmitted to Emperor Justin II and Sophia his wife. They graciously acceded and a splinter of the Cross was sent to Tours. Euphronius, Bishop of Tours, accompanied the procession with the relic from that city which met a second procession from Poitiers at Migné. Together they proceeded to Poitiers singing the hymn, *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, written expressly for the occasion.<sup>2</sup> Although the associated hymns for the Holy Cross, *Pange lingua* and *Crux benedicta*, were also inspired by the same event, it cannot be asserted that they were sung on that day. *Pange lingua*, however, inaugurated a style of processional hymn in the trochaic meter second only in popularity to the elegiac meter of *Salve festa dies* which from the time of Fortunatus was favored above other metrical forms for this purpose. Like *Salve festa dies*, it gave rise to a large group of hymns opening with the words *Pange lingua gloriosi*, many of which were intended for other than processional use.

In the course of time, old restrictions on hymn writing which had forbidden the so-called *psalmi idiotici* or "private hymns,"

<sup>1</sup> See R. E. Messenger, "Salve festa dies," *TAPhA* 78 (1947) 208-222, for a detailed account of the origin and influence of this hymn.

<sup>2</sup> B. M. Peebles, "Fortunatus, Poet of the Holy Cross," *Amer. Church Monthly*, 38 (1935) 152-166. His account is based upon Greg. Turon. *Hist. Franc.* 9.40; Baudo-  
novia, *Vita S. Rad.* 2.16.

were relaxed.<sup>3</sup> The Ambrosian hymn, already established in Benedictine use, spread to the church at large. Isidore of Seville, the celebrated proponent of non-scriptural hymns in the west, had opened up the possibilities of writing and singing hymns beyond monastic walls. As presiding bishop of the Fourth Council of Toledo, 633, he is responsible for, if not the author of, the famous canon upon this subject. After a discussion of the old prohibitions and the reasons for approving the new compositions, Canon 13 reads:

Sicut igitur orationes, ita et hymnos in laudem Dei compositos, nullus vestrum ulterius improbet sed pari modo Gallia, Hispaniaque celebret: excommunicatione plectendi, qui rejicere fuerint ausi.<sup>4</sup>

The hymns of Prudentius the Spaniard had begun to receive liturgical recognition in the Mozarabic rites. At the same time Spain was apparently receptive to the procession. In the opinion of Dom Férotin, the procession and blessing of palms came first to Spain of all the western lands.<sup>5</sup> Isidore of Seville mentions the festival but the sources do not name any specific hymn in this connection.<sup>6</sup>

The prayer for the *Blessing of Palm and Olive* in the Sacramentary of Bobbio, dating from the seventh or eighth century, has been considered evidence by some scholars of the existence of a Palm Sunday procession.<sup>7</sup> Gregory the Great, a contemporary of Isidore, is credited by Benedictine editors with the authorship of *Magnum salutis gaudium*, one of the earliest recorded hymns to be assigned to the Palm Sunday processional observance. Although Gregory the Great is rejected as author by Blume, the antiquity of the hymn in unquestioned. Ambrosian in style, it is included in the so-called Later Hymnal by Walpole.<sup>8</sup> Blume notes its appearance in one

<sup>3</sup> *Psalmi idiotici* forbidden by Council of Laodicea, 320, Canon 59. The Council of Tours, 567, permitted secular clergy to use Ambrosian and other hymns. See G. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, Venice and Paris, 1763), 2.573, 9.803.

<sup>4</sup> Mansi, *ibid.* 10.622-3.

<sup>5</sup> Dom M. Férotin, *Liber Ordinum*, in *Monumenta ecclesiae liturgica*, 5 (Paris, 1904) 179.

<sup>6</sup> Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, 1.28 (MPL 83.763).

<sup>7</sup> *The Bobbio Missal, A Gallican Mass-Book* (MS. Paris. lat. 13246), edited by E. A. Lowe (Henry Bradshaw Society, vol. 58, London, 1920) 558, p. 170; Férotin, *op. cit.* (see note 5) 179.

<sup>8</sup> A. S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge, 1922) 337-340. The "Later Hymnal" is equivalent to the "Ninth Century Hymnal." For Blume's discussion see A.H. (*Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*) 51.75 notes.

ninth century and in several tenth century hymnaries. The hymn follows the events of Palm Sunday very simply as recorded in the Biblical narrative.

1. Magnum salutis gaudium,  
Laetetur omne saeculum!  
Iesus, redemptor gentium,  
Sanavit orbem languidum.  
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6. Olim propheta praescius  
Praedixit almo spiritu:  
Exsulta, dicens, filia  
Sion, satis et iubila;  
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8. Ramos virentes sumpserat  
Palma recisos tenera  
Turba, processit obviam  
Regi perenni plurima. (*A.H.* 51.73)

In eleventh century manuscripts, refrains from the first and second strophes were used. It is quite understandable that a festival hymn from the older hymnaries should later be appropriated for processional use as it undoubtedly was, either before the authentic processional for Palm Sunday had appeared or later when a traditional festival hymn might be more popular than some innovation. Walpole suggests that it was probably familiar to Theodulphus of Orléans and that he may have been indebted to it when in the ninth century he wrote *Gloria laus et honor tibi sit*.<sup>9</sup>

From such scattered evidence arising in Gaul, Spain and Italy, it is apparent that the barriers were breaking down and that the medieval processional hymn was in process of creation as early as the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh.

At this point, attention should be drawn to religious processions of the medieval church aside from the demonstrations which took place wholly or in part outside the church edifice. These include the Sunday procession preceding high mass, widely observed and accompanied by musical antiphons and sometimes by hymns, the procession before the reading of the Gospel, and a number of other ceremonies related to, but not a part of the liturgy proper, which might have an accompaniment of hymns.

<sup>9</sup> Walpole, *op. cit.* 340.

The earliest hymn to be employed with a special ceremonial is said to be *O redemptor, sume carmen*, eight stanzas in length, which was sung at the consecration of the chrism on Holy Thursday.

R. O redemptor, sume carmen temet concinentium.

1. Audi, iudex mortuorum,  
Una spes mortalium,  
Audi voces proferentum,  
Donum pacis praeivium.
2. Arbor feta alma luce  
Hoc sacrandum protulit;  
Fert hoc prona praesens turba  
Salvatori saeculi.
3. Stans ad aram immo supplex  
Infulatus pontifex  
Debitum persolvit omne  
Consecrato chrismate. (*A.H.* 51.80)

Like *Magnum salutis gaudium* this ancient hymn belongs to the Later Hymnal. Many of its phrases are taken from the works of Prudentius whose style the writer has rather successfully reproduced. The beauty of the refrain adds much to its effectiveness. Once the custom was established of bringing the two ampullae — containing, respectively, the oil for the chrism and the oil of the catechumens — in solemn procession before the bishop, as it quite certainly was by the end of the tenth century, the use of such a hymn as this for so special an occasion was an altogether normal development. To sanction the use of a hymn apart from those of the breviary and later of the missal is an important precedent which signifies the enlargement of the scope of hymn-singing and the possibility of building through processional and related usage a body of hymnody having its own individual character and functions.

Gautier, in his *Histoire de la Poésie liturgique au Moyen Age: Les Tropes*, has made the hymn just cited the starting point for his discussion of the *versus*, the name by which, in his opinion, the authentic medieval processional hymn came to be identified. The word *versus* in this technical sense he finds prevailing in St. Gall in the tenth century where the processional hymn was most highly developed when the first half of the Middle Ages came to a close. Gautier observes that the *versus* is always chanted, always accom-

panied by musical notation and is also distinguished by a refrain. Certain hymns written prior to this evolution at St. Gall are there given the title *versus*. In a recent comprehensive work, Wolfram von den Steinen has considered the sacred poetry emanating from St. Gall, giving due credit to the writers of processionals, although chiefly concerned with the sequences of that school.<sup>10</sup>

One of the certainties in the history of the Latin hymn is the appearance in Western Europe in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries of a newly created hymnody in all its branches. In this so-called Benedictine Age, the writing of Hour hymns flowered as never before in the hymn cycles of the religious houses. The ninth century saw in France the origin of the sequence within the mass and its extended development at St. Gall under the inspiration of Notker and the German school in general. With these contemporary movements the *versus* can hardly be unexpected: it is an almost inevitable innovation consequent upon the new springs of religious enthusiasm which led the clerical poets to turn to sacred verse.

It is tempting to connect the rise of hymnody with the Carolingian literary and liturgical reforms.<sup>11</sup> In Carolingian sources as edited in *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, the title *versus* is attached to poems of varied kinds both religious and secular. The word seems to maintain its general meaning but, among other poems, hymns clearly designated for processional use are entitled *versus*. Perhaps this word, capable of varied meanings, was found convenient to identify the new category of hymns and adopted by the hymn writers of St. Gall for that purpose. Theodulphus of Orléans, Walafrid Strabo of Reichenau, Rabanus Maurus of Fulda, Radbert, WalDRAM and Hartmann of St. Gall were all contributors to the Carolingian revival. These men were all writers of processional hymns or *versus* which found their way into the liturgical books of St. Gall. Earlier hymns such as *Salve festa dies*, already cited, were incorporated into the processional group at St. Gall and named *versus*.

The earliest of the Carolingian processionals is the familiar *Gloria laus et honor*, written by Theodulphus, Bishop of Orléans for

<sup>10</sup> L. Gautier, *Histoire de la Poésie liturgique au Moyen Age: Les Tropes* (Paris, 1886) ch. iv, *Versus*; Wolfram von den Steinen, *Notker der Dichter und seine geistliche Welt*, 2 vols. (Bern, 1948).

<sup>11</sup> *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, 1, 2; MGH, *Poetarum Latinorum Medii Aevi*, 1-4 (Berlin, 1881-1923).

the procession and blessing of palms. A cento from a longer poem, it illustrates the use of the popular elegiac meter. Founded perhaps on *Magnum salutis gaudium*, as cited above, it is marked by a strong dramatic feeling which is no doubt responsible in part for its wide diffusion in the Middle Ages and its continued use in translation, in modern times.

At St. Gall processional practice was highly developed. The Sunday procession is not only described in a short poem, *Versus de processione* but is illustrated by the hymns of Radbert (d. 884) and Hartmann (d. 925). To quote from the first mentioned:

Wicharius iunior concors et Wikeli maior  
 Invitent coetum cantando plebis ad ymnum.  
 Nomine signati, lectores, rite parati,  
 Sensim passionum, decet ut, depromite textum.  
 Persistet nonus merito pater ipse decanus,  
 Cantores primi strictim procedite bini.  
 Voce pari Christo carmen cantate benigno.

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 Ordine legali prefulgent festa diei,  
 Istius templi et populo sanctisque dicati  
 Precavet officium sibimet concordia iunctum.  
 Hinc nemo damnum confratrum sentiat ullum,  
 Lecturi seriem conservent themate talem.

(PLAC 2.476.1-7, 20-24)

If to be interpreted literally the poetical account offers an engaging picture of the assemblage of the clergy for the celebration of mass, as well as definite information as to the order of their entry.

Radbert is closely associated with the development of the processional at St. Gall, perhaps an innovator in that field.<sup>12</sup> His *Ardua spes mundi solidator et inclite caeli* (A.H. 50.237) and that of his pupil Hartmann, *Summus et omnipotens genitor, qui cuncta creasti* (eighty lines in length, A.H. 50.253), are imposing litanies. The refrain

Humili prece et sincera devotione  
 Ad te clamantes semper exaudi nos,

<sup>12</sup> von den Steinen, *op. cit.* (see note 10). For Radbert see 1.40-42. He is said to have initiated the procession for the festival of St. Gall and to have written a vernacular hymn for this purpose heard not only in the cloister but in the streets of the town and the neighboring countryside. For Hartmann, 1.57, Walafrid and others, *passim*.

appears with the latter which is also elaborated by several stanzas devoted solely to the enumeration of the apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins who are invoked by name. Both hymns close with the *Kyrie eleison* in the Greek.

Waldram (ninth century) is the author of a third processional of the same type but in a trochaic meter.

- R. Votis supplicibus voces super astra feramus,  
 Trinus ut et simplex nos regat omnipotens.
1. Sancte pater, iuva nos,  
 Sancte fili, salva nos,  
 Compar his et spiritus,  
 Ungue nos intrinsecus.

Waldram's *Kyrie* is in the Latin transliteration.

19. Oramus, Christe, audi nos,  
 Christe, Christe, audi nos;  
 Kyrie, eleison, canimus,  
 Christe, eleison, psallimus. (A.H. 50.246)

Processionals for feast days were provided by Hartmann who wrote the elegiac hymn

- Salve, lacteolo decoratum sanguine festum,  
 Salvete, innocua corpora fusa neci. (A.H. 50.251)

for the Feast of the Holy Innocents. Rabanus at the same period wrote for the festivals of the Nativity, Easter and possibly the Purification.<sup>13</sup> These are attractive hymns following the Biblical narratives in the true spirit of processional drama. The solemnity of the Easter poem, which is composed in iambic verse and devoted to the events of the Passion and to the triumph over hell, is offset by the joyous trochaic stanzas of the Nativity processional.

- R. Surrexit quia Christus a sepulchro,  
 Collaetetur homo choro angelorum.
1. Cantemus Domino Deoque nostro,  
 Fratres unanimes, probas verenter

<sup>13</sup> Blume, A.H. 51, edits 27 hymns attributed to Rabanus Maurus, including 4 hymns admittedly doubtful. The hymns for Sts. Marcellinus and Peter and for St. Boniface are regarded by E. L. Dümmler as authentic.



Laudes ex animo pio canentes,  
Nunc paschalia festa cum tenemus. (A.H. 50.190)

— — —

- R. Christo nato, rege magno  
totus orbis gaudeat.  
1. Lumen clarum rite fulget  
Orto magno sidere,  
Quod per totum splendet orbem  
Umbras noctis aufugans. (A.H. 50.186)

Rabanus also wrote for Sts. Marcellinus and Peter:

- R. O victores gloriosi, his ovate laudibus.  
1. Claras laudes ac salubres,  
Posco, fratres, dicite,  
Quas proferre cogit apte  
Nunc sanctorum gloria. (A.H. 50.203)

Among hymns for saints, Radbert wrote in honor of St. Gall and his mission:

- R. Annua, sancte Dei, celebramus festa diei,  
Qua, pater, e terris sidera, Galle, petis.  
1. Ecce, dies populis micat haec sanctissima nostris,  
Quorum tu princeps auctor ad astra meas.  
(A.H. 50.241)

In the honors extended to royalty, the Carolingians surpassed themselves. Walafrid Strabo wrote *In adventu Hlotharii Imperatoris*, a processional opening

- R. Imperator magne, vivas  
Semper et feliciter.

The occasion seems to have been the Emperor's visit to Reichenau since Valens (Valentinus), whose relics were deposited in that abbey, is invoked in stanza 7.

7. Et Valens iunctus beatis  
Hoc precetur omnibus,  
Vestra pax ut pace cunctos  
Firmet apta subditos.

Expressions of good will are conventional.

9. Vita, virtus et potestas  
 Robur et victoria,  
 Fama felix te sequantur  
 Atque vitae praemia. (*A.H.* 50.176 and notes)

Walafrid's processional, *In adventu Caroli, filii Augustorum*, with the refrain

- R. Salve, regum sancta proles,  
 Care Christo Carole,

honors Charles, a pupil of Walafrid, the son of Louis the Pious. It is a joyous hymn of welcome suggesting music not wholly ecclesiastical.

6. Ferte nabla tibiasque,  
 Organum cum cymbalis,  
 Flatu quidquid, ore, pulsu  
 Arte constat musica.

Perhaps the laity were expected to participate.

7. Dicat omne plebis agmen,  
 Clerus ipse primitus,  
 Dives, pauper, sospes, aeger  
 Consonent in laudibus. (*A.H.* 50.177)

Richgard, Empress of Charles the Simple, was received at St. Gall with the *Versus* of Radbert,

- Aurea lux terrae, dominatrix inclita, salve,  
 Quae domibus nostris nunc benedicta venis.  
 (*A.H.* 50.240)

Waldram and Hartmann wrote processionals that might be sung in connection with any royal visitation, an evidence that St. Gall was frequently favored with the presence of kings. In the hymn

- Rex benedicte, veni, visens habitacula Galli,  
 Otmari tectis accipiendo sacris.

Waldram's central theme is the scope of the royal sway, declared to extend from Spain to the Bosphorus. The closing lines seek patronage for the abbey.

- Fias placatus nobis maneasque misertus,  
 Quos stirps Scottorum suasit in hanc eremum.  
 (*A.H.* 50.245, lines 19-20)

Hartmann's *versus* is one of general praise;

Suscipe clementem, plebs devotissima, regem  
Ducque canens Galli tecta sub alta pii. (*A.H.* 50.256)

Returning to hymns for special ceremonies and processions connected with the liturgy, of which the *Versus ad chrisma consecrandum*, already cited, was the earliest illustration, we find the hymn to accompany the procession before the reading of the Gospel dates from the St. Gall school. Such is Hartmann's *Versus ante evangelium cantandi*. It opens thus:

1. Sacrata libri dogmata  
Portantur evangelici,  
Cunctis stupenda gentibus  
Et praeferenda laudibus.

After this introduction, the Abbot of St. Gall enjoins purity, reverence, and silence as a preparation to hear the Word of God; then, following a beautiful application of the parable of the sower, he prays for the full harvest from the soil of the receptive heart.

10. Sic voluntatis integrae  
Perfecta nitent opera,  
Terraque cordis optimi  
Centenum refert numerum. (*A.H.* 50.250)

Other forms of the extra-liturgical hymn were used at the reception of the Eucharist, for example, the *Versus ad Eucharistiam sumendam* which is illustrated by Radbert's

Laudes, omnipotens, ferimus tibi dona colentes  
Corporis immensi sanguinis atque tui. (*A.H.* 50.239)

Radbert is also the reputed author of a hymn to accompany the sacrament of Baptism, *Versus ad Descensum Fontis*. This sacrament, it should be recalled, provided the original inspiration for the *Salve festa dies* of Fortunatus in which he refers to the Easter baptismal rite.

Rex sacer, ecce, tui radiat pars magna triumphi,  
Cum puras animas sacra lavacra beant.  
Candidus egreditur nitidis exercitus undis,  
Atque vetus vitium purgat in amne novo.

(*Carm.* 3.9.89-92)

The ninth century hymn which in one manuscript is designated as *Versus ad processionem quae fit ad fontem benedicendum in vigilia*

*paschae et pentecostis* is entitled in another *Letania ad baptismum in sabbato*. The latter title draws attention to the form which is that of a litany imploring the intercession of the saints that the stain of sin may be washed away in the sacramental waters.

Rex sanctorum angelorum, totum mundum adiuva

is the refrain of this hymn from St. Gall which embodies a perfect combination of the processional, the litany and the *versus* (*A.H.* 50.242-3).

The ceremony of *mandatum* was inspired by the Gospel for Holy Thursday which recounts the washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus (John 13.1-15). The name *mandatum* originated from the words *Mandatum novum do vobis*. The word appears in a corrupted form in the English Maundy Thursday. The musical part of the ceremony consisted of singing the antiphon *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est* and a hymn such as the ninth century *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor* (*A.H.* 12.24) which is not only based upon the antiphon but retains the words as a refrain.<sup>14</sup> A more ancient hymn, *Tellus et aethra iubilent*, is also associated with the ceremony of *mandatum*. Attributed to Flavius, Bishop of Châlons-sur-Saône (d. 591), it appears first in an eighth or ninth century pontifical of Poitiers and thereafter in sources from every part of western Christendom. Here the biblical incident is described.

3. A celsis surgens dapibus  
Praebet formam mortalibus  
Humilitatis gratia  
Petri petens vestigia.
4. Pallet servus obsequio,  
Cum angelorum Dominum  
Ferendo lympham linteo  
Cernit caeno procumbere.
5. Permite, Simon, ablui;  
Acta figurant mystica,  
Dum summus ima baiulo,  
Quid cinis servet cineri. (*A.H.* 51.77)

<sup>14</sup> L. Eisenhofer, *Handbuch der Katholischen Liturgik*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1922) 1.522-3. Dom A. Wilmart suggests in connection with this hymn that the popularity of such compositions reflects the influence of Paulinus of Aquileia, *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots du Moyen-Age latin* (Paris, 1932) 31.

From one point of view *Tellus et aethra iubilent* may be grouped with the Palm Sunday hymn *Magnum salutis gaudium* and the hymn *O redemptor sume carmen* since all were appropriated from the Later Hymnal for ceremonial use. In every case the opening stanza or selected lines serve as a refrain. The *versus* sung before the reading of the Gospel, at the Communion, at Baptism and at Mandatum illustrate the variety of ceremonies for which a new hymnology came into being at this period.

Contemporary with the St. Gall processions, others are found in sources from different parts of Europe. Just as a hymn, already well known, was occasionally adopted for processional use, so the sequence appears, though rarely, to have been equally interchangeable.<sup>15</sup> Two illustrations are found in a Vatican processional manuscript of the tenth century, one for St. Mauritius and a second for St. Paul, which are of the antiphonal pattern usually associated with the sequence (*A.H.* 23.240, 253). They are not indicated as processionals except by their presence in the manuscript, nor do they have formal refrains; but they may be early examples of the custom of later medieval times to use a sequence in processions.

From this period, a Vatican manuscript of the ninth and tenth centuries contains a short processional for St. Michael entitled *In introitu ecclesiae S. Michaelis* which preserves the elegiac Ovidian recurrences.

Regna poli ianuas, populus, intrate per almas  
Currite christicolae, prendite regna poli.

Nuntius hic Domini, cuius intratis in aulam,  
Semper videt faciem, nuntius hic Domini. (*A.H.* 43.256)

By far the most striking and beautiful of the group from Roman sources celebrates the Feast of the Assumption.

1. Sancta Maria quid est? si coeli climata scandis,  
Esto benigna tuis. Sancta Maria quid est? (*A.H.* 23.74)

It is noteworthy for its unusual style, its descriptive subject matter and the features of the procession for which it was written. A Roman pontifical of the reign of Otto III (996–1002) records the hymn accompanied by directions for the ceremonial which is also described in the medieval Roman rites. At vespers on the Eve of

<sup>15</sup> Wetzer und Welte, *Kirchenlexicon*, s.v. "Sequenzen," 11.159 f.

the Assumption, an icon depicting Christ the Lord is placed on a carrier at the Lateran. At midnight it is borne in a procession of clergy and people to the Church of St. Maria Minor.

In the first eleven strophes Sancta Maria and Roma are both implored to make clear the reasons for the demonstration of grief and repentance, as the throng, bearing torches, moves through lantern-lighted streets under a perfect moonlit summer sky.

Quare volant faculae, lucent per strata coronae,  
Lumine cum lunae quare volant faculae?  
Astra nitent radiis, rutilant et tecta laternis,  
Cuncta rubent flammis, astra nitent radiis. (lines 5-8)

The second section of fourteen strophes is Rome's reply. Here she abases herself for her sins and calls upon the throng to behold the image of their Lord.

En, ubi vultus adest quaerens oracula matris,  
Prae natis hominum, en, ubi natus adest.  
Vultus adest Domini, cui totus sternitur orbis,  
Signo iudicii vultus adest Domini. (lines 37-40)

At the steps of the church the icon is deposited. Kneeling and beating their breasts, the worshippers repeat the *Kyrie eleison* one hundred times, the *Christe eleison* likewise and another hundred-fold *Kyrie eleison* while the choir is chanting.

Dat schola Graeca melos et plebs Romana susurros  
Et variis modulis dat schola Graeca melos.  
Kyrie centuplicant et pugnīs pectora pulsant,  
Christe faveto, tonant, Kyrie centuplicant. (lines 47-50)

The procession now passes to the Church of St. Maria Major where mass is celebrated and then returns to the Lateran. The closing eight strophes or *Invitatio ad orationem* take the form of an invocation to the Madonna and supplications for the reigning emperor.

Not uncommonly processional hymns contain references to persons and details connected with the occasion to be celebrated but here they are circumstantial to a high degree. The final allusion to Otto III dates the composition. The icon which is carried in the procession is one of the most noted of Lateran treasures. Perhaps of Byzantine origin, it is mentioned for the first time in the eighth

century as having been carried in procession when Lombard invasion was imminent. Successive restorations beginning in the ninth century have preserved it to the present day. The hymn is identified by quotations in the medieval *Ordines Romani* where it is named a *carmen*. Nothing could be more significant of the contemporary viewpoint on the classification of hymnic novelties.<sup>16</sup>

At the close of the eleventh century the vogue of the extra-liturgical hymn was on the increase. The *versus* which Gautier related to the trope is soon to be supplemented by the *conductus* which Dreves defined as a *cantio*, that is, a composition distinguished from the trope in this way, that it is not the elaboration of a liturgical text.<sup>17</sup> There was in reality no break in the continuity of development so far as processional hymns were concerned but the account of their evolution in the later medieval centuries must be reserved for a later study.

From the beginning the processional hymn was set to appropriate music rendered by cantors and choirs and sometimes by the people. St. Gall as a great center of liturgical music developed or adapted the melodies for the *versus* as it did for the sequence. How much was owed to Byzantine or other melodies cannot be decided here. Musical notation for the St. Gall processionals is noted by Gautier. A traditional melody exists for *Salve festa dies* which was perpetuated in the later *Sarum Processional*. *Gloria laus et honor tibi sit* has its traditional melody also.<sup>18</sup> If we knew more about the related music the history of the early processional hymn would be greatly clarified. The popularity of the elegiac form as established by Fortunatus and confirmed in the Carolingian revival may have been due, in part, to a good musical setting serving an indefinite number of similar hymns. The processional, which Gautier

<sup>16</sup> For the procession, see A.H. 23.75 notes; Mabillon, *Museum Italicum* II, xxxiv, also *Ordo Romanus* XI, *Museum Italicum* II, 151-2; M. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du haut Moyen-Age* in *Spicilegium sacrum lovaniense études et documents*, fasc. 11 (Louvain, 1931) 516-518. For the icon see P. Lauer, *Le Palais de Latran* (Paris, 1911) 93-4, Plate xxxiv; G. Wilpert, "L'acheropita ossia l'immagine del Salvatore nella cappella del Sancta Sanctorum," *L'Arte* 10.3 (1907) 161-177, 247-262.

<sup>17</sup> Gautier, *op. cit.* (see note 10) 24; G. M. Dreves, A.H. 20, *Introd.*, p. 6 f.; L. Ellinwood, "The Conductus," *Musical Quarterly*, 27 (1941) 165, defines the *conductus* thus: "A *conductus* was a Latin metrical poem set to music in from one to four parts during the 12th and 13th centuries, used for festive or processional purposes both within and without the church."

<sup>18</sup> Gautier, *op. cit.* (see note 10) ch. XIII; *Hymns, Ancient and Modern, Historical Edition* (London, 1909) 205; G. Floeck, "The Procession and Hymn of Palm Sunday," *Catholic Choirmaster*, 31.1 (March, 1945) 12.

asserts was always sung, must have depended for its true effect, as all religious musical ceremonial does, upon the number and quality of the singers belonging to the church or cathedral or abbey. A festival procession like those which were seen at St. Gall in the tenth century or in the great Roman celebrations could hardly have been duplicated in the majority of medieval abbeys or bishoprics. They called for unusual effort and as events of importance in the whole community, were never a commonplace of everyday worship.

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

As the evolution of processional hymns is reviewed their distinctive characteristics become evident. The motives of origin are clear and constantly repeated. Dramatic representation of Biblical events beginning with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, prime origin of the Christian procession, was a central motive. In a greater or lesser degree this motive is always present. The motive of pilgrimage to places of sacred association underlies processionals for saints and is implied through symbolism in many others. Supplication in the hour of emergency or necessity or as a regular practice is the theme and purpose of the litany processional. In the later medieval centuries the significance of these hymns was perhaps more obvious as their symbolism was emphasized and religious rites were elaborated; but the essentials were already established.

It follows that the processional is set apart by its occasional nature. It belongs historically to the special events from which it arose. The great litanies and rogations, the Sunday processional proclaiming weekly the Resurrection, the festival processions of the ecclesiastical year and for the saints, the welcome to royal visitors, were all events of particular significance. Therefore the number of processional hymns as compared with those of the offices and the mass is relatively small. The total number of true processional hymns in the *Analecta Hymnica* for the entire medieval period exceeds one hundred but is less than one hundred and fifty.<sup>19</sup> Again the suggestion is made here that only in places of greater size or importance or musical prestige was the complete cycle of annual processions a possibility. It should also be remembered in connection with the small number of hymns that many and perhaps the majority of processions were not accompanied by hymns but by the scriptural antiphons and psalms which had served every purpose before the hymn was created.

<sup>19</sup> Exact identification is sometimes impossible.



The metrical forms and characteristics of this poetry deserve more than a passing comment. The elegiac meter as used by Fortunatus in his Easter hymn occurs more frequently than any other. As over half of the processional hymns edited in the *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi* belong to the *Salve festa dies* group, especially those written after 1100, and at least half of the remainder illustrate the same or variants of the elegiac form, it may be said to predominate. The trochaic meter as used by Fortunatus in the *Pange lingua* type also met with wide acceptance. Iambic and other meters occur infrequently.

Perhaps the most common metrical characteristic of all processional hymns, aside from the elegiac form, is the occurrence of a refrain. In fact, it is considered by Gautier a distinctive feature without which the true processional hymn does not occur.<sup>20</sup> A detailed examination of the illustrations in the *Analecta Hymnica* substantiates this opinion. The early hymns which set the standard, *Salve festa dies* and *Gloria laus et honor*, have this feature as do all their descendants. Naturally the refrain accentuates the elegiac strophes, each of which constitutes a unit of thought, lengthens the hymn to provide for an extended or unhurried ceremony and gives an opportunity for the singers to produce a periodic burst of renewed praise, to say nothing of the laity whose participation may well have been limited to such familiar lines.

Although Gautier marks the refrain as properly belonging to the *versus*, he does not state its origin. As a matter of fact, speculation alone on this point is possible. The refrain has for ages accompanied lyric poetry. Although it failed to appear as an integral part of the Latin hymn and sequence, perhaps its origin in the processional is the result of Spanish influence. The refrain was common in the pilgrim songs heard in the musical center of Santiago de Compostella in the twelfth century.<sup>21</sup> Earlier evidence points to the entry of the refrain into the peninsula with Arabic verse as early as the ninth century. It may have been known even in pre-Arabic times as a result of Byzantine musical influence. In any case, the specific arrangement of the refrain at the beginning of the lyric with its repetition after every succeeding strophe is characteristic of Spanish lyric poetry in general.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Gautier, *op. cit.* (see note 10) 23, 24.

<sup>21</sup> A.H. 17, *Carmina Compostellana*, *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> J. B. Trend, *The Music of Spanish History to 1600* (London, 1926) 29, 30.

It has been suggested that the ultimate origin of the refrain is in the music of the dance where a musical phrase is supplied with a poetical counterpart.<sup>23</sup> This theory must also be referred to the primitive origins of the lyric where the word, the melody and the rhythm meet. It is entirely consistent, however, for refrains to be an integral part of processional songs where stately and dignified movement takes place.

When placed side by side with the great medieval hymns and sequences, the processional hymns suffer, on the whole, by comparison of their respective literary values. Fortunatus, it is true, wrote an immortal Easter hymn; but his followers and imitators rarely even approached his quality, preferring to manufacture centos from the original or to imitate the form without the substance of his genius. Other writers chose to adapt the phrases of some great hymn or sequence already in use for the festival concerned. After the tenth century, during which the authorship was often known and recognized, the hymnody is generally anonymous. It may be significant that when lists of the great hymns of the Middle Ages are compiled processional songs other than those of Fortunatus are rarely included.

Processional hymnody is above all extra-liturgical in character. The body of hymns, large or small, used within or without the church edifice, irrespective of the nature of the ceremony, constitutes a group which gave free and natural expression to aspirations of worship not realized in the hymns of the daily offices or the sequences of the mass. An independent evolution took place accompanying the growth of processional practice and of other new ceremonies. The student of medieval Latin hymns should think in terms of three and not two categories, recognizing the existence and importance of the processional side by side with the hymn and the sequence.

Conclusions, were they offered here, would at best be tentative, anticipatory perhaps of later medieval features but without complete evidence. In any case there are too many missing pages in the history of the rites and in the hymnic sources. Yet this much may be said. The procession with its hymns played a distinctive part in medieval worship, not clearly discerned in every detail but present to the mind of the student, as to the visitor in some ancient cathedral who perceives the intangible presences of the past as a reality to his vision.

<sup>23</sup> H. Spanke, "Zur Geschichte der spanischen Musik des Mittelalters," *Hist. Vierteljahr. Schrift* 28 (1934) 762.