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"Carolingian Baptismal Commentaries"

Carolingian baptismal commentaries are not hard to recognize ~~by anyone~~
~~familiar with the kinds of~~ ^{among the} items in several hundred Carolingian manuscripts
called "collection volumes." I often refer to them as baptismal "instruc-
tions," because it best describes their intended purpose and style and
tone. ~~Their contents, and the entire contents of their manuscripts, makes~~
~~it evident that~~ They were composed and copied for the instruction of the
clergy, ^{as their contents, and the entire contents of their manuscripts, reveal.}

The vast majority are anonymous. Their tone is didactic; frequently
they are in question-response form. Most occupy no more than three or four
folios in their manuscripts. ^{they are divided into a series of headings on} Usually they ~~explain a series of~~ topics per-
taining to the ceremonies of baptism, such as ^{De catechumeno, De scrutinio,} ~~the catechumen, the scrutiny,~~
^{De exsufflatione} ~~the exsufflation.~~ The explanation of ~~each~~ normally includes a definition
of the Latin word and sometimes a scriptural justification for ^{the ceremony,} ~~its celebra-~~
^{tion} and its purpose or effect.

The same explanations, or bits and parts of ^{them,} ~~the same explanations,~~
recur from commentary to commentary, because their composers borrowed from
the same sources or from one another. Many of them also look very much
alike, because their composers used the same model. This repetitiousness,
as well as their anonymity, partly explains why nobody has paid much atten-
tion to them.

In fact, with a few exceptions, they are hardly inspiring texts for
historians, theologians, or liturgists-- at least, read in isolation from
one another. It is when they are compared collectively that their diversity
begins to emerge.

The nature ~~and meaning~~ ^{and its meaning} of their diversity demands explanation, if

these commentaries

only because ~~they~~ were produced and copied in great numbers as just one of many texts the clergy received in a vast effort to educate them during the Carolingian Reform. How then, and why, do they differ?

I hope to publish soon a study of 64 of them, answering these questions in the larger context of clerical education and liturgical reform under the Carolingians. In the brief time permitted I would like to share with you some of the ^{interest} ~~of these baptismal commentaries~~ for liturgical historians in particular.

One way they differ is in having a different selection and order of *topic headings,* ~~topics.~~ ^{In most cases} Most of them (53 of the 64) ^{their} ~~treat a~~ list of topics ^{covers} ~~pertaining to~~ a complete ordo, or rite, of baptism, from the catechumenate ~~ceremonies~~ to the post-baptismal ceremonies. An ordo consists of the rubrics directing the priest as to what to do, and sometimes also the formulas and prayers that must be recited. While none of the 53 proceed step by step to gloss the entire words of an ordo, nevertheless by their selection and order of topics they reflect an ordo. Sometimes the ^{are} ~~is~~ series of topics ^{is} connected with such words as "primo," "deinde," "postquam," "tunc," "novissime." And occasionally the explanations include direct quotations of rubrics or prayers.

Thus, the sequence of topics is an important part of the baptismal instruction itself, informing the cleric of the order in which the ceremonies of baptism should be celebrated. It is clear that the composer had some ordo in mind, whether it subconsciously guided his decision to make changes in his model, or whether his primary concern was to describe for a priest a specific ordo of baptism.

That was my discovery. These anonymous, brief, didactic, quasi-liturgical commentaries, sometimes mere variations of one another, are different

because they describe different rites of baptism of different liturgical books. Not only do they sometimes include customs common to the liturgical books of a given area, such as the pedilavium or foot-washing ceremony celebrated only in northern Italy, southern Gaul, and Ireland, but sometimes they reflect variations unique to a single sacramentary book, ~~or ordinal.~~

Let me give you three illustrations of this in greater detail, for it is the most exciting find about these tracts for liturgical historians.

The first is an anonymous commentary I have given the unglamorous name "TEXT 7." Only the first nine lines of it survive in a ninth-century manuscript from Reichenau, but the entire text exists in an eleventh-century copy in El Escorial. I am certain, now, of its Spanish origin. What gave it away, despite its anonymity, were a number of remarks that disagree with the Roman ordo of baptism, and certain features that correspond to a very singular Spanish baptismal ordo. For example, here is TEXT 7's brief description of the post-baptismal ceremonies: "After this ^{(referring to} the immersion in the font) he is anointed with the sacrament of chrism so that he is called a Christian. For Christ is interpreted 'the anointed one' from this [word chrism]. Through the imposition of the priest's hands the Holy Spirit invoked upon him flows down, and...he is made a member of the body of Christ..."

What TEXT 7 appears to describe-- only one post-baptismal chrismation with an imposition of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit, performed by a priest (the term used is sacerdos), stands in stark contrast to the post-baptismal procedure in the Roman rite. This has two post-baptismal chrismations, the first ~~is~~ administered by a priest (presbyter), who anoints the top of the infant's head; the second by the bishop (episcopus), who confirms the infant by imposing his hand and reciting a prayer calling

down the seven-form gift of the Holy Spirit, and then anointing its forehead with chrism.

It had been established by Pope Innocent I in 416 that only bishops might impart the Holy Spirit when they signed the neophytes with chrism, and only bishops might sign the forehead with chrism.

But TEXT 7's description precisely matches what we find in a Spanish ordo of baptism contained in the Liber Ordinum. The Liber Ordinum, a liturgical book preserved in three eleventh-century manuscripts, which contains the ritual of the Spanish Church from Visigothic times, has two rites of baptism, one for the Paschal Vigil and one entitled, "Ordo of baptism to be celebrated at any time-- quolibet tempore," which I will refer to as the ordo "Q. T."

After the infant is raised from the font "Q. T." states: quote: "The priest (sacerdos) anoints him with chrism, making the sign of the cross on his forehead alone...Then he lays his hands upon him and says this prayer of the imposition of hand:" unquote. The prayer that follows invokes the seven-formed gift of the Holy Spirit.

"Q. T." uses the word sacerdos for the minister of confirmation. Sacerdos was sometimes used to refer to a bishop, but certainly the sacerdos here must mean a presbyter, because this ordo is for "anytime" baptisms, when, as one liturgical historian put it, "bishops could hardly have been available." Dom Ferotin, the editor of the Liber Ordinum, believes that "Q. T." is evidence that in Spain simple priests were confirming.

Isidore forbade simple priests to consecrate chrism or anoint the forehead with chrism at the Second Council of Seville in 616-- evidence that they were doing this. He was trying to bring the Spanish liturgy in- to closer conformity with Rome, but his reform attempt seems to have failed.

Dom Férotin believes the Liber Ordinum represents the Spanish liturgy in continual use from at least the latter seventh century to the eleventh; however, we have no actual evidence for the ongoing use of "Q. T." or for simple priests performing confirmations in Spain anytime between Isidore and the eleventh century.

After I read TEXT 7 more closely with the words of "Q. T." in mind, a number of other parallels leapt out. One example is TEXT 7's use of "hands" plural instead of "hand" when describing the priest's hand-laying during confirmation. The plural expression, if not the actual gesture of the priest extending both of his hands in confirmation, is extremely rare. One liturgical historian states that, "without exception the fathers from Tertullian onwards and the ancient baptismal liturgies in this context [that is, confirmation] have the word "hand" in the singular." (Fisher, p. 92)

The statement makes it all the more noteworthy when we find "hands," plural, used in "Q. T.," both in its rubric directing the priest to impose his hands, and in its alternative confirmation prayer, a prayer unknown anywhere outside of this ordo.

In addition, I found four other parallel expressions in TEXT 7 and "Q. T.," two of which are in prayers that are unique to this ordo, as far as I can establish.

There is almost no doubt that TEXT 7, with its single post-baptismal chrismation accompanied by an imposition of hands (plural) for the bestowing of the Holy Spirit, performed by a priest (sacerdos), and containing expressions found nowhere else but in "Q. T." is evidence of the circulation of this ordo in the Carolingian period.

There are further arguments to support the Spanish origin of TEXT 7, such as its permission for either a triple or a single immersion, the

latter practised only in Spain in the West; its use of Beatus of Liébana's Commentary on the Apocalypse, apparently not known outside of Spain during the Carolingian period; the start of the catechumenate on the day of the delivery of the Creed, a Spanish custom described by Ildefonsus of Toledo; and its instruction that heretics be received back into the church with chrism, a Spanish custom different from the hand-laying alone required elsewhere. But I wished to show you that even beyond revealing generally Spanish symptoms, TEXT 7, an obscure didactic liturgical commentary, still lying unedited in an eleventh century copy in El Escorial, is able to show its composer's use of a specific ordo of baptism. It happens to be a very interesting one, one that the composer of TEXT 7 would not likely have used if it was not the one familiar to the clergy for whom TEXT 7 was intended.

Since we have no evidence for the celebration of baptism from a Spanish liturgical book dating to the Carolingian era, TEXT 7 is precious evidence for the rite followed by parish priests in some parts of Spain.

My second illustration of a baptismal commentary reflecting a specific sacramentary book is a succinct description of the ordo of baptism attributed to Alcuin. It is an abbreviation of the description of baptism by the sixth-century John the Deacon of Rome, but there are a few changes that have never been satisfactorily explained. One is the omission of the touching of the ears. Alcuin (I will call the text his, although he may have ~~only~~ ^{merely} copied it) only mentions the touching of the nose, although the Effeta ceremony of the priest touching the ears and the nose of the catechumen with saliva or oil almost invariably involved both organs, and John the Deacon has both the nose and the ears. Did Alcuin simply omit the ears

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for brevity's sake? It does not seem so, for later he adds a ceremony John the Deacon does not mention.

Casting about in the sacramentaries I was startled to find that the so-called "Sacramentary of St. Martin of Tours" omits any mention of the touching of the ears, only directing the priest to touch the nose.

Furthermore, Alcuin's commentary has three other distinctive features that are all found in ~~this~~ ^{the} "Sacramentary of St. Martin of Tours" but not in numerous other Gelasian of the 8th-century-type sacramentaries. The fact that Alcuin probably wrote the baptismal commentary, ~~or~~ ^{and} at least included it in two letters he composed at Tours, and that the "Sacramentary of St. Martin of Tours" according to Deshusses transmits, up to a certain point, the very missal Alcuin compiled for his Abbey of St. Martin at Tours, seems hardly a coincidence. The omission of the ears in the Alcuin commentary was no accident, but reflects liturgical practice in the area of Tours.

It is especially significant to be able to explain the selection and order of topics of Alcuin's abbreviation as the influence upon it of a specific liturgical book in use in one area, because Alcuin's commentary was widely copied for clerical instruction, but with alterations. Thirteen of the 64 commentaries I study are variations of Alcuin's text. Topics were omitted or added or rearranged even while keeping most of Alcuin's words. Why did editors make these changes? That they were not content simply to copy Alcuin's text was, I found, sometimes clearly due to liturgical considerations.

The most impressive case is TEXT 38, my third illustration. It is essentially Alcuin's text, but with a radical rearrangement of its order of topics. The rearrangement has remarkable parallels with a most distinctive ordo for the scrutinies and baptism preserved in an eleventh-cen-

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ture manuscript now in Milan. The editor of the ordo, Dom Lambot, believes the first part, for the scrutinies, ^{was used in} ~~comes from an ordo written for~~ a cathedral city in northern Italy in the eighth century. It has many peculiarities foreign to the Roman ordo of the scrutinies.

Here are some of the differences between TEXT 38 and its model, Alcuin, explained in light of this north Italian ordo.

First, TEXT 38 places the topic of the delivery of the creed after the topic of scrutiny, whereas Alcuin has the delivery of the creed before the scrutiny. In the north Italian Ordo the delivery of the creed does not take place until all the scrutinies are over. This would explain TEXT 38's switching the position of the delivery of the creed to after the scrutiny.

Second, the topic of exsufflation has been moved later ^{than in Alcuin to} ~~and is~~ immediately before the delivery of the creed. In the north Italian Ordo we find that the final scrutiny before the delivery of the creed is especially solemn. It is marked by the celebrant placing himself in the midst of the catechumens // 20 and proclaiming a three-part exorcism prayer. Before each part he sufflates on the catechumens in the form of a cross. These memorable exsufflations on the final day of preparation before the delivery of the creed would explain TEXT 38's decision to move the topic of exsufflation immediately before the topic of the delivery of the creed.

A third feature of TEXT 38 is its change of the topic of the anointing of the breast to ^{away from} ~~before~~ the touching of the nose. It is after the nose in Alcuin's text, accompanying the anointing of the back. The anointing of the breast and back are topics invariably found together, except in TEXT 38. But in the north Italian Ordo we find that on the same day as the delivery of the creed there is a provisional scrutiny for anyone who was unable to attend the regular series of scrutinies. In this special

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scrutiny the priest anoints the breast of the catechumen with oil three separate times. This would explain the position in TEXT 38 of the topic of the anointing of the breast beside the delivery of the creed and separated from the anointing of the back. (By the way, it would also indicate that the provisional scrutiny instead of a series of regular scrutiny meetings was the norm for the clergy for whom TEXT 38 was written.)

Even before I had seen the parallels between TEXT 38 and Lambot's north Italian Ordo I had noticed that after a point TEXT 38's series of topics matched the description of baptism in Andrieu's Ordo Romanus L. Thus, I was amazed to learn that, according to Lambot, the north Italian Ordo was originally only an ordo for the scrutinies and was supplemented at some point in history with another ordo to make it a complete rite of baptism. The ordo used ~~was what~~ ^{identified as} Lambot ~~calls~~ Hittorp's "Ordo Romanus Antiquus," ~~This is~~ none other than Andrieu's Ordo Romanus L! In other words, TEXT 38's reflecting a north Italian "Ordo ^{for the} ~~of~~ Scrutinies" in the first half of its topics, and reflecting Ordo Romanus L in the second half of its topics, is no accident. This is precisely what a certain Romanized north Italian rite of baptism consisted of.

There are more striking parallels between TEXT 38 and the north Italian Ordo. TEXT 38 adds a topic on the competentes lacking in Alcuin. It explains that catechumens become competentes when they have given in their names and the names of their sponsors to an acolyte at the doors of the church. In the Ordo, there is a detailed description of the enrollment ceremony on the day of the first scrutiny. The candidates give in their names and the names of their sponsors to an acolyte at the doors of the church, then proceed in and, for the first time, are addressed as competentes with the deacon's cry, "Orate, competentes!"

In the Ordo an odd phrase recurs. After every exsufflation the celebrant proclaims, "Omnia recta," as if to say, "Everything has been done properly." Dom Lambot calls the formula the most notable curiosity of the Ordo. The phrase occurs in TEXT 38! It says: "And when they have responded in order all things correctly... (per ordinem omnia recte...)" It could be that the composer of TEXT 38 adopted the phrase almost subconsciously from the liturgical book opened before him.

TEXT 38 is preserved in one manuscript written in the first 1/3 of the ninth century. Thus, the TEXT is our first actual evidence that Lambot's Romanized north Italian ordo existed in the ninth century. Lambot thought it was created in the tenth or eleventh century since he followed Andrieu who believes Ordo Romanus L was not compiled until the tenth century. But TEXT 38 (as well, I might add, as a number of other baptismal commentaries in my study) suggest that Ordo Romanus L was already in circulation in the ninth century.

To return to Alcuin's text, we learn that what appear to be mere variations of it, such as TEXT 38, should not be overlooked. Although TEXT 38 contains all the words of Alcuin's text, its composer intentionally reworked it to describe a Romanized north Italian ordo-- presumably the ordo of baptism used in the area in which he wrote. There is a correlation between TEXT 38 and its one known manuscript: the manuscript comes from northern Italy or Bavaria. It also contains another baptismal instruction definitely from northern Italy, for we know the author, Archbishop Maxentius of Aquileia.

What we are seeing is that these didactic, anonymous instructions for parish priests nevertheless are able to show the use of diverse sacramentary books in different locations, and differences in how baptism was being celebrated from place to place.

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I have given just three examples to show that a systematic study of the Carolingian baptismal commentaries proves to be extremely worthwhile for liturgical historians. A new awareness of the variety that existed in the celebration of baptism across the Carolingian empire is now possible, which was not before the time of Bernard Bischoff, who has securely dated to the ninth century so many medieval manuscripts with anonymous works.

The comparison of these texts revealed our first positive evidence for the ongoing use of presbyteral confirmation in Spain in the Carolingian period. It linked the commentary used if not composed by Alcuin to a liturgical book in use in the Tours area. It provided our first evidence that Dom Lambot's Romanized north Italian ordo was in use in the ninth century, and that thus Ordo Romanus L, known only in manuscripts of the famous tenth-century Pontifical Romano-Germanic, was compiled and in use a century earlier, at least in some form.

Other baptismal commentaries offer more for liturgical historians. The study has made it clear that the Carolingian baptismal commentaries represent sacramentary books that no longer exist, but which would testify to the variety of liturgical celebration from location to location during the so-called Carolingian standardization of the liturgy.

A note of caution, however, is necessary. Granted that the person who originally composed a baptismal instruction described the way baptism was celebrated in his area, often bowing to local usages and preferences over unfamiliar rites. But what about the manuscript compiler who copied the baptismal instruction into a collection volume? Did he have the same intended destination or purpose for it as the original composer?

All of the 64 commentaries, with one exception, are in collection

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volumes-- in other words, they are copies. Is TEXT 38, in a collection volume, legitimate evidence that Lambot's Romanized north Italian ordo was in use when and where the collection volume was compiled? How was the entire volume intended to serve? Was it intended to be placed in the hands of parish priests, or was it a schoolbook whose contents might be glossed but not necessarily applied? Or ~~was it~~ a library volume, meant to preserve the attempts of a creative liturgist?

What was most encouraging about my study of the baptismal commentaries in their manuscripts was the large number of times they were exquisitely suited to the intended purpose or destination of the volume as a whole, and to its place of origin. It showed that even the manuscript compilers read these commentaries and selected them for their volumes with care. The Carolingian compiler himself was an important figure in determining how far liturgical conformity would go and how much room for diversity would be left for the Carolingian clergy taught through the written text. The compiler's work, which to us may appear as a "junk-drawer" of miscellanea, is not. Rather, it is a carefully designed book reflecting the needs of a specific recipient. The baptismal commentary is an integral part of a whole design. The designer's mind is the key for the liturgical historian like myself, who searches for the meaning of the diversity among the Carolingian baptismal commentaries in the eyes of the Carolingians themselves.