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THE CORPUS CHRISTI FESTIVAL AND ITS DOCTRINE.

“*Semper eadem!*” — Ever the same! — that is the proud boast of the Church of Rome. And in one respect we yield her the truth of this boastful assertion. From the time that St. Paul wrote: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work,” to the spiritual darkness and shadow of death of the fifteenth century; from the time that the Augean filth of popery was swept out of the temple of the Church by the pure Alphaeus of God’s Word, guided by that blessed servant of God, Martin Luther, to this day, when by hypocrisy and deceit Romanism is usurping the very power of the government in our country; from the time that Bishop Boniface III of Rome arrogated to himself the title of Pope to this day, when the doctrine of infallibility has been promulgated, and the dogmatization of the assumption of the Virgin Mary is only a question of time, Rome has been *ever the same* in her hatred of Christ the Savior, the one Redeemer of the world, and His blessed Gospel.

In every other respect, however, we most emphatically repudiate Rome’s claim to the title: *Semper eadem*. Her doctrine of justification by works, her fasting and mechanical praying, her doctrine of purgatory, her canonization of hosts of saints, her mass and her eucharist, her formalism and her festivals, have been developed by a slow process, in the course of many centuries, and Rome, even on mere historical grounds, has not the least shadow of a reason for her proud boast. This will be found true especially of the doctrine of transubstantiation and the establishment of the Corpus Christi festival with its procession.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CORPUS CHRISTI FESTIVAL.

The origin of the Corpus Christi festival has, to some extent, been shrouded in mystery. This fact has tended to accentuate the impression of the festival itself on the minds of the laity, as well as to emphasize the importance of some persons alleged to have been instrumental in instituting the festival, as will be shown. An examination of all extant and available records will enable us to separate legend from history, to show the chronological sequence of events, to consider the relative importance of the various factors which resulted in the institution of the central festival of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus to give an unbiased account of the establishment of the festival. This is evidently a prime requisite for the successful treatment of our subject.

The Catholic account, which is repeated by almost every liturgist (R. R. Gueranger, *The Liturgical Year*, Vol. VII, Part I, 155 ff.; *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s. v. "Corpus Christi Festival" and "Bolsena, Miracle of"; *Encyclopedia Britannica*; Brockhaus, *Konversationslexikon*; Meyer, *Konversationslexikon*; Alt, *Das Kirchenjahr*, 57 ff.; *Der Christliche Kultus*, 550 ff., mentioned by Gieseler, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 2, 448), is probably based on the book *Vita Benedictae Julianae ab Auctore Coaevo Scripta* and on the narrative of Joannes Blaerus Diesthemius, prior of the Benedictine Monastery Sancti Jacobi at Liège in his *Historia Revelationis Benedictae Julianae Anno 1230 Divinitus Factae de Institutione Festi Corporis Christi*. The story is substantially as follows.

It was in the year 1208 that Juliana, now usually called the Blessed Juliana, a member of the Congregation of Hospitalers and prioress of Mont Cornillon, near Liège, had a mysterious vision, in which she beheld the moon at her full, but with a hollow on her disk. The vision, which she at first thought an illusion, continued to haunt her whenever she said her prayers. After two years of supplication she received a revelation. The moon, she was told, signified the Church as it then was, and the hollow on the disk expressed the want of

one more solemnity in the liturgical year, a want which God willed should be supplied by the introduction of a feast to be kept annually in honor of the institution of the blessed Eucharist. The solemn commemoration made of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday was no longer sufficient "for the children of the Church, shaken, as they had been, by the influences of heresy" (Gueranger). Besides, the Church itself had its attention divided on that day by the important function of the washing of feet, followed, a few hours later, by the sad mysteries of Good Friday. When Juliana received this command, she was at the same time told to make known to the world these revelations. Juliana confided everything to her friend Eva, but she herself was so timid and humble that she did not dare to mention the matter to persons in authority. Finally, after twenty years, she gained sufficient courage to mention the subject to a canon of St. Martin's, of Liège, named John of Lausanne, whom she respected very highly. She begged him, at this time, to get the opinion of theologians on the subject confided to her. The consensus of opinion among the leaders of the Church in the district was that the institution of a festival as suggested was not only feasible, but would, no doubt, redound to the glory of God and the benefit of many souls. This favorable opinion encouraged Juliana to such an extent that she herself had a proper office for the new festival composed and approved. It has been stated that she chose a young unknown cleric, by the name of John, to compose the liturgy, who had refused the honor at first, but finally succeeded with the aid of her prayers. The office begins with the words: "Animarum eibus." Portions of it are extant in missals and breviaries.

The festival of Corpus Christi was first celebrated in the church of Liège. Robert de Torote, bishop of the diocese, in 1246 published a synodical decree commanding that each year, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, there should be observed, in all the churches of the diocese, a solemn feast in honor of the blessed Sacrament. The passage reads: "Ut de

excellentissimo Sacramento singulis annis feria quinta proxima post octavas Trinitatis festum solemne cum novem lectionibus et responsoriis, versiculis et antiphonis propriis, quorum vobis copiam faciemus, in singulis ecclesiis Leodienis dioecesis de caetero perpetualiter celebretis." (Binterim, *Denkwuerdigkeiten*, 276 ff.) The usual desistance from servile work and the fasting of preparation on the eve of the feast was ordered. But Bishop Robert died at this time, and the decree would probably have been forgotten, had not the canons of St. Martin-au-Mont determined upon the observance of the new festival. In 1247, the festival was celebrated for the first time in this church. But Robert's successor, Henry de Gueldre, took no interest in the new festival. It happened, however, at about this time, that Hugh de Saint Cher, Cardinal of Saint Sabina and Legate to Germany, came to Liège. He had formerly been prior and provincial in the order of St. Dominic, and had been one of the theologians who had passed favorably on the idea of the new festival. He not only celebrated the new feast with great solemnity himself, but also issued a circular, dated December 29, 1253, which he addressed to the archbishops, bishops, abbots, and the faithful of the territory of his legation, and in which he ordered the festival to be observed. He even granted one hundred days' indulgence to all who, contrite, and after confession of their sins, should, on the feast itself, or during its octave, devoutly visit a church in which the office of Corpus Christi was being celebrated. His successor, the Cardinal of St. George in Velabro, confirmed and renewed the ordinance. The opposition of the Franciscans, however, was still so strong that the observance of the feast did not spread far. All consistent efforts were terminated by the death of Juliana, in 1258.

On the 29th of August, 1261, James Pantaleon ascended the papal throne under the name of Urban IV. He had formerly been an archdeacon of Liège and had been interested in the festival. Eva now took occasion to remind the new pope of the festival in a letter of congratulation through the bishop

of Liège, Henry de Gueldre. Since the miracle of Bolsena was recorded at this time, and several other incidents made a deep impression on Urban IV, he determined to make the new feast general. Thomas of Aquinas was commissioned, in 1263, to create a new office for the festival, to supersede the one which Juliana had prepared, and which had been adapted to the ancient liturgy of France. In 1264, Pope Urban IV issued the bull *Transiturus*, permanently establishing the Feast of Corpus Christi for the whole Catholic Church. In this decree, the fifth *feria* after the octave of Pentecost (*feria quinta proxima post octavam Pentecostes*), that is, the Thursday after Trinity, was designated as the day set apart for the new festival. The principal reason for the institution is stated in the words: On Maundy Thursday the Church was too much occupied with the reconciliation of the penitents, with the holy chrism, and with the ceremony of the washing of feet. The object of the new festival was mainly "ad confundendam specialiter haereticorum perfidiam et insaniam." The bull closes with a list of indulgences granted to all the faithful who would attend the various services of the festival.

Although the decree of the pope was now, theoretically, a law of the Church, it, nevertheless, remained a dead letter for the time being. This was due mainly to the disturbances in Italy at that period. It was not till 1311 that the bull was again promulgated. But even then its publication and general distribution was attended with difficulties. It was Pope Clement V, who, at the Council of Vienne, in 1311, had the decree confirmed. But since he, at the same council, recalled the Clementine Constitutions, the seventh book of papal decretals, a sort of confusion seems to have resulted as to the validity of all decretals published by him. However, order was restored by his successor, Pope John XXII. This able and energetic man renewed the Clementine Constitutions and incorporated them in the Papal Law, inserting also the entire bull *Transiturus*, and adding the order for the procession. "Clemens Quintus . . . septimum librum Decretalium, quae Constitutiones

Clementiniana vocantur, ordinavit, sed cito post in concilio quod apud Viennam celebraverat, eundem librum revocavit, quem tamen successor suus Papa Johannes XXII. innovavit, incorporavit et publicavit . . . anno MCCCXVI. . . . — Johannes XXII. post Clementum Quintum sedit Papa annis circiter XVIII, qui septimum librum Decretalium innovavit.” (*Annales Monastici*; ed. by Henry Richards, Luard, IV, 341. 344.)

In the entire account given above, which is substantially that of the best Catholic sources, fact and legend are intermingled. In our all too scientific age we do not readily credit visions of that kind. It was undoubtedly not sentimental veneration for the blessed Juliana which was the reason for the introduction of the festival. The remarks and notes of Gieseler (*Lehrb. d. Kirchengesch.*, II, 2, 448) in this connection are worth considering. “Dem kann aber nicht so sein,” he writes in regard to the conventional account, “denn der Cistercienser Aegidius, ein Zeitgenosse (er endigt seine Geschichte mit 1251) gedenkt in seinen *Gestis Pontificum Leodiensium*, obgleich er sonst kein Wunder verschmaecht und auch der durch Robert bewirkten Erhoehung der Feier des Lambertusfestes erwachnt, dieses Festes mit keiner Silbe. Der erste Luettichesche Geschichtschreiber, der ueber dasselbe spricht, Ioannes Hocsemius (Canonicus in Luettich um 1348), *Gesta Pontificum Leodiensium*, sagt nur folgendes: ‘Anno vero Domini 1259 (vel forte 1260, cum tunc secundum quosdam Reclusae juxta Ecclesiam s. Fidis, cui de sacramento fuit Urbanus praecesse coeperit) Henricus Episcopus instinctu cuiusdam Reclusae juxta Ecclesiam s. Fidis, cui de sacramento fuit ostensa visio, Urbano Papae Quarto (cui nihilominus haec nota fuerat, cum dudum fuisset canonicus Leodinensis’ — naemlich bis 1255 —) ‘super hoc suas literas destinavit, quibus inductus Papa hoc festum instituit celebrari, quod ex tunc a Leodinensibus est receptum, et postmodum continue per plures ecclesias in Germania et Francia a clero et populo celebratum, sed demum per alias universaliter recipitur ecclesias, cum Johannes Papa XXII. constitutionem Urbani super hoc factam,

quae incipit *Transiturus de hoc mundo ad Patrem* (quam Clemens Papa V. observari districte praeceperat ab omnibus in concilio Viennensi), fecisset eum cacteris Clementinis Constitutionibus celebrari.' Die folgenden Luetticheschen Geschichtschreiber, Joannes Ultramosanus und Joannes Warnantius, wissen nicht mehr darueber. Erst 1496 schrieb Joannes Blaerus Diesthemius, Prior des Benediktinerklosters Sancti Jacobi in Luettich, seine *Historia Revelationis Benedictae Julianae Anno 1230 Divinitus Factae de Institutione Festi Corporis Christi*, wo alles, selbst der Name Juliane, neu ist. Onuphrius Panvinius (†1558) erklarte daher wohl mit vollem Rechte alle jene revelationes fuer Fabeln." A critical examination of the book *Vita Benedictae Julianae ab Auctore Coaevo Scripta*, which appeared even later, would undoubtedly prove the writing an attempt *ex post facto* to substantiate legendary claims.

After culling out all legendary fancies, then, the following facts will remain, which we present in form of a table:—

- 1246, synodical decree of Robert de Torote, establishing the feast in his diocese.
- 1247, first celebration.
- 1253, December 29, circular of Cardinal Hugh de St. Cher, extending the territory of the celebration over his entire legation.
- 1263, composition of the office for the Corpus Christi Festival by Thomas of Aquinas.
- 1264, the bull *Transiturus*.
- 1311, confirmation of the festival at the Council of Vienne; Pope Clement V.
- 1316, renewal and incorporation of the decree into Clementines (Canon Law) by John XXII.

Arguments of probability and facts of history thus compel us to reject the sentimental veneration for Juliana of Liège as a reason for the introduction of the festival. In order to find the real reason for the introduction of the Corpus Christi Festival, we are obliged to trace the history of the doctrine of

transubstantiation briefly from its inception, and thus see whether logical sequence and the evolution of dogma, as well as question of polity, were not determining factors in the establishment of the festival, in brief, that the latter made the step of the institution *Festi Corporis Domini* necessary.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

The *idea* of an actual physical change of elements taking place in the Eucharist, that bread is *converted* into the body and wine into the blood of Christ, may have been broached at a very early date, as Gieseler notes, though the teaching of Augustine makes this improbable. In the ninth century, however, the concept of transubstantiation, as we now know it, is plainly found. We find the idea stated plainly in the writings of Paschasius Radbertus (born at Soissons, near Paris, about 786; died at Corbie, near Amiens, about 865). In his *Liber de Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, 831, he expressly states: "Nihil aliud quam caro Christi et sanguis post consecrationem credenda sunt.—Substantia panis et vini in Christi carnem et sanguinem efficaciter interius commutatur"; and in his *Epistola de Corpore et Sanguine Domini ad Frudegardum*, who had opposed him: "Cum ait [Christus]: Hoc est corpus meum vel caro mea, seu: Hic est sanguis meus, non aliam puto insinuasse, quam propriam et quae nata est de Maria virgine, et pependit in cruce, neque sanguinem alium, quam qui profusus est in cruce, et tunc erat in proprio corpore." He was followed in his views by Florus, subdeacon of Rheims, Hincmar of the same city, Remigius, and Pseudo-Aleuin. But the new idea also found strong and influential opponents. Rhabanus Maurus (born at Mainz, between 776 and 784, died near there 856), in his *Epistola ad Heribaldum Antissidorensem Episcopum* and in his *De Institutione Clericorum*, declares the assumption of a physical change to be absurd. Ratramnus (monk of Corbie, died after 868) was just as outspoken in his denunciation of the new doctrine. He addressed his *De Cor-*

pore et Sanguine Liber ad Carolum Regem on the subject to Charles the Bald. In the next two centuries there was no material change in the status of the controversy. About the middle of the twelfth century the concept of Paschasius had not yet been accepted generally. But the controversy with Berengar of Tours (born perhaps at Tours, died 1088 on the island of St. Cosine, near there) served to bring matters to a crisis. Berengar had openly declared himself against the idea of transubstantiation. In his *Epistola ad Lanfrancum* in regard to the controversy, he had declared his adherence to the ideas of Ratramnus (which were at that time attributed to Johannes Scotus Erigena), and had said that, if he were pronounced a heretic, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, "ut de caeteris taceam," would come under the same heading. Berengar did not stand alone in his views. Heriger, Abbot of Laubes, and the Anglo-Saxon Aelfric were opponents of the teachings of Paschasius. This should be noted here to understand the bitterness with which the controversy was carried on, as well as the fixation of the dogma in detail which it resulted in. But Berengar was the only one that had the courage of his convictions. He was attacked most bitterly by Lanfranc (lived at Pavia, in Normandy, till the Berengarian controversy, since 1070 Archbishop of Canterbury, died 1089) in his *De Eucharistia*. The controversy lasted for about three decades, and was the subject at several councils and synods (Vercelli, Rome; 1059 and 1078). Berengar was summoned several times, and a refutation forced upon him. After he had revoked his last refutation, he was permitted to spend his last years quietly. It should be noted that he opposed only the idea of transubstantiation, but did not deny the real presence.

Now, although Berengar's views had been declared heretical, his influence remained. There were always some few that refused to accept transubstantiation. Zacharias Episcopus Chrysopolitanus (about 1157) wrote in *Commentarius in Monotessaron*: "Sunt nonnulli, imo forsitan multi, sed vix notari possunt, qui cum damnato Berengario idem sentiunt, et tamen

eundem cum Ecclesia damnant. In hoc videlicet damnant eum, quia, formam verborum Ecclesiae abjiciens, nuditate sermonis scandalum movebat. . . . Aliis vero latenter imponunt, quod non intelligant tropos et figuratas locutiones. Illud quoque maxime dirident, quod panis et vini species dicunt in aere apparere.” Algerus, presbyter at Liège, in his *Prologus in Librum de Sacramento Corporis et Sanguinis Domini*, gives a few of the ideas which were held: “Alii panem et vinum non mutatum, sed solum sacramentum, sicut aquam baptismatis, vel oleum chrisnatis, corpus Christi non vere, sed figurate vocari dicunt. — Alii autem dicunt, panem non solum sacramentum, sed in pane Christum quasi impanatum, sicut Deum in carne personaliter incarnatum. Alii autem panem et vinum in carnem et sanguinem mutari, sed non Christi, sed cuiuslibet filii hominis sancti et Deo accepti, ut compleatur, quod Christus dixit: Nisi manducaveritis etc. Alii autem gratiae Dei derogantes dicunt, sacerdotum malis meritis ita invocationem divini nominis annullari, ut eorum indigna consecratione non debeat panis in Christi carnem converti. Alii vero mutari quidem in carnem Christi, sed malis meritis sumentium non permanere carnem Christi, sed iterum reverti in purum sacramentum panis et vini. Alii, quod est deterius, dicunt per comestionem in foedae digestionis converti corruptionem.” So we find the ideas of impanation and consubstantiation having adherents, as well as that of transubstantiation. It must be remembered, however, that the term “transubstantiation” was not coined till the latter part of the eleventh century. Pietro Damiani uses it in his *Expositio Canonis Missae*, Hildebert, Archbishop of Tours, in his *Sermo XCIII. Synodicus ad Sacerdotes*. Stephen, Bishop of Autun, 1113—1129, in his *Tractatus de Sacramento Altaris*, uses the verb *transubstantiare*: “hoc est corpus meum, i. e., panem, quem accepi, in corpus meum transubstantiavi.”

If anything could have urged the Roman Curia, at this time, to have the controversy settled as speedily as possible and the doctrine fixed, it was the fact that minor questions were beginning to agitate the minds of some teachers, such as the

mode and the duration of the change. Anselm of Canterbury, the successor of Lanfranc, had already touched upon the question of communion under one form and claimed: "In utraque specie totum Christum sumi." The fourth Lateran Council, 1215, fixed the dogma proper by stating: "Una vero est fidelium universalis Ecclesia, extra quam nullus omnino salvatur. In qua idem ipse sacerdos et sacrificium Jesus Christus, cuius corpus et sanguis in sacramento altaris sub speciebus panis et vini veraciter continentur, transubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina, ut ad perficiendum mysterium unitatis accipiamus ipsi de suo, quod accepit ipse de nostro. Et hoc utique sacramentum nemo potest conficere, nisi sacerdos, qui fuerit rite ordinatus secundum claves Ecclesiae, quas ipse concessit Apostolis et eorum successoribus Jesus Christus." It should be noted here that not merely the doctrine is fixed, but also the power of the priests clearly defined. If we add to this the fact that the elevation of the monstrance was required by papal law in 1217, we have a pretty clear picture of the trend of teaching and polity.

The next questions concerned the *manner* of transubstantiation and the duration of the change. Of greater importance for our purpose, however, is the gradual withdrawal of the chalice. In the case of communion of children and of the sick it had long been the custom to dip the bread into the wine, and thus to administer the Sacrament. In the twelfth century this practice became a more general custom, based on the assertion of Anselm quoted above. Rudolph, abbot of St. Trone, near Liège, wrote the following:

"Hic et ibi cautela fiat, ne presbyter aegris
Aut sanis tribuat laicis de sanguine Christi:
Nam fundi posset leviter, simplexque putaret,
Quod non sub specie sit totus Iesus utraque."

Robert Pulleyn (about 1140) wrote: "Primo corpus, post sanguis a presbyteris est sumendus; institutio Christi mutanda non est. Verum qualiter a laicis eucharistia sumi deberet, sponsae suae commisit iudicio," so long as the laity receive the body (bread). The universal acceptance of this idea did not

take place, however, till after the time of Thomas of Aquinas (born about 1225 at Roccasecca, 75 miles from Rome, died at Fossanova, Italy, 1274), whose influence was almost decisive. He writes in his *Summa Theologiae*: "Sub utraque specie sacramenti totus est Christus, aliter tamen et aliter. Nam sub speciebus panis est quidem corpus Christi ex vi sacramenti, sanguis autem ex reali concomitantia, sicut supra dictum est de anima et divinitate Christi. Sub speciebus vero vini est quidem sanguis Christi ex vi sacramenti, corpus autem Christi ex reali concomitantia." The omission of the chalice was therefore defended by Thomas in the same book: "Utrum liceat sumere corpus Christi sine sanguine? Provide in quibusdam ecclesiis observatur, ut populo sanguis sumendus non detur, sed solum a sacerdote sumatur." We might note here that the views of Thomas were embodied in the Roman Catholic catechism: "The substance of bread and wine is so changed into the very body of the Lord that the substance of bread and wine entirely ceases to be," etc. Bonaventura, although a Franciscan and therefore really opposed to the Dominicans, nevertheless agreed with Thomas on this point, when he wrote: "Ideo fideles recipiunt perfectum sacramentum sub una specie, quia ad efficaciam recipiunt." (*Sententiae*, Liber IV.) Since that time (about 1260) the Dominicans and the Franciscans united on the *communio sub una*.

There now remains the question of the *latria*, or adoration of the host. After the rite of elevation had been made obligatory by papal law, and transubstantiation became a dogma of the Church, the next step was so obvious as almost to be self-evident. After some preliminary local ordinances Gregory X (pope 1271—1276) made the law: "In elevatione corporis Christi, cum antea parum debeant surgere, prosternant se ad terram et adorent reverenter in facies cadendo; et sic prostrati stent usque ad 'Per omnia,' ante 'Agnus Dei,' et dant pacem, et iterum se prosternant, et stent sic prostrati, quousque sacerdos corpus et sanguinem sumat." This practice of the adoration of the host was always upheld and defended with the

greatest fervor by the Roman Church. Bellarmine, in his *De Eucharistia*, writes: "Cultu latriac per se et proprie Christus est adorandus, et ea adoratio ad symbola etiam panis et vini pertinet, quatenus apprehenduntur, ut quid unum cum Christo, quem continent." The Council of Trent, which fixed the dogma of transubstantiation once more, as well as all the customs connected with it, says (sess. 13, *De Eucharistia*): "Nullus dubitandi locus relinquitur, quin omnes Christi fideles pro more in Ecclesia Christi semper recepto latriac cultum, qui vero Deo debetur, huic sacramento sanctissimo in veneratione exhibeant, neque enim ideo minus adorandum, quod fuerit a Christo Domine, ut sumatur, institutum."

From this brief survey of the history of the concept of transubstantiation and its attendant factors four points stand out for the purpose of our argument:—

- 1) The idea of transubstantiation itself;
- 2) The celebration of the Eucharist under one species;
- 3) The emphasis on the power of the priests;
- 4) The adoration of the host.

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(To be continued.)
