

der Apostelgeist, der zu neuen Eroberungen drängt. „Chi vuole il fine, vuole i mezzi: torna dunque facile concludere che, per giungere a quest' occupazione estensiva, occorre aumentare gli effettivi e creare il clero indigeno.“ Aber trotz Mängel an Personal und Mitteln haben die früher und jetzt ansässigen Missionare doch viel zur religiösen und kulturellen Hebung des Volkes beigetragen. Zerstreut über ein Land ohne Eisenbahnen, weit voneinander entfernt, fast immer auf Ritt, erfüllen diese „Chevaliers du Christ“, wie man sie genannt hat, eine große Sendung und zwar unter einem Volke, das wegen seiner körperlichen Tüchtigkeit und Intelligenz zu großen Hoffnungen berechtigt. Pius XI. sagte vor einigen Jahren dem Leiter des Priestermissionsbundes von Frankreich: „Ich habe Dokumente, aus denen hervorgeht, daß unter allen Missionen der Welt eine der interessantesten die Mission im Basutoland ist. Dort gibt es ein Volk, das große Fortschritte macht und gleichzeitig den Weg der Geistigkeit einschlägt und zwar so, daß man es für berufen halten kann, eine große Rolle unter den afrikanischen Völkern zu spielen.“

Religious Customs and their Bearing on the Maintenance and Growth of Religion¹

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Since Sumner's work on „Folkways“ the sociologists make certain distinctions among the forces which produce group conformity. They say that a large part of our social heritage consists of traditional attitudes and manners which are centuries old. These are called *Folkways*. Apart from them are social habits to which are attached ethical and legal values; they go under the caption of *Mores*, because they intend to rule the ethical habits of the members of the community. Society is likely to wink at

„Nisi tempestive Clero indigenae excolendo provideatur, istud accidet ut Missionarius, cuius est paganus Evangelium praedicare, in communitate quadam christiana sedem fingens, ceteros infideles fere derelinquat, magnumque conversionis opus catechistis concredat. At Clerus indigena potest debetque, saltem initio, optimo auxilio esse Missionario; qui inde magis expeditus unice vel fere unice se dedicare poterit altissimae vocationi, convertendis scilicet infidelibus.“

¹ Der Verf. der vorliegenden Studie, Universitätsprofessor für allgemeine Religionswissenschaft in den Vereinigten Staaten, untersucht in seinem Aufsatz die große Bedeutung des religiösen Brauchtums für die lebendige Religion an Hand religionsgeschichtlicher Beobachtungen und Vergleiche. Er bemüht sich zunächst, die kaum übersehbare Fülle religiöser

a violation of folkways, but if an individual tries to disregard the mores, he is considered as dangerous to the public.

Folkways and mores are creating a third form of habits which Sumner called „Institutions“. They are habits grounded in the social structure which furnishes the means of putting them into action. Here is an example: Lynching would be reckoned among the mores, while the Court procedure, say, in trying a murderer, or, the educational system of the United States, is considered an institution. To call, however, as some sociologists do, family, government, religion, an institution, is not seemly; they rather belong into the category of groups and communities.

It would be quite appropriate to apply Sumner's terminology to religious forces which operate upon the individual; but for logical reasons I prefer to group them under the genus „customs“, and I shall try to classify them into four species. To avoid misunderstanding I state that by religious customs I mean all religious practices which govern the priests' and people's conduct, behavior, and habits of worship and of reverence towards God.

I. Classification

In our daily life we practise many customs which have a religious origin, while others, seemingly, are indifferent. Buddha, for example, did not introduce, or suggest, any customs expressing religious ideas, because the philosophy of early Buddhism is godless, while the opposite attitude is upheld in Mohammedanism: The social rules of the Koran obviously try to materialize Allah's reign on earth. Similarly, the early Christian Church did her best to accustom the newly converted nations to habits which point heavenwards and intend to conform our earthly existence to one hereafter. The nearly sacerdotal character of the Roman Emperor is an unmistakable

Übungen durch eine sachliche Klassifizierung zu ordnen, indem er sie nach vier Gesichtspunkten in Kreise aufgliedert. Er unterscheidet Bräuche, welche durch Ritual und Gesetz der Religionsgemeinde allgemein vorgeschrieben sind; solche, die nur von lokaler und partikularer Bedeutung sind; ferner religiöse Übungen, die die profanen Akte des täglichen Lebens sakralisieren und der religiösen Seele ihren Ursprung verdanken; endlich die religiösen Betätigungen schlechthin, insofern sie „Brauch“ geworden sind. Mit Nachdruck wird der Einfluß betont, der vom Brauchtum auf den religiösen Menschen übergreift in Hinsicht der Lebenskraft und Wirkung der Religion. Auch dem Verständnis fremder Religiosität erschließt das Brauchtum wertvolle Wege. So erhellt seine Bedeutung auch für den Seelsorger und Missionar. Näheres eindrucksvolles Belegmaterial sowie praktische Hinweise bringt ein weiterer Beitrag des gleichen Verf. im nächsten Heft. (Die Schriftl.)

witness to this intention. However it experienced a complete change during the reformation, when people were told to regard religion an entirely spiritual and exclusively personal affair, to be eliminated from civic life. Now that put people in a perplexing position. How can a thoroughly religious person feel comfortable in an environment, where any expression of religious ideas is considered out of place? Naturally, people were looking for a substitute of God to serve it with all devotion. Since the reformers had banished God from the markets and streets into the seclusion of private chambers, people devoted their life to commercial success and to the promotion of public welfare. New customs developed, seemingly indifferent to religion; effectively, they diverted the human mind from divine ideas and, eventually, became a serious impediment to a religious worldview. The Christian representation of God was replaced by the „golden calf“. This bogus god originated the unattractive customs of our present-day epoch. We cannot regard them, therefore, as utterly irreligious.

I propose to divide religious customs into four species:

1. Class: Ceremonial customs, enjoined upon both priests and faithful by the ritual and Church laws for the celebration of the divine service, the administration of sacraments, sacramentals, benedictions, novenas, pilgrimages. We find them also among pagans and Jews. Hereto belong the rites observed in slaughtering and preparing the sacrificial animal, rules for the sacrifice itself, the participation in the sacrificial meal. If we decide to apply Sumner's terminology we can call them „institutions“, because they are strictly prescribed and upheld by the full authority of the religious cult.

2. Class: The Catholic Church has another species of rites which can be considered independently from the 1. class, because their application is left to the discretion of local authorities, and they are used, moreover, outside of the church edifice. To these customs belong blessings and certain processions, e. g., blessings of horses on St. George's day, of the fields on St. Mark's day, of pilgrims, of houses, and of food. Their observation is not indispensable, and they have ethical values, wherever practised. They may be called „mores“.

Pagans, non-Catholics, Greek orthodox Christians, however, seem not to know any distinction between „mores“ and „institutions“. Whatever customs they have, such are obligatory as to time and procedure. I would mention as examples: The hand washing of the Jews, when participating in a funeral; eating of

Mazza bread at the Pasha time; their ancient pilgrimages to the holy city, the observation of the feast of tabernacles. The eastern Indians have their pilgrimages to Calcutta and Bangkok, bathing in the Ganges river, funerals by combustion on stakes. Of the American Indians I mention only two examples: In spring and fall, when sickness is considered most common, the Iroquois used to put on ugly masks and to go through all the houses of the community shaking their turtle-shell rattles to frighten away the invading spirits of sickness. The Huron tribe observed strictly another custom, expressing their respect for the dead. About every twelve years, there was a great feast of the dead. The bodies of all who had passed away during that period were carried by their families, often many miles, to a common burial pit, lined with furs and other costly offerings, and buried there with great solemnity.

As it was said before, it is very difficult to classify pagan customs. What at first sight seems to be a folkway, turns out to be an institution. A dependable reason of classification is the presence of the medicine man performing the rite. But full certainty could be achieved probably only during a period of decline, when certain customs are dropped sooner than others, the presumption being that those dropped first are but optional folkways, while those tenaciously preserved are institutions.

3. Class: In the Catholic Church, however, folkways are easy to distinguish from higher class customs. They are remote from ritual directions, their origin being the Christian soul. They impart a sacred purport even to trivial activities, as eating, working, housing, common events of family life. Strong faith strives, very naturally, to be a „living faith“, as St. Paul says (Rom. I, 17, and Hebrew X, 38) and originates sacred habits of daily life. Hereto belongs the use of holy water, when leaving the house, blessing of the bread before cutting it; prayers uniting all members of the family in the morning and at night, as well as prayers before the meals. Sacred customs are connected with birth, baptism, marriage, and death. In some countries (Belgium) the churchgoers wear particular garbs, distinguishing them as to sex, matrimonial state, and age. Even the way priests are dressing in different countries, and conversing with people, is dictated more by folkways than by canon law. Among more outstanding folkways may be mentioned the mountain fires on St. John the Baptist's day and around the Yule tide. I think that the use of a ritual language is based also more on custom and tradition than

on law. The veneration and protection of guests seems to be of religious origin, as is the selection of hill tops and mountain peaks for divine service. Most of the folkways are handed down to following generations in poetic and musical form, thus enhancing their impressiveness.

4. Class: In a larger sense all religious activities are ruled by custom, as far as the layman's viewpoint is concerned. The time, length, selection of religious services is closely watched by the people, and any decisive innovation, still more any abolition, is resented. They object even to the removal of a picture, its esthetic worthlessness notwithstanding. People are greatly puzzled, when one pastor observes May- and October devotions, while another absolves himself from it; when one church has the Corpus Christi procession, the Asperges, the Holy Week devotions, and another gets along without it; if the priests differ in the application of Canon Law, what really happens. The results are disastrous, because the crowd naturally favors rebellion, and they begin to doubt not only liturgical rules, but the priest's word in general.

II. Effectiveness, stability, and necessity of customs

Ceremonies and religious customs speak an eloquent language to us. They are the objectivated intellect, because, although impersonal, they arouse our thinking and compel us to follow their guidance, or to reject it. They lend world to the supernatural, and symbolize in a very suggestive way events going on in a supernatural world with which we are in permanent relation. To the simple minded they substitute for books and instruction, but to the cultured mind they offer an unexhaustible treasure of stimulating meditations. As history teaches they are inspiring esthetic productiveness, calling for embellishments by poetry, music, and dramatic impersonation.

As to their stability, it is obvious that the ceremonial customs, practised during the divine service and protected by the church edifice, have the best chances of persistence. Some priests believe that they suffice for the preservation of a truly Christian life, which is fundamentally wrong as will be shown. Extramural customs, mores, mentioned in class 2, do not enjoy so much appreciation as the ceremonies of class 1. They are regarded, sometimes, as „non-essential“ and likely to be dropped for any plausible reason. As to the folkways, it must be stated that they do not enjoy, of late, the patronage of the clergy as they have enjoyed that of the missionaries in earlier centuries, when Christian folkways were encouraged, because they brought home the

meaning of the dogmas to the human mind. Fortunately, customs are not exclusively dependent on the patronage of the clergy. Large groups have found them beneficial, and they maintain for them a continued appreciation, especially in a settled country, even if their day of value has passed. Religious folkways are, sometimes, an expression of the general outlook of an epoch, as it was during the romantic period which was very fond of symbolism, while the enlightenment period was particularly adverse to religious customs, because of its antagonism against anything irrational. Moreover, at that time, many folkways had become void of their original meaning, a worthless mechanism, conducive rather to superstition than to edification. They are manifestations of the objectivated intellect only as long as their meaning is not detached, lost, from them, else they become useless ruins.

It is this writer's opinion that all classes of religious customs are equally important for the preservation of a living religion, that they are so necessary to religion as the branches, leaves, and blossoms are integral parts of a normal plant. It is true, that religion is a matter of man's intellect. But does that mean that we can convert the world simply by appealing to reason in correct, logical argumentation? Christ, when teaching, adhered to the religious notions of the Jews; he minutely observed Jewish customs, and so did the apostles, always taking pains to instill into them the lofty doctrine of the redemption. That was both very wisely and carefully done, and the missionaries have followed their example. They can tell us about the almost invincible resistance of primitives whose religion is deeply interwoven with habits of daily life and civic events. The worship of ancestors, and the rites observed in the cult of animism and fetishism have proved to be nearly unsurmountable obstacles to Christian preachers. In the following the power of religious customs is to be elucidated by the example of the Amish sect living in the United States.

„Wenn die Rettung der Seelen und die Ausbreitung der Wohltaten der Erlösung ein Werk ist, an dem alle Priester der Welt teilnehmen, so bestimmt man nicht das unterscheidende Merkmal der Missions-tätigkeit mit der Behauptung, daß sie ein für die Rettung der Ungläubigen unternommenes Werk sei . . . Es ist das eigene und wesentliche Ziel der Mission, eine sichtbare, hierarchische und organisierte Kirche vorzubereiten. Diese andere Aufgabe hat S. H. Pius XI. in seinem unvergänglichen Rundschreiben *Rerum Ecclesiae* formuliert: *Quorsum, quaesumus, sacrae Missiones pertinent, nisi ut in tanta immensitate locorum Ecclesia Christi instituat ac stabiliatur?*“ (Albert Perbal O. M. I., *Premières leçons de théologie missionnaire*, Paris 1937, S. 61 u. 98—99.)